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Anke Esser, Marion Kahrens, Yusra Mouzugi, Ester Eomois,

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A female leadership competency framework from the perspective of male leaders

Female
leadership
competency

Anke Esser and Marion Kahrens

European College of Business and Management, London, UK

Yusra Mouzughi

Muscat University, Muscat, Oman, and

Ester Eomois

Department of Management, Estonian Business School, Tallinn, Estonia

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to develop a competency framework that incorporates the key leadership competencies required of female leaders working in male-dominated industries by putting particular emphasis on the male leaders' point of view.

Design/methodology/approach – This qualitative research combines a thorough literature review on important leadership competencies with ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews with male leaders from the Telecommunication and ICT industry, two typically male-dominated industries in Germany. All the interviews were transcribed and analysed through qualitative content analysis based on Mayring.

Findings – Findings revealed that success of female leaders within male dominances is shaped by not only their exceptional professional expertise but also the complex mix of behaviours on a professional and interpersonal level.

Practical implications – This study contributes to the academic debate on why only a few women reach the top of organisations in male-dominated industries by considering the perspective of male leaders. A competency model is proposed that incorporates both professional competencies and expected behaviours on a personal and interpersonal level and therefore enables leadership professionals to better understand the male leaders point of view on the complex mix of competencies expected from female leaders operating in male-dominated industries.

Originality/value – The need for more women in leadership has become a global business imperative, yet little is known about the competencies required to succeed in environments shaped by male leadership styles and the understanding that women are less capable leaders. Assessing the point of view of male leaders, who dominate these working environments, provides new and valuable insights into the complex issue of women in leadership for the academic debate and the practitioners' point of view.

Keywords Leadership competencies, Competency frameworks, Leadership styles, Female leaders, Gender-related competencies, Male perspective

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Despite governmental guidelines and growing evidence that diversity at the top management benefits overall performance, globally, the gender gap in top leadership positions remains significantly high (Masters, 2017, Catalyst, 2016; Doldor and Vinnicombe, 2015). While exceptions exist and a number of women do successfully attain senior leadership positions, they then face the challenge of operating in a working environment



that is dominated by male leadership styles and shaped by the understanding that women are less capable leaders (Ryan *et al.*, 2016; Cook and Glass, 2014).

Furthermore, women are confronted with stereotypical thinking because executive leadership has long been associated with, and successfully carried out by, men (Chizema *et al.*, 2015; Jackson *et al.*, 2014). A major problem that female leaders face is the contradiction between the expectations which people have of women and how they expect a leader to behave (Broadbridge and Fielden, 2015; Ely, 2015). More precisely, the key-competencies shaping the success of male leaders may not align with those that women in similar positions require (Gartzia and van Engen, 2012).

Therefore, arguably the specific set of competencies required by female leaders operating in a male-dominated industry is shaped by not only contemporary leadership challenges but also social gender role bias and how female leaders are perceived and respected by their male peers.

Within this context, it is imperative to look at the specific competencies female leaders require to succeed in male-dominated business environments, especially because the understanding of effective leadership is seen to be changing in the light of the contemporary and fast developing business environment (Chin *et al.*, 2016).

While many gender-related leadership studies take an emancipatory stance to highlight the discrimination of women in leadership, this study will provide a different perspective on the gender debate by focusing on the complexity of the competencies required of women in male-dominated leadership environments.

The purpose of this study is to develop a competency framework that incorporates the key competencies required of female leaders working in male-dominated industries by putting particular emphasis on the male leaders' point of view. Opinions of male leaders have been given very limited attention in this context so far, despite their high impact on the challenges that female leaders face and the correlated competencies required to overcome these. Therefore, this supplementary viewpoint provides unique and valuable insights and a new lens for the debate why only few women reach the top of organisations.

Theory and research on leadership competencies

Conceptual introduction of leadership and competencies

Research into leadership is a constantly developing science that is central to organisational effectiveness and has been investigated from a variety of perspectives. Although many researchers consider the field of leadership to be too wide and complex for a single definition (O'Connell, 2014; Zaleznik, 1977), scientists have made an attempt by differentiating the term "leadership" from "management". One of the first to do so was John P. Kotter, who described leaders as those applying vision to inspire and motivate their followers and praising creativity, innovation, self-fulfilment and change; while seeing managers as administrators with the task of ensuring the reliable and efficient operation of complex organisations (Hegele-Raih, 2004). This understanding is supported by Bennis (2009) who considers leaders as focusing on people and managers as focusing on systems and structures.

Numerous researchers support the understanding that the practice of leadership is undergoing significant changes by shifting from a focus on generating constant progress through determination towards a greater concern for positive leader-follower relations and a focus on the needs of the people (Jones and Gosling, 2015; Day and Antonakis, 2012). This change in the concept of leadership is thought to manifest itself in both the skills required to adapt to technical innovations in occupational fields and also in the competencies needed to adjust to a changing, more sceptical and faster moving society (Leitl, 2016).

As the word “competency” has many different and partly confusing definitions (Young and Dulewicz, 2009), this research uses the interpretation provided by Boyatzis (1982), who understands competencies as “an underlying characteristic of a person that may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one’s self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses” (p. 23). In addition, competencies are understood as behaviours focusing on the personal attributes of an individual that are important to him/her to perform effectively at work (CIPD, 2015).

Researchers and professionals across industries agree that leadership competencies must be considered as highly contextual components (Finkelstein, 2016), yet different ways of gathering these competencies are commonly applied. While a strong case exists for self-reported approaches (Quintana *et al.*, 2014; Rowe, 1995), the accuracy of the correlation between self- and other-reported competencies has its critics. Instead, it is argued that the competency assessments provided by others are likely to be more accurate (Emmerling and Boyatzis, 2012), which supports the approach taken in this research.

Applicability of competency frameworks in the leadership context

Competency frameworks are understood as the tools that define and set out behaviours that individuals working in a team or organisation require to facilitate a shared vision or common goal (Vazirani, 2010).

Based on the vision of an organisation, these frameworks are thought to be valuable tools for precisely defining required leadership competencies and setting clear frameworks for the behaviour expected from the people responsible for leading others (Hollenbeck *et al.*, 2006). Further, human resource researchers consider their application to be of great benefit for a transparent recruiting process and essential for assessing overall leadership performance (Torrington *et al.*, 2014, Kim and McLean, 2015).

However, if competency frameworks are applied, contemporary changes in the hypersensitive business environment, and in the understanding of effective leadership, must be incorporated (Quintana *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, competency frameworks must always be seen in the situational context of the business environment and should only be considered a guiding framework rather than an end in itself (Hollenbeck *et al.*, 2006). Both standpoints have been considered in this research.

Gender-related leadership competencies

In the context of gender and leadership, the evidence for differentiating between masculine and feminine leadership competencies is still mixed. While those debating the distinction argue that the differences found in organisational settings have been insignificant (Kaiser and Wallace, 2016; Andersen and Hansson, 2011; Eagly and Johnson, 1990), those in support of the differentiation have built a strong case around gender role differences as the main reason for perceived gender differences in leadership behaviour (Gartzia and van Engen, 2012; Eagly and Karau, 2002).

