

# CHALLENGES OF WOMEN LEADERS IN FEMALE AND MALE DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The article presents the results of research revealing the challenges faced by women leaders during their career in public administration and business organisations and highlighting the peculiarities of women's experience in female and male dominated occupation areas. The study has shown that that stereotypes still do not disappear despite legislative institutionalization of gender equality in professional career. In most cases, women face constraints such as widespread stereotypes in society, negative attitudes of colleagues and behaviour related to that, doubts of women-leaders themselves about their opportunities, and conflict between family and work roles.

**Keywords:** women's leadership; gender equality; male and female dominated occupation; stereotypes; leadership challenges; public administration organizations; business organizations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A gender role is defined as a behaviour that is learned in a particular society or community (Rakauskienė, Štreimikienė, Žalėnienė, Kiaušienė, Lisauskaitė & Krinickienė 2014). A person's accepted gender role can determine his choices, commitments, and responsibilities as well as attitudes towards men and women in general. Due to the historically and culturally established different gender roles, the position and opportunities for women and men in a labour market are uneven. While gender equality is ensured at supranational level (e.g., European commission, 2010b), the situation of women in the labour market remains fairly discriminated (Dromantaitė-Stancikienė & Gineitienė, 2010). Women make up almost a half of the workforce and that more than half of all university graduates in the EU are women. Despite of that, participation of women in supreme bodies of decision-making in many member states is still low. Taking an

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example of Lithuania, one woman and 10 men were elected to the European Parliament in 2014, 30 women and 111 men were elected to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, and only one of Lithuania's 14 ministries is led by a woman in 2020. Based on the Gender Equality Index (2019), between 2005 and 2017, progress towards gender equality did not improve in Lithuania.

A gender disbalance in Lithuania can be well illustrated by the context. For example, in 2016, the public administration sector employed 76.8% of women and only 23.2% of men (*Women and Men in Lithuania*, 2017). As it can be seen, the public administration institutions can reasonably be called female-dominated activity area.

In general, across all the Europe there are different sectors, in which of them men or women are more likely to work. Women work more often in education and health sectors, but far less in science, engineering, and technology areas. As European Commission states, nearly 60% of EU university graduates are women, but they account for less than 33% of scientists and engineers across Europe (European Commission, 2010a). Recent studies show that the situation is even getting worse. The European Economic and Social Committee notes that despite their higher educational achievement, women face various obstacles to career advancement in certain male-dominated sectors, such as engineering and technology (Official Journal of the European Union, 2019). Even if some girl-students opt for science, engineering, and mathematics, only 10% of women subsequently pursue careers in these fields. Meanwhile, men's shortages in education, health care and social services are gaining alarming proportions as women represent nearly 80% of the total workforce in education, health and welfare organizations. The European Economic and Social Committee calls for awareness-raising campaigns at EU and national levels of government to encourage women to pursue careers in technology and engineering and men - in female-dominated occupations, professions and other work areas.

In the European Union (EU), equal opportunities for men and women are ensured at a policy level, e.g. European pillar of social rights (2017); Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010a), as well as at Member State level. For example, the Law on Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos lygių galimybių įstatymas, 2003) emphasizes that the employer has a duty to implement equal opportunities in employment, civil service, irrespective of gender, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion.

However, as far as also leadership is concerned in mentioned legislative documents, leadership positions as a rule are occupied by men, moreover, men generally more often occupy higher career positions than women (Andrikienė & Vaičiūnienė, 2016; Ellemers, 2018). In terms of career, the closest to the gender equality are only a few countries: Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Men are more likely to hold higher positions than women in the EU in general. In the EU, only 34% of managers were women in 2017 (*Moteryų ir vyrų gyvenimas Europoje. Statistinis portretas*, 2018). However, the disproportion between women and men among the leaders of organisations is not beneficial. Beeson and Valerio (2012) claim that a woman leader may be one of the reasons for improved performance of organisation.

It is important to note that there is disagreement among the scientists whether there are objective differences between women and men in leadership. Upholders of the one approach argue that differences, even if they are detected, are determined not by gender, but by group characteristics,

organizational environment, etc. (Foels, Driskell, Mullen & Salas, 2000; Kanter, 1977). However, supporters of another approach try to formulate the different characteristics of leaders depending on gender (e.g., Riggio, 2008; Helgesen, 1990, Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Some authors criticize this view by providing evidence that different behaviour of men and women is most affected by the environment in which women and men form their own identity and learn social roles (e.g., Šilingienė, 2012; Petruškevičius & Bakanauskienė, 2014; Diskienė & Jaškevičiūtė, 2017). And if the discussions of the men leaders of the organizations with regard to the women leaders can be explained by the aim of facilitating themselves to win in the competitive struggle, the researchers' disagreement on gender leadership unquestionably shows that the medium for imagination and stereotypes is still thriving. Gender stereotypes are changing over time, and women are increasingly combining the bond between career and family (Endendijk, Derks & Mesman, 2018), however, observing the trends of the problem's change is relevant. Thus, with the help of research, we are aiming to contribute to positioning and deepening understanding of the career paths of modern women in Europe.

