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WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS IN SERBIA: CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS

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Abstract: The status of women in relation to men has always been different, both in family and in business life. Through this paper, we examine the position and role of contemporary women who hold significant business positions, the difficulties and opportunities they encounter, as well as the possibilities for balancing private and professional life. Additionally, this paper compares the financial and social status of women in relation to men in the business world and analyzes the factors that influence potential differences in their positions. In order to assess all of the above, a quantitative study was conducted on a sample of 51 female respondents, with the subject of this paper being the examination of women's leadership in corporate management in Serbia, as well as the challenges and potentials women leaders face in the modern business world. The research results show that, despite the level of emancipation of contemporary women, their education, and business success, there is still a different perception of women in leadership positions compared to their male colleagues. It can also be concluded that the differences between women and men vary in intensity across different life segments, but are certainly present in almost every segment. Therefore, the demand and expectation from modern human civilization is to reduce these differences as quickly as possible and ultimately eliminate them.

Keywords: female leadership, gender equality, management, entrepreneurship

Introduction

The evolution of the role of women throughout history is complex and diverse, significantly influencing social, economic, and political changes. Through key historical periods and changes, the role of women has also evolved. Today, the role of women in society depends on many factors, including geographical location, culture, economic conditions, and political circumstances. While certain progress toward equality has been made, challenges remain to achieve full equality and respect for women's rights worldwide.

To adequately address the topic of female leadership, it is essential first to focus on the concept of leadership itself. Traditional literature has defined leadership as the character traits of strong personalities, their competencies, skills, and behaviors. However, according to Ivanović, leadership is a much broader concept than that; leadership is a flexible and interdisciplinary concept.

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Contemporary approaches to leadership emphasize a process-oriented approach, as leadership is not the activity of a single person but a series of processes and interpersonal relations that contribute to successful business outcomes (Ivanović, 2020: 4).

In modern interpretations of leadership, the focus shifts from the individual to the relationships between people. However, it should be noted that contemporary approaches align to some extent with traditional approaches, which focus on the personality and character traits of leaders. Modern approaches support the idea that personality predispositions are important, but they are not sufficient on their own for someone to be a successful leader. The impact of personality predispositions on successful leadership depends on various factors, with education, experience, reflection, and responsible work being of great significance (Ivanović, 2020: 4).

From the perspective of different theories, leadership is viewed both as a trait and as a process. The expression "born to be a leader" is often heard. This view is supported by the theory of trait leadership, according to which leaders are born, not made. In fact, for someone to be a leader, according to this theory, they must possess a set of certain personal characteristics, such as self-confidence, the desire to lead others, emotional stability, cognitive ability, etc. (Đorđević, 2019: 15). On the other hand, the process theory of leadership takes into account the shortcomings of the trait theory. According to this approach, certain personal traits are desirable, but they are not sufficient on their own for someone to be a successful leader. In fact, some learned skills, knowledge, and acquired experiences are also required (Đorđević, 2019: 16).

Despite the existence of different views and theories, certain common components can be identified, namely that leadership certainly involves processes, exerts influence, is expressed in groups, and is related to achieving specific goals. Observing the process that leaders go through in interaction with people to achieve their goals, it is clear that training and education can improve and facilitate this process (Lawlife, 2022).

An important connection to mention in the context of this paper is the relationship between leadership and organizational culture in companies. There is an unresolved debate about which comes first—whether organizational culture has a greater influence on leaders or whether leaders influence organizational culture. One can start from Edgar Schein's view, one of the most influential authors in the field of organizational culture, who states that the leader is the one who makes decisions, takes actions, and thus influences the creation of organizational culture, not the other way around.

However, organizational culture has a social character because it arises as a result of social interactions within an organization and is manifested at the collective level, not the individual level, which limits the omnipotence of the leader in its creation. If behaviors and norms defined by the leader do not prove to be effective, those aspects are most likely not adopted as part of the organizational culture. Only solutions and patterns that result in success can be adopted as desirable behaviors, norms, and beliefs, and thus become part of the organizational culture (Janićijević, 2011: 220). Therefore, it can be concluded that the influence of the leader on organizational culture is significant but certainly not the only factor that influences its creation and implementation.