Based on the socio-psychological understanding of men as providers, masculine leadership behaviour is often associated with attributes such as assertiveness, mastery and competence (Bailey, 2014; Mendez and Busenbark, 2015), hierarchical and individualistic (Bhat and Sisodia, 2016; Festing *et al.*, 2015; Schein, 1973) or power and influence (Rudman and Kilianski, 2000). Therefore, male leaders are thought to be more assertive and decisive (Gartzia and van Engen, 2012) and driven by money and the ambition to achieve personal success (Fröhlich, 2016).

On the other hand, the societal expectations of women as mothers and caretakers lead to an association with attributes such as generative, cooperative or creative (Bhat and Sisodia, 2016).

In addition, empathic understanding that reiterates competencies such as caring, and being communal (Brescoll, 2016; Sandberg and Scovell, 2015), emotional sensitivity (Glass and Cook, 2016) or the ability to listen and help younger colleagues (Frankel, 2014), is considered a typical feminine leadership competency (Bailey, 2014; Pfeffer, 2015). In the light of the people-focused leadership definition provided by Bennis (2009), women can be seen as displaying more leader characteristics than men. This potential leadership advantage is further affirmed by women's ability to work better with others when taking the trend towards flatter and more collaborative working environments into account (Kaiser and Wallace, 2016).

These perceived differences between masculine and feminine leadership competencies are confirmed by the research on leadership styles, associating masculinity with task-oriented, autocratic and directive leadership styles and femininity with relationship-oriented, democratic and participative leadership styles (Glass and Cook, 2016; Trinidad and Normore, 2005; Oshagbemi and Gill, 2003; Rigg and Sparrow, 1994).

Based on the aforementioned arguments, this study assumes that gender differences do exist and that despite the potential leadership advantage, these lead to additional challenges for female leaders in male-dominated industries.

One of the greatest of these challenges is perceived to be the incongruity between female social roles and the stereotypes associated with effective leadership (Hoyt and Murphy, 2015; Heilman, 2001; Phelan and Rudman, 2010). This role-congruity theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002) leads to the assertion that even women with outstanding leadership qualifications are considered to be less competent leaders because, by tradition, leadership roles are associated with masculine leadership attributes (Glass and Cook, 2016; Koening *et al.*, 2011; Schein, 1975). Schein's phenomenon of "Think manager – Think male", which she identified in 1973 and which is still used today (Brands, 2015), demonstrates how deeply grounded this traditional thinking has remained over the past forty years. While this could lead to the assumption that female leaders need to act differently to their traditional gender norms, research demonstrates that these women are likely to risk negative evaluations and to be less favoured than when their male counterparts behave in the same way (Brescoll, 2012; Rudman and Glick, 2001). However, aligning with expected feminine stereotypes has been noticed to lower the chance of female leaders being given equal opportunities (Broadbridge, 2010; Sandberg and Scovell, 2015). The considered consequential effects can weaken their position in the workplace, including poorer access to professional networks (Watkins and Smith, 2014; Vinnicombe and Singh, 2002) and the additional pressure of justifying their positions as being the result of professional expertise not gender quotas (Singh *et al.*, 2015).

The current situation regarding opinions on important competencies for female leaders

Looking at the competencies required of women in leadership, it was found that female practitioners themselves consider it most important that they remain true to their behaviour and stand up for themselves because acting outside their feminine gender stereotypes would result in the loss of authenticity (Cunningham, 2015; Rosner, 2015). From the follower perspective, numerous studies have found that women were rated as being most effective when employing a feminine transformational and participatory leadership style (Rhee and Sigler, 2015; Douglas, 2012).

On the other hand, it is argued that women aiming to lead in male-dominated environments can only succeed when over-adapting to masculine leader behaviour and abandoning specific female strengths and points of view (Paustian-Underdahl *et al.*, 2014). Further, adapting to the dominating masculine behaviour is key to getting access to important so called boys' networks (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Powell, 2011). Another viewpoint

is provided by those who found that androgyny, which refers to the ability to integrate both masculine and feminine leadership competencies, is more important than adapting to masculine leadership behaviour (Gartzia and van Engen, 2012; Koenig *et al.*, 2011). Mendez and Busenbark (2015) came to the result that neither congruent nor incongruent behaviour, as related to their communal roles, increased the influence of female leaders among their male peers. In the context of this gender-related behaviour, Watkins and Smith (2014) build a strong case for women's political skills, i.e. the ability to carefully read and understand situations, affect others and look for and build upon powerful networks at work, as being important prerequisites for achieving respect in male-dominated workplaces.

Overall, these contradicting opinions not only confirm the complexity of the issue but also highlight the strong dependence of the viewpoints being taken. Consequently, the fact that most assumptions related to this issue are based on the opinions of women, about themselves or others, raised the possibility that the perspective provided by male peers could provide new, interesting points of view and opportunities for further debate. This provides the unique contribution of this study.

Research objectives

Guided by this theoretical background and the aim of developing a new perspective on leadership competencies for female leaders, the objectives of this study are:

- to critically review leadership literature on essential leadership competencies;
- to assess the competencies that male leaders consider most important for female leaders to succeed in male-dominated business environments; and
- to develop a competency framework for female leaders working in male-dominated business environments with a particular emphasis on the points of view of male leaders.

Methodology

Research philosophy

This study is concerned with exploring the leadership competencies female leaders require in their real-life leadership settings. The research with a focus on gender often has an emancipatory purpose aimed at empowering oppressed women and effecting change in reference to equality (Robson, 2011). Although gender plays a major part in this research, it does not take an emancipatory approach because the main focus is on the leadership aspect and the goal is to understand, not change, the status quo for women in male-dominated industries by considering the points of view of male leaders. Instead, the philosophical assumption underlying this research reflects a phenomenological approach. According to van Manen (2007), a context-sensitive form of interpretive inquiry, phenomenology of practice, is well suited to serve practitioners who in their day-to-day practice may be unaware of the depths and subtleties of other people's experiences. By constructing the realities related to leadership competencies with multiple perspectives based on qualitative empirical methods to gather lived experience descriptions, from which underlying patterns and structures of meaning may be drawn, a central feature of phenomenology is considered (van Manen, 2016). Phenomenology aims at retrospectively bringing to our awareness experiences we lived through to be able to reflect phenomenologically on their meanings (van Manen, 2017).

Research design and method

Because of the complexities of social realities that must be considered when developing a competency framework, the research approach must be flexible and thus a qualitative approach was adopted. As the concept of leadership competencies is a complex phenomenon and numerous standpoints and definitions exist, it was important that varying approaches and ideas are applied when interpreting the topic. Furthermore, qualitative methods have become increasingly popular in leadership research over the past years (Parry *et al.*, 2014).

To fulfil this goal and accomplish the research objectives, two research methods were used. First, a systematic literature review was conducted to identify the most important leadership competency frameworks and competencies. Established leadership competency frameworks that were considered in this research include those described by Alldredge and Nilan (2000), Bolden *et al.* (2003), Boyatzis (2008), Ruben (2000), Yoon *et al.* (2010) and Quintana *et al.* (2014).