Hence, the purpose of the article is to reveal and compare the most important constraints of women's leadership in Lithuania in male and female-dominated occupation areas. The research is based on the results of a survey filled out by women-managers representing public administration and business organizations. As Lithuania is a member of the EU, the results of our research and experience of Lithuanian women-leaders may be of interest to gender researchers and social policy stakeholders in around the world.

Male and female dominated industries, professions and occupations are those that comprise 25% or fewer women (Campuzano, 2019). We defined those areas according to reports of the Institute for Women's Policy Research (Hegewisch, Phil & Williams-Baron, 2018; Hegewisch, Phil & Tesfaselassie, 2019) and data of World Health Organization (2019). To gather the research data, 36 women, who hold formal managerial positions in public administration or business organizations for no less than 3 years, were given to the survey.

The article is composed as follows: the literature analysis section investigates the problem of gender stereotypes and women's leadership, further - the empirical research methodology, the research results are presented in the third section, and the conclusions of the study are presented at the end of the article.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Women's career equality is defined as the phenomenon of how women have equal access to career advancement compared to men. Studies show that, despite many efforts to increase gender equality in the European Union, there is still gender discrimination (Barbieri, Franklin, Janeckova, Karu, Lelleri, Riobóo Lestón, Luminari, Madarova, Maxwell, Mollard, Osila, Paats, Reingardė & Salanauskaitė, 2017) and there are stereotypical attitudes that reflect women's limited career opportunities (Radović-Marković, Nelson-Porter & Grozdanic, 2013; Kollmayer, Schober & Spiel, 2018; Kossek, Su & Wu, 2016). Also, in the USA, only 6.6% of women work full-time in male-dominated areas (Hegewisch et al., 2018). And while it has been proved that stereotypical beliefs about professional roles are harmful and lead to lower productivity (Mollie, 2017; Ramaci, Pellerone, Ledda, Prest, Squatrito, & Rapisarda, 2017), it is become clear that

scientific research is not relied on frequently in practice. According to the leadership studies and career consultation NGO *Catalyst* data, through the period of the 1972-2018, there have been 73 individual women in Fortune 500 CEO roles in total (Catalyst, 2020).

Historically, the division of labour by gender in the modern economy has for some time now been subject to strict forms, as evidenced by horizontal and vertical market segregation. Clear male and female occupations and activity sectors have formed, dominated by single gender (Mažeikienė & Dorelaitienė, 2012). For example, in EU member Lithuania, according to the data of the Department of Statistics in 2016, the most feminine area of economic activity was health care and social work, where women made up 85.3% of all employees, as well as accommodation and catering services - 78.8%, education - 78, 7%. The most masculine economic activities were construction (90.6%) and transport and storage (75%) (*Women and Men in Lithuania*, 2017). Other studies confirm that around the globe, feminine profession areas are considered to be education, health care, social and community services (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009).

As far as leadership is concerned, it is noteworthy that women are successful in the middle management positions, but men continue to dominate executive positions around the world, while women leaders dominate the human resources and health sectors (Schwanke, 2013). In addition, the leadership position for women is usually entrusted in their older age (Belasen, 2017). It is astonishing that while women exceed men by education their career in science, technology, engineering and mathematics are still stereotypically falling into masculine work area. Only 14 percent of the top 200 universities are run by women (Bothwell, 2017). Janušauskienė (2016), analysing discrimination against female researchers in pursuit of their careers, argues that the most common obstacles are the underestimation of the scientists' competence, their devaluation as equivalent partners, disdainful view towards them from male colleagues, loading them with additional technical type tasks and the "maternity wall" - professional activity and career limitations when a woman becomes a mother. It has to be admitted that stereotypical attitudes are nevertheless gradually disappearing among younger people (Barth, Kim, Eno, & Guadagno, 2018).

Women in different countries and cultures spend more time in household activities than men, regardless of their employment status (Bureau of Labor Staistic, 2018). Olsson and Martiny (2018) note that this is due to the fact that for a long time, state and public decisions have influenced the formation of stereotypical gender models. In this way, false beliefs became established even in the self-perception of women themselves. Often women themselves believe in stereotypes and behave accordingly (Appelbaum, Steven, Audet & Miller, 2003).