When talking about female leadership, the subject of this paper, it is impossible to avoid comparisons with male leadership. Many differences between men and women are obvious, but how much of that is based on biology and how much on culture, social norms, and upbringing is hard to measure. What is



definitively a fact is that men and women are certainly not identical, either biologically or psychologically. However, biological differences are individually less important than most people believe. They become significant only through the lens of upbringing and the culture in which a child grows up (Babić, 2021).

The entry of women into high leadership positions, which were once predominantly "male" positions, has always been accompanied by various types of barriers. The first and oldest type of barrier, called the "concrete wall," was based on the belief that men should be employed and earn a living, while women should be homemakers. This was justified by the notion that the "natural order" demanded it.

In the 1970s, things began to change, as women started to participate in business life and reach certain positions, but not leadership positions at higher levels. This limitation was characterized as the "glass ceiling." This term depicted invisible barriers, transparent like glass but still solid and impenetrable. Over time, women advanced to better positions and moved to higher ranks, but only up to a certain point, which they could not surpass—the glass ceiling (Igli & Carly, 2013: 6). The second type of barrier, called the "glass ceiling," is gradually disappearing and being replaced by obstacles symbolically referred to as the "labyrinth" (Igli & Carly, 2013: 4).

As Igli and Carly (2013) note, in 2004, the American newspaper *Wall Street Journal* published an article titled "Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling," which talked about women who had succeeded in breaking that barrier and reaching high leadership positions. The "glass ceiling" was broken, but that does not mean that all paths for women were easy and accessible. In fact, the paths women take to the top got a new name—"the labyrinth." The term "labyrinth" describes the path women take to top positions—there is a path, and some women find it, but it is not simple and straightforward; it has many twists, barriers, and difficulties (Igli & Carly, 2013: 8).

The labyrinth is a path with obstacles, some of which are hidden, while others are quite obvious. Obvious obstacles primarily relate to childcare and family responsibilities, which are still largely assumed to fall on the mother or woman.

By analyzing data on the current representation of women in managerial positions in Serbia, various conclusions can be drawn. On the one hand, there is relatively high participation of women in the economy, with the development of emancipation and high achievements in education. On the other hand, patriarchal relations remain firmly rooted in the sphere of private life and family relations. Statistical data on the gender structure of university graduates show that, in 2019, more women than men completed higher education (RZS, 2019).

When it comes to employment by gender, according to 2019 data from the Republic Statistical Office of Serbia, women have a slightly lower employment rate (41.9%), while the employment rate for men is higher (56.6%). From the same sources, it is also available that the average salary for men, according to 2020 statistics, is about 11% higher than that of women (RZS, 2019).

Regarding women's participation in managerial positions, management teams and boards of directors of leading Serbian companies have increased the presence of women, according to a study by the Kotrugli Business School, conducted on a representative sample of the largest companies in eight countries of the region.

"A large number of initiatives aimed at raising awareness about gender equality and non-discrimination against women in various spheres of life and business have contributed to the increased number of women in top positions in leading Serbian companies," the researchers from Kotrugli note, who



conducted the research in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Romania, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria (Bizlife, 2023).

An analysis of the boards of directors of the largest Serbian companies shows that the average percentage of women in top positions is 27.25%. Significantly weaker results were recorded in other countries of the region, where fewer women are "at the top," including Croatia (16.56%), Bulgaria (16.95%), Romania (17.5%), Slovenia (18.56%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (19.86%), and Montenegro (20.77%) (Bizlife, 2023).

Only North Macedonia has a better result than Serbia, which also records the best regional result, with 33.98% of women on the boards of directors of the largest Macedonian companies ranked by market capitalization.

Through this paper, it will be shown that, despite all the obstacles and challenges, women, in many cases, succeed in standing equally with men in the business world and even being more successful. The goal of this paper is to examine the relationship between the demographic characteristics and business experience of the respondents, and then the relationship between business position, age, and work experience of the respondents regarding the obstacles they consider to be the greatest challenges on their path to leadership.

Materials and Methods

To assess the situation, position, and status of women leaders in Serbia, we conducted a quantitative study with a sample of 51 respondents. The research was carried out using a pre-prepared questionnaire, and the following section will present the methodological framework, the research results, and their analysis.