In addition, literature was screened against individual competencies that are considered essential for senior leadership by a minimum of three different sources. The sources considered include academic journals with a particular focus on leadership (*Academy of Management Review*, *Harvard Business Review*, *International Journal of Manpower*, *International Leadership Journal*, *Leadership and Organisational Development Journal* and *The Leadership Quarterly*), as well as published work by renowned senior executives and leadership experts (W. Bennis, D. Goleman, P.F. Drucker, J.P. Kotter and V.E. Schein). The competencies were allocated to the five different competency categories based on the established leadership competency frameworks as outlined in the findings. The subsequent competency lists were then used as a guiding framework for the semi-structured interviews conducted as the second research method. Experiences of male leaders in regard to leadership competencies of female leaders were elicited by interview, which serves the purpose of gathering and exploring experiential narrative material (van Manen, 2016).

The primary data collection was used because the contemporary phenomenon of leadership and gender has been explored by focusing on the specific cases of female leaders serving in male-dominated industries. In this research, the focus was on the competencies required of female leaders by assessing the experiences of male opponents who are or were working alongside female leaders for a minimum of ten years. The rationale for exclusively interviewing male leaders instead of a mix of both genders was based on the aim to provide an analysis of a new psychological phenomenon from the perspective of one gender only that can contribute to the high number of female viewpoints already being taken on the issue.

For the purpose of this study, senior leaders from the telecommunication and ICT industry in Germany were involved. The focus on Germany was to exclude influences of any global cultural differences in leadership and gender. The telecommunication and ICT industries were chosen because both of these industries in Germany can be regarded as male leader-dominated, which is underpinned by a leader ranking published in the *Manager Magazin* (2016).

Data collection and analysis

Primary data were collected with the help of semi-structured one-to-one interviews using scaled but predominantly open questions. The semi-structured interviews enabled the researchers to guide the course of conversation with the help of pre-set questions to gather the information relevant for the study while still enabling an open conversation and allowing the interviewees to respond freely in their own words. The detailed interview schedule can be reviewed in [Appendix 2](#).

A convenience sampling approach looking for the nearest and most convenient candidates with experience in the phenomenon being researched was used, as there was a limited number of appropriate available interviewees who fulfilled the requirements of at least ten years of experience alongside female leaders in male-dominated industries.

Based on [Boyd \(2001\)](#), that ten interviews are sufficient for phenomenological research, a sample size of ten leaders, five from the telecommunication and five from the ICT industry, were selected. The interviewees included former CEOs, senior managers, managing directors and divisional heads. All participants had a leadership experience of between ten and twenty years and a minimum of ten years of working experience with female leaders. The detailed profile of interviewees is outlined in [Table I](#).

Prior to the interview, all participants were informed about the purpose of the research and a hand-out containing the researched leadership competency framework was provided to guarantee a shared basis of understanding. Participation was entirely voluntary and strict confidentiality was guaranteed. For this study, in-depth interviews with ten managers of the relevant industries were conducted and transcribed in German.

In keeping with the phenomenology, analytic methods such as thematic analysis were used to identify and reflect on meaning aspects of the phenomenon ([van Manen, 2016](#)). Thematic analysis involved line-by-line readings of transcript material analysed through qualitative content analysis based on [Mayring \(2014\)](#), a method commonly applied to the development of competency frameworks ([Smythe et al., 2014](#)) and the analysis of interviews ([Mayring, 2014](#)). The rationale for this choice was based on the belief that this method of data analysis offers a way to capture the phenomenon of what was experienced of each interview participant in his role as a male leader to provide an informative account of each experience of the phenomenon ([Moustakas, 1994](#)) ([Figure 1](#)).

A prerequisite for this approach is the definition of category dimensions and abstraction levels based on the theoretical considerations about the case and the purpose of analysis ([Mayring, 2002](#)).

In the second step, the transcribed material was allocated to the category dimensions, followed by paraphrasing relevant text phrases and narrowing them down to key

Interviewee	Industry	Position	Years of professional experience	Years of leadership experience	Years of professional experience with female leaders
1	Telecommunication	Senior manager	28	20	15
2	Telecommunication	Divisional head	20	15	14
3	Telecommunication	Freelancer, former CEO	25	17	10
4	Telecommunication	Divisional head	32	17	10
5	Telecommunication	Divisional head	25	15	10
6	ICT	Managing director	20	19.5	17
7	ICT	Divisional head	22	15	15
8	ICT	Divisional head	20	18	20
9	ICT	Divisional head	20	12	12
10	ICT	Consulting partner	19	10	10

Table I.
Profile of
interviewees

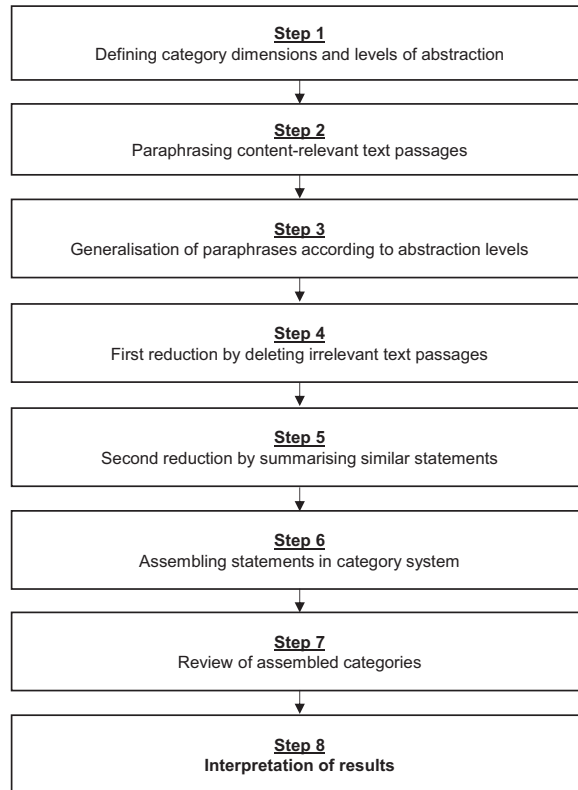


Figure 1.
Eight steps of the
content analysis after
Mayring conducted
in this research

statements. In the third step, these paraphrases were generalised with the help of the pre-defined abstraction level and then translated into English.

Within the following two reduction steps, all irrelevant statements were excluded and all similar statements were summarised. In the sixth step, the summarised statements were assembled to the pre-defined category system and carefully reviewed in step seven, followed by an interpretation of results in the final step of the analysis. The detailed categories and sub-categories that were defined within the second reduction can be reviewed in [Appendix 1](#).

Findings

Results of the systematic literature review

Based on the leadership competency frameworks considered in this research, the leadership competencies are divided in the following five categories:

- (1) analytical competencies;
- (2) communicational competencies;
- (3) organisational competencies;
- (4) personal competencies; and
- (5) professional competencies.

Analytical competencies refer to the ability to go beyond the obvious and identify patterns across complex situations by structuring issues into clear cause and impact chains (Rueder, 2014). It includes competencies such as the alertness to new opportunities, sound judgement and the ability to critically reviewing existing processes and ideas. Analytical competencies are considered essential for leaders to keep up with continuous growth and changing customer expectations (Quintana *et al.*, 2014).

Communicational competencies are defined as the ability to use language as a flexible tool to exchange information and ideas through verbal, written or body communication. For leaders, this is of particular relevance to create effective leader–follower relationships, homogenous relationships within the leadership team and the need to gain acceptance and acknowledgment as a leader (Alvinus *et al.*, 2015; Notgrass, 2014). Competencies in this category include a convincing self-expression, the ability to build networks and inspire others, empathic understanding or the ability to listen.