It has been noticed that different attitudes and patterns of behaviour between boys and girls are being formed already early on in the family. For example, girls in the family are less encouraged by early aspirations for independence than boys, and this can affect girls' independence, self-confidence and career orientation. The impact of parenting on the child is emphasized in many studies. Sandberg and Scovell (2013) note that the girl who is trying to lead is often described as instructing. This is rarely told about boys because it does not surprise and does not hurt if the boy takes the lead. According to Šilingienė (2012), a strong relationship with the father in childhood leads the girl to take over the traditionally "masculine" characteristics: tendency to lead, desire to win, orientation to the task, satisfaction with the competition and tendency to risk. Girls who grow in female environment are usually limited in these respects. Research by Reingardienė

(2004) showed that firstborn women dominate among careerist women, especially in “male” occupations.

Consequently, changing the attitudes, established in society is also complicated by the attitude of women themselves to their career opportunities. Because of that, as Žukauskienė and Šakalytė (2003) notes in their study, women tend to expect less professional success than men when choosing typical “masculine” professions. On the other hand, it can be noticed that female leaders make mistakes when denying stereotypes or vice versa by over-exploiting their “feminine” weaknesses (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2013). Stereotypes related to the roles of women and men give the impression that women's professional achievements are limited by their low self-confidence, fear of failure, poor decision-making abilities, need for dependence, and poor knowledge of the functioning norms of the organization. As a result, women need to put more effort than men in order to be leaders and learn to distance themselves from the attitude towards leadership that is unfavourable for women (Eagly & Carli 2003).

Authors observe (e.g. Northouse, 2009; Lavassani & Movahedi, 2014) observes, that women's career is complicated by the fact that they have to pause or terminate their job because of the childbirth and later on they have a conflict between work and family, which creates circumstances in which women return to the lower occupations, abandon the journey of the leadership and have less self-improvement opportunities than men.

In summary, because of the differences in society's attitudes towards gender roles, because of the stereotypes that are fortified in families, and women's own attitudes towards their and other women's careers, make it very difficult for women to climb up the career ladder and take up managerial positions.

### **3. METHDOLOGY**

The purpose of the survey was to empirically validate what factors influence women's leadership. Data was collected by a written survey method. The problem of leadership was addressed through subjective experience of women who hold formal managerial positions in public administration or business organization.

The recommended sample size for qualitative research varies between 5 and 30 subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). To ensure information gathering and to obtain data from the required number of fully and qualitatively completed questionnaires, a larger number of respondents were interviewed. So finally, 36 respondents participated in the study, of which all were women. 19 and 17 respondents represented public administration organizations and business organisations accordingly. Respondents were purposefully selected within the three main criteria for selecting respondents: 1) manager's duties; 2) work experience in management positions; 3) sector of organisation's activity. Respondents were chosen who 1) had the manager's position in not lower than in the middle of the organization's job position hierarchy; 2) has at least 3 years of managerial work experience; 3) represents an organisation in public administration or business sector. The selection does not include nongovernmental organizations (NGO) as there can be found relatively few organisations traditionally attributed to male-dominated occupations.

All women who participated in the study have a degree in higher education. No data on the age, family status and children of the respondents were collected during the survey. By this decision, the authors of the research ensured that a) no excessive personal data will be collected; b) respondents would feel as comfortable as possible.

The collected survey data was depersonalized with the help of e-survey mean “pollmill.com”. Respondents were provided with identification codes according the date and time of filling the survey. Then, answers to our questions were analysed and grouped by theme and subtheme which are called here as topic and subtopic.

Scientific sources distinguish between male and female dominated activities within organisations (Seaton, Bottorff, Oliffe, Medhurst, & DeLeenheer, 2019). Mental health promotion in male-dominated workplaces: Perspectives of., 2019; Judson, Ross & Glassmeyer, 2019; Forkuor, Buari & Aheto, 2019. Moreover, according to Py, Lapan and Tate (2004), realistic professions are usually considered masculine, and social and artistic professions are traditionally considered feminine. Therefore, in the first survey question, the respondents were asked what they thought about the division of professions into feminine and masculine, and in the second question the respondents were asked to take their represented organisation’s area of activity and assign it to a female or male-dominated activity sector. It is important to note that none of the respondents asked for clarification as to what professions and activities are to be classified as feminine or masculine. This has shown that gender stereotypes are still widespread and known. On the other hand, by structuring the data collected, respondents’ identification codes were linked to the sector they represent and the position they occupy, based on the answers of the respondents themselves (Table 1). This has allowed the results of the interview to be grouped and analysed, looking for similarities and differences between the male and female-dominated activity sectors, same as between public administration and business organizations.