The subject of this paper is the examination of women's leadership in corporate management in Serbia, as well as the challenges and potential faced by women leaders in the modern business world.

The hypotheses we start with are:

H₀: There is a statistically significant difference between the demographic characteristics of respondents and their experience in advancing within the corporate sector.

H₁: There is a statistically significant difference between the positions held by the respondents and the obstacles they consider the greatest challenges in reaching high leadership positions.

H₂: There is a statistically significant difference between the respondents' ages and the obstacles they perceive as the greatest challenges in attaining high leadership positions.

H₃: There is a statistically significant difference between the respondents' years of work experience in their current positions and the educational programs they consider most beneficial for their advancement to high-level positions within the organization.

The primary research method used to assess the situation, position, and status of women leaders in Serbia involves statistical analysis of the results through a survey conducted on a sample of 51 respondents.

The instrument utilized for this research technique was a pre-prepared questionnaire comprising 19 questions. The first part of the questionnaire collected general data on the respondents' age, education,



position, and work experience. In the subsequent section, questions and answers provided insights into their views on the status of women in the business world, their position relative to men, and similar topics. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive methods were applied in data analysis, while the chi-square method was used to confirm the stated hypotheses.

The research was conducted in March 2024 in Serbia on a sample of 51 respondents, gathering fundamental data and information about women in middle or senior management positions and women entrepreneurs.

Among the 51 respondents, the majority (49%) were aged 25–30 years, followed by 29.4% aged 31–40 years, 17.6% aged 41–50 years, and 4% aged 51–60 years.

Regarding the respondents' educational levels, the largest group (68.6%) comprised women with higher education, followed by 29.4% with postgraduate, specialist, or doctoral degrees, and a small minority (2%) with secondary education. Given that the research focused on women holding managerial positions, it is unsurprising that no respondents had only an elementary education.

Most respondents (41.2%) currently hold middle management positions in their respective companies, while equal proportions (29.4% each) are in senior management or are entrepreneurs.

Results

This section presents the research findings, the conclusions derived from the results, and an analysis of the initial hypotheses.

When asked to evaluate the representation of women in high-level leadership positions within their industries on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates very low and 5 very high representation), the largest percentage of respondents (37.3%) gave a score of 3, indicating moderate representation, while the smallest percentage assigned a score of 1, reflecting very low representation. This suggests a relatively favorable positioning of women in high leadership roles in Serbia.

Most respondents (52%) identified achieving work-life balance as the greatest challenge and obstacle for women aspiring to high leadership positions. This was followed by workplace discrimination and stereotypes about women's roles in the business world (28%) and a lack of mentoring support and professional development opportunities (18%). Regarding the effectiveness of female leaders compared to male leaders, most respondents (54.9%) believed female leaders are equally effective, while 41.2% considered them even more effective than their male counterparts. Only 3.9% thought women are less effective as leaders.

A significant 78.4% of respondents observed differences in how the success of women and men in identical roles is evaluated. Among those who noted such differences, the most common reason cited was a workplace culture that often supports gender stereotypes (48.8%). This was followed by a lack of parity in recognizing achievements between women and men in identical roles (31.7%), and unclear criteria that favor one gender (19.5%). For those who believed there is no difference in evaluating the success of men and women, the reasons given were equally divided (38.5% each) between the belief that success is assessed equally regardless of gender and that evaluation criteria are identical for both genders. A smaller percentage (23.1%) credited clear and transparent evaluation processes that do not favor any gender.



A large majority (68.6%) felt there is sufficient progress toward achieving gender equality in their workplaces, indicating an improving status for women in the business world. Among respondents who answered negatively, the majority (41.2%) cited unequal career advancement opportunities for women and men. This was followed by insufficient support (29.4%) and gender-based discrimination (23.5%).

For supporting women's leadership, respondents found training in communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills (38%) and mentorship programs for leadership development (34%) to be the most beneficial. Fewer respondents favored programs on work-life balance (18%) and career planning and time management workshops (10%).

When asked how stereotypes and biases affect the perception of women's leadership on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates a very negative and 5 a very positive impact), the majority (35.3%) rated the impact as 2. Only 7.8% assigned ratings of 4 or 5, reflecting a positive impact. A significant 58.8% of respondents believed there are insufficient resources and programs for the education and professional development of female leaders in Serbia.