Organisational competencies refer to the leader's ability to head internal organisational developments and changes (Allredge and Nilan, 2000). Competencies within this category include the ability to supervise and delegate, develop others through coaching, create a shared vision and encourage innovative thinking, as well as nurture ethical behaviour and integrity.

Personal competencies include competencies such as self-confidence, self-awareness or self-discipline and can, in the context of leadership, be supplemented by a leaders ability to balance self-promotion and being humble or authenticity and self-protection. Personal competencies are not only noticed to have a significant impact on the effective execution of a leadership role from the junior to senior level (Chin *et al.*, 2016), but are also thought to be one of the most important prerequisites for getting into a leadership position in the first place (Goleman *et al.*, 2013).

Professional competencies are considered to be related to the organisational tasks a leader must perform and are therefore seen as being subject to the maturity of the organisation and the leadership level being executed (Ulrich *et al.*, 2007). Competencies of this category include business acumen, determination and persistency, adaptive capacity, the ability to take risks and use power in a positive way to assume responsibility or to negotiate effectively.

Table II summarises the competencies identified as essential for effective senior leadership in the literature review. The definitions and references for each competency are listed and a distinction between analytical, communicational, organisational, personal and professional competencies is made. This leadership competency model was provided to the male interviewees within the primary data collection as the guiding framework.

Results of interviews

Applicability of competency frameworks. The majority of interviewees thought that, in general, competency frameworks provide useful guidance and orientation for leadership behaviour for female leaders. While only two participants considered the use of competency frameworks to access leadership behaviour to be very useful, most of the respondents however doubted their practical relevance and believe that personal impressions are more relevant.

With reference to the provided competency list, all interviewees agreed that the guiding framework provided a comprehensive selection of important leadership competencies, yet four of the candidates added that their individual relevance would be subject to the context in which leadership occurs. One candidate reported an extensive use of frameworks in his

Table II.
Leadership
competency model

Competency	Definition	Resources
<i>Analytical competencies</i>		
Alertness to and creation of new opportunities	Identifying and successfully generating product, market, and geographic growth opportunities; Continually searching for ways to add value and position to the organisation for future success; Going beyond the obvious to seek out information	Aldredge and Nilan (2000), Davenport (2013), Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), Hay/McBer (1996), Quintana <i>et al.</i> (2014), Wiek <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Sound judgement without bias	Demonstrating resiliency and sound judgement in dealing with business and corporate challenges; Recognising when a decision must be made and acting in a considered and timely manner; Dealing effectively with ambiguity and learning from success and failure	Aldredge and Nilan (2000), Combe and Carrington (2015), Ruben (2000), Quintana <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Critically reviewing ideas and processes	Challenging new ideas and existing processes and assumptions and critically reviewing these against present and future market opportunities	Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Ruben (2000), Quintana <i>et al.</i> (2014)
<i>Communicational competencies</i>		
Build alliances and networks	The ability to cultivate and maintain mutually beneficial relationships and networks, both internal and external	Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Drucker (2004), Fitzsimmons <i>et al.</i> (2014), Goleman (2000), Griffith (2002), Hucke and Kepinski (2016), MacKenney (2016), Hay/McBer (1996)
Convincing self-expression	The ability to stand up for one's own position, articulate one's position and standing clearly, communicating clearly, concisely, and with appropriate simplicity	Bennis (2009), Goleman (2000), Gosling <i>et al.</i> (2012), MacKenney (2016), Nelhöver (2016), Quintana <i>et al.</i> (2014), Stone and Dillehunt (1978)
Empathic understanding and ability to listen	Inspiring trust by understanding the feelings and concerns of others and taking their perspective, and showing an active interest in their concerns; Promoting inclusiveness of all groups and appreciating differences in people's feelings	Alvares de Souza Soares (2016), Alvinus <i>et al.</i> (2015), Bennis (2009), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Cramer and Karabell (2010), Eberly and Fong (2013), Goleman (2000), Goleman <i>et al.</i> (2013), Hay/McBer (1996), Sandberg and Scovell (2015), Stone and Dillehunt (1978)
Motivate, inspire and influence	The ability to motivate, inspire and influence others with a wide range of influencing techniques	Bennett (2016), Bennis (1984), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), van Dierendonck and Driehuizen (2015), Goleman <i>et al.</i> (2013), Gosling <i>et al.</i> (2012), Hay/McBer (1996), Jones and Gosling (2015), Katz (1955), Ulrich <i>et al.</i> (2007)
<i>Organisational competencies</i>		
Supervise, delegate and share responsibility	Precise and detailed knowledge about all business processes to give precise directions while being able to delegate tasks and responsibility to others	Drucker (2004), Kotter (1990), MacKenney (2016), Hay/McBer (1996), Kanter (1989), Porath (2015), Quintana <i>et al.</i> (2014), Ruben (2000)

(continued)

Competency	Definition	Resources
Developing and challenging others through mentoring, teaching and coaching Create a shared vision	Developing the abilities of others through feedback and guidance; Promoting continuous learning and the development of oneself and others to achieve maximum potential Creating shared meaning and engaging everyone in pursuit of a common goal	Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Fenwick and Bierma (2008), Finkelstein (2016), Hay/McBer (1996), Ruben (2000), Ulrich (2016)
Ethical behaviour and Integrity	Committing to corporate values, HR principles and business conduct policies; Demonstrating integrity across diverse groups	Allredge and Nilan (2000), Bennett (2016), Bennis (2009), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Goleman (2000), Kouzes and Posner (2009), Allredge and Nilan (2000), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Hay/McBer (1996), Ruben (2000)
Nurturing innovation and innovative thinking	Creating and sustaining an environment that supports experimentation and reinforces curiosity as basis for change processes	Bennett (2016), Cramer and Karabell (2010), Goleman <i>et al.</i> (2013), Katz (1955)
<i>Personal Competencies</i> Balancing self-promotion with being humble	Promoting oneself and one's personal abilities while being humble and finding the reason for organisational success in others, not in oneself	Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Collins (2000), Fröhlich (2016), Pfeffer (2015), Zenger and Folkman (2015)
Achievement orientation Self-awareness & personal responsibility	The drive to meet an internal standard of excellence The ability to read and understand one's own emotions as well as recognise their impact on work performance and relationships; The realistic evaluation of own strengths and limitations; recognising the consequences of own decisions and actions	Bennis (2009), Goleman (2000), Jones and Gosling (2015), Bennett (2016), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Goleman <i>et al.</i> (2013), MacKenly (2016), Ruben (2000), Stone and Dillehunt (1978), Sturm <i>et al.</i> (2014), Zenger and Folkman (2015)
Self-confidence	A strong and positive sense of self-worth; Backing oneself, inspiring oneself, trusting oneself; believing that you provide value to the organisation	Bennis (2009), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Goleman (2000), Gosling <i>et al.</i> (2012), Jones and Gosling (2015), Ruben (2000), MacKenly (2016), Stone and Dillehunt (1978)
Self-discipline and self-control Balancing authenticity and self-protection	The ability to keep disruptive emotions and keep impulses under control Being one's own author and true self when leading; discovering one's own native energies and desires; Balancing openness and distance to be authentic but not vulnerable	Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Ruben (2000) Azanza <i>et al.</i> (2015), Bennis (2009), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016)

(continued)

Table II.

Female leadership competency

Table II.