Among those who identified a lack of resources, the main reason cited was insufficient financial support for women's leadership education (45.2%), followed by the low visibility of leadership support programs (32.3%) and the lack of mentorship programs (22.6%).

In terms of measures to enhance women's leadership, the most popular suggestions were ensuring salary transparency (33.3%), developing mentorship programs (27.5%), implementing legal measures to increase women's participation in political and public life (21.6%), and organizing leadership skills training for women (15.7%). A small percentage (1.9%) advocated for implementing all these measures. Finally, the concluding question revealed an overall positive sentiment, with the majority of respondents (37.3%) rating their work environment as very supportive, while only 2% found it very unsupportive.

Overall, the research suggests that while the role of women in the business world, particularly in high leadership positions, remains somewhat ambiguous, significant improvements have been observed compared to a few years ago. However, there is still substantial room for further progress.

The Impact of Demographic Characteristics and Respondents' Attitudes on Their Experience in Advancing within the Corporate Sector

Statistically significant differences in the challenges perceived as the greatest obstacles to reaching high leadership positions (workplace discrimination and stereotypes about women's roles in the business world/lack of mentoring support and professional development opportunities/difficulties in achieving work-life balance/other) among respondents in different positions (senior management/middle management/entrepreneurs) were examined using the χ^2 test and are presented in Table 1..

Table 1: Differences in Obstacles to Achieving High Leadership Positions Among Respondents in Different Positions

Variables	χ^2	df	p
The method of evaluating the success of women and men in the same positions	3,328	6	0,767



Statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$) were not found between the obstacles perceived as the greatest challenge on the path to high leadership positions and the respondents' positions ($\chi^2 = 3.328$; $df = 2$; $p = 0.247$). There is no difference in the selection of obstacles identified as the greatest challenge on the path to high leadership positions among respondents in different positions.

Based on this result, we can conclude that the first hypothesis (There is a statistically significant difference between the position of the respondents and the obstacles they perceive as the greatest challenge on the path to high leadership positions) is not confirmed.

A χ^2 test was conducted to examine whether statistically significant differences exist in the obstacles perceived as the greatest challenge on the path to high leadership positions (discrimination in the workplace and stereotypes about women's roles in the business world/lack of mentoring support and opportunities for professional development/problems achieving work-life balance/other) among respondents of different age groups (25–30 years / 31–40 years / 41–50 years / 51–60 years) (Table 2).

Table 2: Differences in Obstacles to High Leadership Positions Among Respondents of Different Age Groups

Variables	χ^2	df	p
The Method of Evaluating the Success of Women and Men in the Same Positions	5,964	9	0,744

No statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$) were found between the obstacles that respondents consider to be the greatest challenge on their way to high leadership positions and the age of the respondents ($\chi^2 = 5.964$; $df = 9$; $p = 0.744$). There is no difference in the selection of obstacles considered the greatest challenge on the way to high leadership positions among respondents of different ages. Based on this result, we can conclude that the second hypothesis (There is a statistically significant difference between the age of respondents and the obstacles they consider the greatest challenge on their way to high leadership positions) was not confirmed.

Statistically significant differences in the assessment of the usefulness of various types of educational programs for supporting female leadership (mentoring programs for the development of female leadership/workshops on career planning and time management/training on communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills/education on balancing work and private life/other) were tested using the χ^2 test and are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Differences in the Assessment of the Usefulness of Different Types of Educational Programs for Supporting Female Leadership Between Respondents with Different Years of Work Experience in the Current Position

Variables	χ^2	df	p
The method of assessing the success of women and men in the same positions.	19,326	9	0,023

* $p < 0,05$



Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found in the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs for supporting female leadership and the number of years of work experience in the current position ($\chi^2 = 19.326$; $df = 9$; $p = 0.023$). In the group of respondents with up to 5 years of work experience in their current position, 14 respondents (42.4%) selected communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills training as the most useful, 13 respondents (39.4%) chose mentoring programs for developing female leadership, 4 respondents (12.1%) selected career planning workshops, and 2 respondents (6.1%) chose education on balancing work and private life. Among respondents with up to 10 years, up to 15 years, and up to 20 years of work experience in their current position, there were no differences in the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs.

Based on this result, we can conclude that the third hypothesis (There is a statistically significant difference between the number of years of work experience of the respondents in their current position and the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs for supporting female leadership) has been confirmed.

Discussions

The research we conducted aimed to examine the position and status of female leaders in Serbia.

The first hypothesis we tested in this study assumes that there is a statistically significant difference between the position held by the respondents (senior management/middle management/entrepreneur) and the obstacles they consider the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions (workplace discrimination and stereotypes about the role of women in the business world/lack of mentorship support and opportunities for professional development/problems in achieving work-life balance/other). Statistically significant differences were not found between the obstacles considered the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions and the respondents' positions. There was no difference in the choice of obstacles considered the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions among respondents in different positions. The hypothesis stating that there is a statistically significant difference between the position held by the respondents and the obstacles they consider the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions was not confirmed.

The second hypothesis predicts that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents' age and the obstacles they consider the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions (workplace discrimination and stereotypes about the role of women in the business world/lack of mentorship support and opportunities for professional development/problems in achieving work-life balance/other). No statistically significant difference was found in the obstacles considered the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions based on the respondents' age. There was no difference in the choice of obstacles considered the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions among respondents of different ages. The hypothesis stating that there is a statistically significant difference between the respondents' age and the obstacles they consider the biggest challenges on the path to high leadership positions was not confirmed.

The third hypothesis we tested in this study assumes that there is a statistically significant difference between the number of years of work experience of the respondents in their current position and the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs for supporting female leadership



(mentoring programs for developing female leadership/career planning and time management workshops/training in communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills/education on work-life balance/other). In this case, statistically significant differences were found in the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs for supporting female leadership and the number of years of work experience in the current position. In the group of respondents with up to 5 years of work experience in their current position, the majority selected training in communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills as the most useful. Among respondents with work experience in the other categories, there were no differences in the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs. The hypothesis stating that there is a statistically significant difference between the number of years of work experience of the respondents in their current position and the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs for supporting female leadership was confirmed.

Based on the results obtained, we can conclude that the null hypothesis of the entire research, which assumes that there is a statistically significant difference between the demographic characteristics of the respondents in relation to their experience in advancing in the corporate sector, is partially confirmed.

When comparing the results of our research, conducted for the purpose of this study, with McKinsey's "Women in the Workplace 2023" research (McKinsey, 2023), we can find some similar conclusions, as well as certain differences. Namely, McKinsey has been conducting research on the position of women in the workplace in the U.S. and Canada for the past nine years.

According to our research, the largest number of respondents assessed the representation of women in high leadership positions with an average score. According to the "Women in the Workplace 2023" research, depending on the management level, the representation of women in the management structure varies but is still quite high (Field et al, 2024). One common conclusion of both our and the foreign research is that positive changes in women's representation do exist, but they are rather slow. As shown in Figure 1, in the past five years, the percentage of women in managerial positions has increased at all levels of management.

	Entry level	Manager	Senior manager/ director	Vice president	Senior vice president	C-suite
Total women, 2023	48	40	36	33	27	28
Total women, 2018	48	38	34	29	23	22
5-year percentage-point change	0	2	2	4	4	6

Figure 1. Women's Representation at Different Management Levels (%) (Field et al, 2024)

The research "Women in the Workplace 2023" (Field et al, 2024) also disproves certain myths related to women in the workplace. Our research confirms that stereotypes and prejudices about women at work do exist and negatively impact women's business positions and career advancement.

The first myth, debunked by the American study, is the belief that "women lose ambition" to advance in their careers. According to this research, an identical percentage of women and men (80% each) have the



desire to advance at work. This attitude is also present among the participants in our study, as the majority of respondents (almost 60%) believe that there are not enough resources and programs for the education and professional development of female leaders in our country. This demonstrates their desire for advancement and education.

The second myth addressed by foreign research relates to the belief that workplace flexibility is exclusively a woman's issue and need. However, this myth was debunked by the fact that men are increasingly participating in family life, household chores, and child-rearing and that workplace flexibility is also important to them. If we relate this topic to our research, as many as 52% of respondents believe that the biggest obstacle to women's advancement is the difficulty of balancing personal and professional life, which can be interpreted as a fact that, in our country, this is not a myth, but rather that a larger share of private and family obligations falls on women. Nevertheless, despite this, 55% believe that female leaders are just as successful as their male colleagues.