Competency	Definition	Resources
<i>Professional competencies</i>		
Business acumen	The awareness of business necessities in the environment, understanding the external stakeholder requirements; The ability to read the currents of organisational life	Aldredge and Nilan (2000), Bennis (2009), Goleman (2000), Katz (1955), Hay/McBer (1996), Ruben (2000), Ulrich <i>et al.</i> (2007)
Determination and Persistence	The absolute determination to always do whatever needs to be done to achieve the best long-term results, regardless of any difficulties	Gosling <i>et al.</i> (2012), Jones and Gosling (2015), Ruben (2000)
Adaptive capacity and flexibility	The Skill to adjust to changing situations and overcoming obstacles; the ability to respond quickly and intelligently to relentless change; displaying competencies in accordance with situation	Bennett (2016), Bennis (2009), Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Goleman <i>et al.</i> (2013), Gosling <i>et al.</i> (2012), Hay/McBer (1996)
Taking risks, handling and tolerating stress	The willingness to take risks and take responsibility for them; conscious action, even in stressful situations	Bennis (2009), Gosling <i>et al.</i> (2012), Ruben (2000), Stone and Dillehunt (1978)
Using power in a positive way and assuming responsibility	The conscious use of power coming with a leadership position to protect the organisation's interests; taking responsibility for the organisation even in crisis	Chin <i>et al.</i> (2016), Demmer (2016), Gosling <i>et al.</i> (2012), Okimoto and Brescoll (2010)
Negotiating effectively	Understanding and breaking through an opponent's behavioural and argumentation structure; communicating at eye level and doing the right thing by listening	Quintana <i>et al.</i> (2014), Ruben (2000), Sandberg and Scovell (2015)

workplace for evaluation purposes and considered the one provided as covering the most important dimensions which a leader should possess (I5).

However, it was noted that all the competencies neither would be demonstrated nor would be possessed by all the leaders for their role. Further, it was stated that not all competencies can be trained and that their importance is also subject to the hierarchical position and main tasks of a leader.

Gender-related leadership competencies. In reference to a potential distinction between typically masculine and feminine leadership competencies, no uniform opinion prevails, yet the entirety of the findings allows the following distinction.

The professional competency most frequently associated with masculine leadership behaviour is determination, which was named by more than half of the interviewees. An effective use of power was considered by four interviewees, whilst three outlined stress resistance, the willingness to take risks and responsibility as typically masculine. In the range of personal competencies, self-promotion and self-confidence were associated with masculine leadership by three of the participants whilst two also outlined achievement orientation as typically masculine. Within the communicational competencies category, three of the interviewees considered the ability to build networks as male-related. It was further stated that men most likely would not consider the ability to balance self-promotion and being humble as male strengths. Instead, their ambition to make a better hit at the opposite side of the table by over-egging the pudding would lead them towards stronger self-promotion (I4).

The competencies most strongly associated with feminine leadership behaviour were those allocated to the communicational competency category. Here, empathy reached the highest consensus and was named by eight of the interviewees, yet it was considered not to be reserved for women only (I5). Four interviewees associated the ability to listen with feminine leadership behaviour whilst the ability to motivate and inspire others was mentioned by three interviewees. One candidate explicitly pointed out that both men and women do challenge others but that female leaders would be more instinctive at developing and mentoring others than their male colleagues (I4). Within the analytical competencies, the ability to critically review existing processes, find alternatives and holistic thinking were thought to be typically feminine by three of the interviewees. Within the professional competency category, determination and persistence were the only competencies referred to as feminine leadership behaviour. As direct contrast to the masculine-related competencies, the personal competency of finding a balance between self-promotion and humility was associated with feminine leadership by a number of candidates. However, it was also pointed out that in some cases being humble is likely to turn into a negative competency, as stated in the quote below:

Within self-awareness and self-responsibility women are more reflective than men. And also within the ability to balance self-promotion with being humble. However, being humble sometimes turns into something negative. (I6)

While a limited number of candidates did not want to clearly distinguish between masculine and feminine leadership behaviour, the following quote not only underpins that some competencies were related to both genders but also proves the phenomenological approach of this research:

Perseverance and persistency is what the female leaders whom I worked with have as much as the male ones. And referring to the issue of hardship, which often might be related to men, is what I experienced in female leaders just as often.

Competencies required for female leaders to succeed in male-dominated industries. The competencies male leaders considered most important for female leaders refer to the professional, communicational and personal competency categories established for this study. The answers provided are illustrated in Figure 2 with the enlarged circles highlighting competencies that have been named by several interviewees.

Within the professional competencies, professional expertise was considered most important by four of the male leaders. In addition, adaptive capacity and effective use of power were considered key by several interviewees. Three candidates explicitly named the ability to adapt to and adopt masculine behaviours as very important. They stated that women must bring a certain flexibility with regard to changing circumstances and varying internal political trends, which in a male-dominated leadership environment are likely to be led by male colleagues. The quote below underpins this extreme standpoint:

They require one specific competency, they must be able to adapt, bring a certain flexibility. This means that they have to be able to serve typical masculine behaviours. (19)

One interviewee referred to flexibility in the context of time when describing his best female colleague as very flexible in terms of managing job and family responsibilities. In addition, he pointed out being very well organised and hard working as two additional reasons for this woman's success, which both can be related to the professional competency category.

On a personal level, authenticity was mentioned as most important by half of the male leaders. Interviewees explained this by arguing that women should be able to assume a role but also remain true to themselves. On the contrary, it was also argued that female leaders should avoid slipping into a role but have a strong and balanced personality:

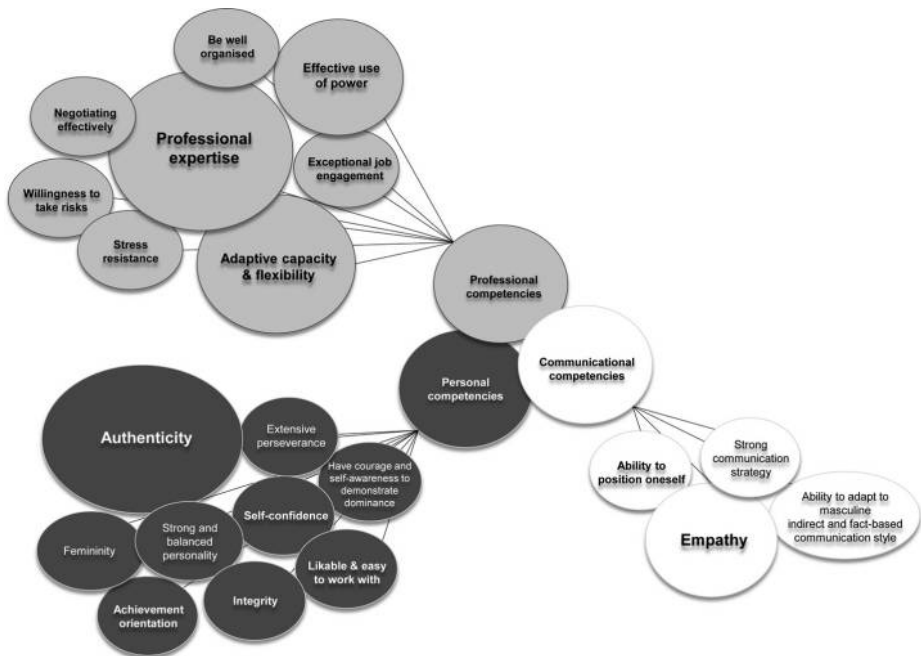


Figure 2. Competencies required of female leaders to succeed in male-dominated business environments

Therefore, in addition to her professional expertise, she should have a strong and balanced personality. This is what I mean with being authentic. Not slipping into a role but simply doing her own thing. (I6)

Coming back to authenticity, it is what I consider most important. Unfortunately, to be successful in reality, she in fact has to behave like a man. (I7)

Together with the two quotes, a high number of individual answers to this question underlines the controversy about how female leaders in male-dominated industries should behave. One interviewee considered competencies such as self-confidence and achievement orientation as key factors, whilst others argued that women require extensive perseverance, the ability to use their power effectively and to be achievement-oriented. In this context, one candidate also stated that female leaders are more likely expected to demonstrate over-fulfilment when operating in male dominances (I4).

On a communicational level, three of the male leaders considered the ability to empathise with others as very important for women to succeed in male-dominated business environments. Further, the ability to adapt to indirect masculine communication, but also deliberately apply her feminine communicational strengths was highlighted.

In addition to the competencies outlined above, it was also argued that the interpersonal level has a strong influence on a woman's success in male-dominances. The quote below provides one clear example for the importance of interpersonal-fit from the male leaders' point of view:

A woman can gain recognition on the one hand on a professional level due to exceptional expertise, and on the other hand on a personal level because it simply is fun to work with her and because she has specific character traits that one does have and the other does not. (I10)

Application of masculine and feminine leadership competencies. Based on the distinction between masculine and feminine leadership competencies, male leaders were asked whether they consider it more important for women to rely on their natural feminine competencies, or to adapt to what has been referred to as masculine leadership behaviour. Within this context, six of the interviewees considered it most important for women to be, and remain authentic, and this could include both typically male and female competencies. It was stated that female leaders were expected to remain true to themselves and that playing a role would not get them anywhere (I1). Further, one interviewee pointed out that authenticity could also be given if masculine-related competencies like willingness to take risks or power orientation were shown by female peers (I3). The following quote well describes this predominant request for authenticity from female leaders:

I consider the most important thing to remain authentic and if a woman has particularly strong feminine qualities and knows how to apply these because they are part of her personality, then she should use these strengths to achieve her goals. She should not jump through hoops and believe to have to adapt frantically and pretend to be something that she is not. (I8)

In addition to authenticity, four of the participants considered feminine competencies to be a key advantage and a "secret weapon" if women are aware of their femininity and their effect on men and can use this to their advantage. In addition, it was suggested that women should apply their feminine competencies more often.

On the other hand, it was also pointed out that feminine competencies alone might not be enough to succeed in male-dominated industries, but that certain masculine competencies were equally important for female leaders to succeed. It was also suggested that, though not a must, it would be beneficial for women to have the ability to debate on a more rational

level and step back from their feminine emotional strengths, if necessary. This ability to apply masculine leadership behaviours and be familiar with the roles men normally play was described as “homework” for a woman operating in male dominances. Whilst there would always be the option not to adapt, one candidate pointed out that the ability to do so is still important (I6). One male leader expressed a strong believe that those women who have already reached the top of organisations would have copied a lot of the competencies carried out by men to get into the position in the first place (I1). Whilst the degree of adaption to masculine behaviour varied between the differing opinions, one interviewee took on the perspective of a female leader and considered the following:

One option is to switch to the masculine side. If I were a woman, then I would try to scale back from the feminine strengths like for example empathy, keep them to myself and try to get an idea of the situation. (I5)

On the contrary to this extreme standpoint of holding back one’s feminine strengths completely, it was however also suggested that adapting too much to male behaviour could have a negative impact on a female leader’s image and her acceptance by male colleagues. Within this context, one leader argued that over-adaption could lead to the impression that the woman is too masculine, but not a real man, and therefore, she would not be totally respected within the leadership team.

Overall, it was also stated that the charm lies in the right mix and that this could include professional expertise, key feminine soft-skills and the ability to make decisions. Here, the balance between professional skills in terms of leading a meeting to results and being able to make decisions was mentioned alongside the right mix of soft skills, which can again be referred to the interpersonal and personal behaviours:

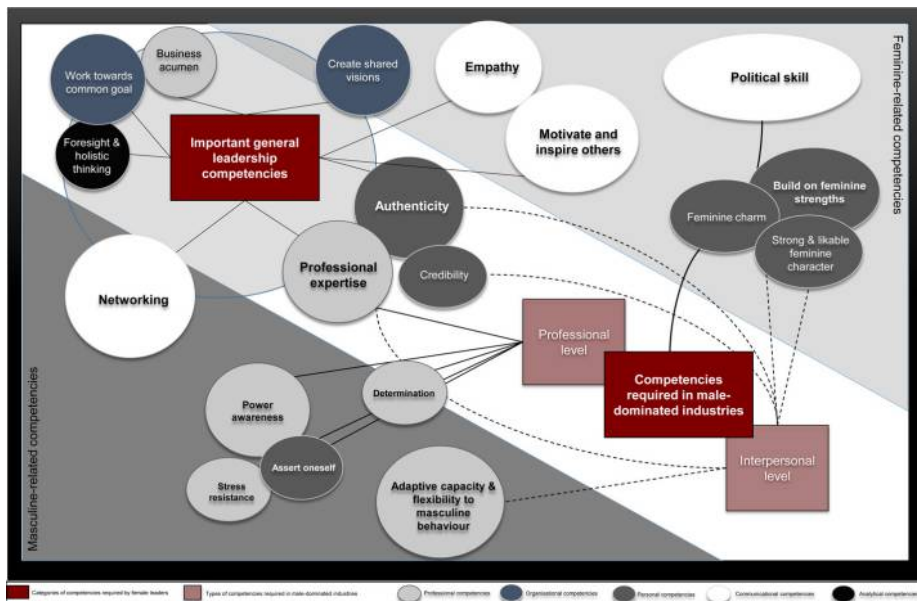
I believe that finding the right mix is key. The right mix of soft skills, professional expertise and the required willingness to make decisions [. . .]. Not holding small-talk sessions but leading meetings to a result. Then I think she has made a really good job. (I8)

Interestingly, two interviewees did not confirm that a difference even exists between masculine and feminine leadership behaviour, arguing that this would be too strongly related to non-existent clichés.

Proposed competency framework for female leaders. Based on the findings of this research, [Figure 3](#) shows the proposed competency framework that can be divided in general competencies, as well as professional and interpersonal competencies important for female leaders. The important general leadership competencies are summarised in the top left part of the white middle bar, and the lower part differentiates the particular competencies required of female leaders in male-dominated occupations between those at the professional and the interpersonal level. The competencies listed in the bottom left triangle summarise the required competencies that are considered to be more masculine-related. The competencies listed in the top right triangle summarise all the required competencies considered to be more feminine-related.

Discussion

Exploring the competencies most important for women leaders in male-dominated industries as viewed from the perspective of male leaders, provided some very interesting new insights, especially in direct contrast to the follower and female leader perspective, which have been the subject of selected studies on leadership competencies in the past ([Cunningham, 2015](#); [Mendez and Busenbark, 2015](#); [Rosner, 2015](#)).