The third myth, somewhat debunked by last year's American research, is that the "glass ceiling" is still the biggest obstacle to women's advancement in the business world. The research data shows that for every 100 men who advance, 87 women advance. There is a difference, but it is not dramatic, so a significant number of women are able to break through the glass ceiling. Our research shows that over 68% of respondents believe sufficient progress has been made toward achieving gender equality, although, of course, there is still room for further progress.

The final myth addressed by the American research concerns the belief that "microaggressions do not matter." These refer to everyday, "small" forms of insults, devaluation, or other forms of aggression, which many tend to downplay, saying they are not that serious or important, but if they occur frequently, they can certainly be the cause of someone feeling bad in their work environment. This research shows that women are 1.5 to 2 times more likely to experience these forms of aggression than men. Additionally, there is a 3.3 times greater likelihood that women will consider leaving their workplace due to these unpleasant experiences, and a 4.2 times greater likelihood that they will feel "burned out" at work. In our country, according to the results of our research, only 2% of respondents rated their work environment as very hostile, while the largest percentage (37%) rated their work environment as very friendly.

By comparing our research with the American study, it can be concluded that there are certain similar conclusions, but also certain differences, which are likely related to culture, mentality, and different perspectives on family and social relations.

Conclusions

With the development of human civilization, the role of women in society has also evolved. From the basic and natural role of mother and homemaker, women have fought for their political and work rights, and today they stand almost equally with men in social life.

Human society has indeed moved significantly towards gender equality, in political, economic, and business terms. It is now quite acceptable not only for women to work but also to be the greatest leaders in their fields. However, the woman's role in the household still remains her responsibility, and women are expected to fulfill it. This is perhaps the main reason why more women are not in key leadership positions,



and why, on a global level, women in our country still earn less and have lower employment rates than men.

However, even when women manage to balance their personal and professional lives and become serious leaders in their careers, they continue to face a series of challenges. Due to entrenched ways of thinking and attitudes toward women, there is often a different relationship between subordinates toward a female leader compared to a male leader.

The subject of this work was female leadership in corporate management in Serbia, as well as the challenges and potential that female leaders face in the modern business world. The research conducted aimed to determine whether there are differences between the positions of the respondents in the corporation and their age (separately) and the obstacles they consider the greatest challenge on the way to high leadership positions. We also examined differences in the assessment of the usefulness of various educational programs supporting female leadership between respondents with different years of experience in their current positions.

Based on the results of the research, the following conclusions were drawn. First of all, there is no difference in the choice of obstacles considered the greatest challenge to reaching high leadership positions among respondents in senior management, middle management, and female entrepreneurs.

The next conclusion is that there is no difference in the choice of obstacles considered the greatest challenge to reaching high leadership positions among respondents of different ages.

Finally, it can be concluded that there are differences in the assessment of the usefulness of different types of educational programs supporting female leadership. The largest number of respondents in this group selected communication, negotiation, and decision-making skills training as the most useful, while the smallest number chose training on balancing work and personal life as the most useful.

The research we conducted was small, and the cause was specific. Therefore, the results obtained in our research cannot be generalized to the entire population of female leaders in the Republic of Serbia because this research covered a small number of respondents. Further research is needed, and the number of respondents should be increased in order to obtain more reliable data that could be generalized to a broader population. Ideally, this type of quantitative research should be combined with qualitative research (for example, focus groups) to obtain more precise data that may be specific to our culture.

As a final impression, it can be said that the biggest obstacle to women's professional advancement is identified as the problem of establishing a balance between personal and professional life, or achieving all family obligations and household responsibilities, on the one hand, and professional development, on the other. Therefore, the fight for gender equality continues, not only through greater participation of women in business life but also through greater participation of men in family life. Significant progress has been made in the consciousness of our people, evident in the increasing number of women in the police and military services, as well as in important state functions, but also in the growing role of men in family responsibilities.

However, the achievement of full gender equality is an ongoing process, through which many generations must gradually pass for this way of thinking to truly take root in people's minds. Therefore, every form of support for this equality is important, from institutional and legal frameworks to the support of women within their families and circles of friends.



Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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