Female leadership competency

Figure 3. Competency framework for female leaders working in male-dominated business environments based on the perspectives of male leaders

Professional considerations

The key consideration arising out of the male perspective is the need for female leaders to be and remain authentic. Authenticity, also considered one of the most important generic leadership competencies, refers to people “who are “in tune” with their basic nature and clearly and accurately see themselves and their lives” (Avolio and Gardner, 2005, p. 319). Within the context of leadership, Goffee and Jones (2015) consider authentic leaders as constantly being themselves, even if their behaviour has to be adapted in accordance to changing contexts. When applying this to female leaders in male-dominated industries, it can be assumed that male leaders expect women to remain true to what feels natural to them, even in situations that require them to adapt their behaviour. In other words, if it did not feel natural to a woman to be more self-confident, network more or be more power-oriented, she would no longer be authentic and could therefore not become an effective leader in the male-dominated business environments where these behaviours prevail.

Taking both the aspects into account allows one to assume that male leaders consider a combination of remaining authentic while also being able to adapt to masculine behaviour as being important.

Seven out of the 12 competencies named in this context, including power-orientation, the ability to assert oneself, the ability to demonstrate dominance, extensive perseverance, a strong and balanced personality, willingness to take risks and stress resistance, have been identified as associated with masculine leadership competencies. This builds a strong case for female leaders to possess masculine leadership competencies to succeed in male-dominated industries and supports the proposition that female leaders should be able to adapt, while contradicting the assumption that relying entirely on feminine strengths would suffice.

However, the fact that feminine competencies, such as the effective use of one’s femininity, sympathy and empathy, are considered important, not just by male leaders

considered in this research, but also by female leaders (Rosner, 2015) and followers (Rhee and Sigler, 2015), allows one to assume that adapting totally to masculine behaviour would be ineffective.

Instead, as can be deduced from the male leader perspective, female leaders should integrate both masculine and feminine leadership competencies. This understanding can be linked to Bem (1974) concept of androgyny as well as Corlett and Mavin (2014) understanding of identity work where the creation of multiple co-existing self-identities is considered. Although it was found that from the follower perspective, this is important for both genders (Gartzia and van Engen, 2012); this research makes this strong argument for women, as their effectiveness in male-dominated industries are thought to be significantly affected by how they are perceived by their male peers. This includes not only the competencies that men think make women competent, but also how female leaders are perceived on an interpersonal level.

Interpersonal considerations

When looking at the desired behaviour, certain masculine competencies, like persistence or the ability to demonstrate power and rigour, were valued just as much as the ability of women to step back from their emotional feminine strengths and debate on a more rational, masculine level. At the same time, it was thought to be essential not to frantically adapt to masculine behaviour, as this could cause a negative impact on a female leader's image and influence. The latter point of view confirms the research of Broadbridge (2010), where women acting as men are considered to be no longer in line with their social expectations and may attract negative reactions. In summary, according to the male leaders' opinions, it can be stated that the charm lies in the right mix between power awareness, a natural femininity and the ability to switch flexibly between masculine and feminine ways of debating.

Despite all the typically feminine competencies, which ultimately could also be applied by men, like the ability to listen and be more people-oriented, to interact on a relationship basis, to create a relaxed and trustful atmosphere or to demonstrate a higher self-awareness and self-responsibility, one competency was considered to be a "secret weapon" and is therefore given special attention, i.e. the deliberate use of one's femininity to influence men.

Some participants assumed that the sexual component between men and women would often be underestimated when analysing the interpersonal issues in mixed leadership teams. Still talking at a professional level, this would assume that these female leaders, being well aware of and knowing how to deliberately use their feminine charm, would be able to positively influence the interpersonal relationship with their male peers, and that in extreme cases, this could also affect how they are perceived as leaders. Although, this is entirely subject to the response of the male peers, this aspect should not be underrated when assessing the key competencies required of female leaders in male dominances.

In respect to the gender-related competencies, participants considered women to often lack self-confidence and the ambition to gain power, to communicate too much on an emotional level and to refuse to join networks. Interestingly, all of these competencies were also found to be critical by female leaders themselves (Wang, 2015; Rosener, 1990). Further, the reluctance to support other women was highlighted as one key issue within the female-leadership spheres, which also confirms the considerations found in the leadership literature (MacKenty, 2016; Sandberg and Scovell, 2015). This again underlines the emphasis that male leaders put on masculine leadership competencies to be important for their female peers.

Generally, making use of both key feminine and masculine competencies should include the ability to carefully read situations and anticipate when a conscious application of feminine charm may be advantageous. This understanding can be part of what [Watkins and Smith \(2014\)](#) called political skill, “the ability to understand situations, influence others, and identify and capitalise on powerful coalitions at work” (p. 207).

Summarising the interpersonal perspective, it can be assumed that the important prerequisites for a female leader to increase the probability of being liked and respected within a masculine environment include the following: the triangulation of displaying a strong yet likeable feminine character, the ability to adapt to masculine behaviours and the political skill to analyse which behaviour will be most effective. However, these assumptions depend on the context of a situation and may be valid in one situation and not another.

Correlation of professional and interpersonal considerations

A number of interpretations can be drawn from the assessment of the perspective of male leaders in this study. To be accepted on a professional level, female leaders have to demonstrate exceptional professional expertise and they must remain authentic yet display both masculine and feminine related competencies. In addition to handling interpersonal relationships, it is key that they rely on one’s feminine strengths while also adapting to masculine behaviour and having the political skill to anticipate and know when this behaviour is effective.

When reviewing what has initially been identified as behaviour relating to the traditional social role of the feminine gender, it could be suggested that this complex and highly situational combination of competencies does not exist in many female leaders. This would limit the number of women suitable for senior leadership positions within male-dominated industries and could also provide an explanation for why, despite women’s very high potential to become effective leaders from the perspective of important contemporary leadership competencies and the need for more people-focused leadership, so few women achieve leadership positions in male-dominated industries.

However, the fact that there are women (like Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF; Virginia Marie Rometty, Chairwoman, President and CEO of IBM; in Germany, Christiane Benner, Vice Chair of IG Metall; Lisa Davis, Member of the Managing Board at Siemens and Claudia Nemat, Member of the Managing Board at Deutsche Telekom) who hold senior leadership positions in male-dominated industries proves that there are women, albeit only a few, who seem to have the competencies required to overcome all the additional hurdles female leaders face when climbing to the top of male-dominated industries.

While it would be very interesting to interview the male peers of the aforementioned women about their key competencies, it can be assumed that the male perspectives evaluated in this research have provided valuable insights and allowed rigorous conclusions to be drawn regarding the competencies that are most important for female leaders in male-dominated industries.

Implications for future research

The new perspective proposed in this study has its limitations and this provides interesting opportunities for future research. To validate the value of the competency model for female leaders from a male leader perspective, more male leaders, and from different male-dominated industries could be consulted. A larger sample size will provide practical applications of the model in the recruitment of female leaders and executives in male-dominated industries.

Further, the proposed framework needs to be validated in other cultures outside of Germany and may require modification for universal acceptance. This can be achieved by assessing the perspective of male leaders in additional male-dominated industries and in different countries, which will introduce a level of generalisation and prove evidence that some competencies can be transferred across various contexts.

To apply the guiding framework for leadership competencies based on the literature review, it would also be interesting to directly compare the perspectives on the important competencies expressed by the male leaders with those of female leaders.

In addition, given that not all male interviewees confirmed the proposed difference between masculine and feminine leadership behaviour, it would be of high interest to further elaborate this opinion with the help of a larger sample size and across male and female genders.

Conclusion

In this paper, the researchers contributed to the debate why only a few women reach the top in male-dominated organisations by exploring the competencies required of female leaders working in male-dominated business environments with a particular focus on the male leaders' points of view. In addition, the researchers conducted a thorough literature review on the competencies essential for effective senior leadership, which was used as a guiding framework for the primary data collection. The study results revealed that male leaders consider a complex mix of gender-related behaviours on a professional and interpersonal level as being key to the success of female leaders in male-dominated industries. It can be concluded that women are usually expected to demonstrate exceptional and often higher professional expertise than their male peers to be respected. Further, male leaders considered authenticity and the ability to rely on one's feminine strengths, such as empathy and the ability to listen, as important for women to succeed. However, being able to adapt to masculine behaviour, such as power awareness, networking and determination, were also considered as key. In addition, getting on well at an interpersonal level was found to be a factor that greatly impacted women's success within male-dominated occupations.

The proposed competency model summarising these findings was created to enable leadership professionals, both female and male, to better understand the male leaders point of view on the complex mix of competencies expected from female leaders operating in male-dominated industries. Other than previous leadership competency models, it incorporates both the professional competencies required and expected behaviours on a personal and interpersonal level. The model provides the basis for the development of a guiding framework for female leaders and for male-dominated organisations aiming to develop strategies for the advancement of women professionals. In addition, it can be seen as a valuable tool for human resource professionals aiming to improve the recruitment process of female leaders in male-dominated professions, where not only professional expertise but persistency among male majorities are key for a woman's success. Present and future female leaders can gain interesting information that may be complementary, yet in parts controversial, to their own considerations and therefore contribute valuably to the debate on why only a few women reach the top of organisations in male-dominated industries. Whilst the model can only be seen as a starting point and must always be considered in the context of the contemporary business environment in which it was assessed, it can however be used for clearer understanding of the so far under-researched perspective of male leaders on competencies required from female leaders in male-dominated professions.

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Corresponding author

Marion Kahrens can be contacted at: marion.kahrens@t-online.de

Appendix 1

Female leadership competency

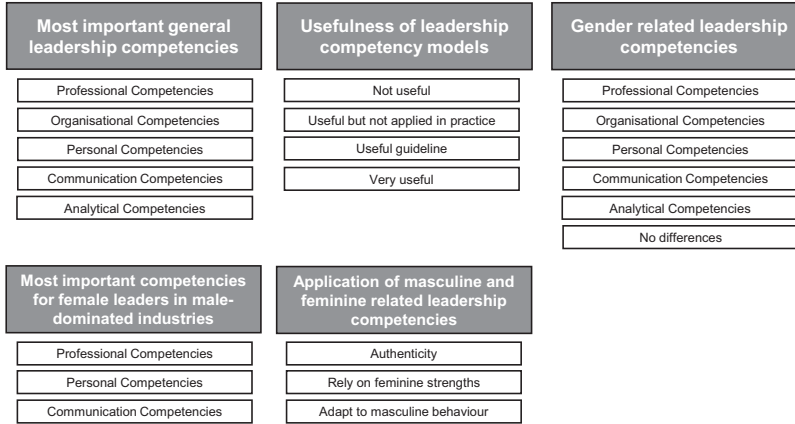


Figure A1. Categories and Sub-categories that were defined within the second reduction of content analysis

Date:	_____
Start:	_____
End:	_____

Interview phase	Question	Prompts	Probes					
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you • Introducing myself • Explaining purpose of interview • Assuring confidentiality • Asking permission to tape (According to participant information) 	<p>Profession, university, motivation for choosing my topic</p> <p>In the hand out provided in advance it has been assured that all information provided by you will be handled strictly confidential and that this interview will be recorded for the purpose of transcription. Is this all clear for you and do you still agree to the interview being recorded?</p>						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect short information about participant's profession and professional experiences 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current professional position 2. Responsibilities 3. Years of professional experience 4. Years of leadership experience 5. Female leader as peer colleague 						
<p>Warm Up Leadership competencies</p> <p>Industry specific leadership competencies</p> <p>Relevance of competency frameworks</p>	<p>1. Starting with your opinion about leadership competencies: What do you consider to be the most important competencies a leader needs to possess? Please rank the three most important competencies</p> <p>If general answer: 2. Are there any specific competencies a leader requires in your industry?</p> <p>3. To which extent do you agree that competency frameworks are a useful tool to define leadership competencies?</p> <p>If agreed: Why do you think this is good or useful tool to have in place?</p>	<p>If help is required: May I suggest you take the information that I sent you in advance, perhaps you would like to refer to the competencies I have already mentioned in the framework</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Strongly agree</td> <td>Agree</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Disagree</td> <td>Strongly disagree</td> </tr> </table> <p>- Provide (well-defined) set of behaviours required in work and clearly point out expected behaviour; make recruitment systems fairer</p> <p>- Focus on past and cannot keep up to date with rapidly-changing environments; create clones as everyone expected to behave in the same way</p>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<p>How did you come to this opinion?</p> <p>Are you answering in general or are you referring to the leadership competencies required in your industry?</p>
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree				
<p>Main body Leadership competencies and gender differences</p>	<p>4.1 I would like to shortly review the competency model that I have provided for you in advance. Do you agree to the competencies listed in the model to be key competencies for a leader?</p> <p>4.2 Do you consider any of these competencies to be a) typically masculine? b) typically feminine?</p> <p>4.3 What do you consider to be the most important leadership competencies female leaders should possess?</p>	<p>Think about your own peer female colleagues</p>						

Figure A2. Interview Schedule.

(continued)

Female leadership competency

Competencies to succeed in male-dominated industry	<p>5.1 What do you think are the key competencies women require in order to succeed in this male-dominated business environment?</p> <p>5.2 Do you think that the telecommunication/ICT industry requires any specific competencies from female leaders?</p>	If help is required: offer to refer back to the competency model prepared for the interview	<p>What exactly do you mean by this?</p> <p>Can you think of any additional competencies?</p>
Women and gender-related behaviour	6. In order to respect a woman in a leadership position, would you expect her to draw on her feminine leadership competencies or do think it is necessary for her to possess more masculine competencies?	Please feel free to give examples you have experienced with your female peers in your own business environment	Can you explain this?
Leader qualifications of women	<p>7.1 Do you think that women have certain competencies that, if used smartly, could make them particularly good or even better leaders than men?</p> <p>7.2 Can you think of competencies that you have experienced in female leaders that have stopped them from being a successful?</p>		<p>Can you explain what exactly you mean by this?</p> <p>Can you give an example?</p>
Cool-off	<p>10.1 Would you like to make any further comments on this topic?</p> <p>10.2 Can you think of any aspect of your experience about this topic that has not been covered in this interview?</p>		
Closure	I thank you very much for giving up your time to talk to me today and taking part in this interview. You have provided me with highly valuable input to my research and therefore for my university degree.		

Information about interviewee (to be collected at the beginning of the interview)

Current professional position _____

Responsibilities: _____

Years of professional experience _____

Years of leadership experience: _____

Years spent working alongside female leaders _____

Figure A2.