**Table 1: Information about the study participants.**

	No.	Code	Female-dominated activity	Code	Male-dominated activity	
			sector		sector	
<b>Public administration organizations</b>	1.	PA-F-1	Director of the secondary school	1.	PA-M-1	Vice-head of the bureau at criminal policy
	2.	PA-F-2	Human resource manager at the public administration institution	2.	PA-M-2	Member of the council at municipality
	3.	PA-F-3	Director of the enterprise of social service	3.	PA-M-3	Member of the Parliament, fraction chair of the political party
	4.	PA-F-4	Head of institution in the system of protection of children's rights	4.	PA-M-4	Captain at the State military force
	5.	PA-F-5	Head of the City Library	5.	PA-M-5	Prosecutor
	6.	PA-F-6	Head of the institute of humanities at the University	6.	PA-M-6	Chief of the military medical service
	7.	PA-F-7	Head of the baby-orphans institution	7.	PA-M-7	Judge at the city district court

No.	Code	Female-dominated activity sector	Code	Male-dominated activity sector
8.	PA-F-8	Head of the hospital children’s department	8. PA-M-8	Member of the Parliament
9.	PA-F-9	Head of PR department at the ministry	9. PA-M-9	Dean of the faculty of technology at the University
10.	PA-F-10	Human resource manager at the Ministry		
<b>Business organizations</b>	1.	PS-F-1	1. PS-M-1	Owner of the beauty business company Projects’ manager at IT company
	2.	PS-F-2	2. PS-M-2	Director of the Kindergarten Head of Sales Department
	3.	PS-F-3	3. PS-M-3	Head of the Publishing Company Sales manager
	4.	PS-F-4	4. PS-M-4	Family Finance Expert at the Bank Head of Asset Management Department
	5.	PS-F-5	5. PS-M-5	Editor of the women's magazine for leisure Head of the Business Customer Credit Risk Assessment Division at the Bank
	6.	PS-F-6	6. PS-M-6	Head of the model agency Head of the IT unit at Logistics Company
	7.	PS-F-7	7. PS-M-7	Head of administration at the business enterprise Director of the finance department
	8.	PS-F-8	8. PS-M-8	Head of the leisure business center General director at the company of automotive dealer
	9.	PS-F-9		Chief at Pharmaceutical company

*Source:* the authors’ research.

The survey data were proceeded by content analysis and then structured, which allowed to form certain groups of responses and highlight common topics and subtopics. The results of the research are presented in the article within the tables. Each formulated subtopic is validated by respondents’ statements. The tables do not include the respondents’ codes along the statements to ensure the confidentiality of the research participants. Since in some occupation women are relatively rare even on a national scale (e.g. member of the parliament or fraction chair of the political party), any possibility of linking the information in this article to a specific person must be prevented.

During the survey, respondents were asked 3 open-ended questions in written form, enabling researchers to: a) identify the key factors that make leadership difficult particularly for women who work as managers, b) find out what specific challenges women face while reaching for managerial position in the organization and c) describe women leaders’ attitude towards women’s career assumptions.

#### 4. RESULTS

The results of the research show that women-leaders in Lithuania, both in the public administration and business organizations, generally face with similar burdens that can be divided into two main groups: 1) attitudes and beliefs, and 2) external requirements. In turn, it can be seen that the attitudes and beliefs include: a) stereotypes about women that exist in the society, b) colleagues' attitude towards women leaders and c) subjective factors such as women's self-assessment of themselves and their opportunities. The requirements of the external environment usually occur as a conflict between family-work roles. However, some aspects among respondent groups differ.

Speaking of the public administration organizations and comparing the leaders' responses between the groups "female-dominated occupation" and "male-dominated occupation", it was found out that the respondents' experience was relatively similar, except for two aspects:

- 1) female respondents working in female-dominated areas pointed out that it is more difficult for women to become managers compared to men, while those women who work in men dominated areas have not mentioned this aspect at all. It shows signs that men are particularly desirable in the public administration organizations' female-dominated areas, and that it is still the case that a man is chosen over a woman if there is a chance to choose a candidate by gender.
- 2) female respondents working in male-dominated areas have pointed out that they stumble upon negative attitudes and emotions of women colleagues, who do not occupy managerial positions. It can also be observed that women working in the female-dominated areas are more likely to overcome the conflict of family-work roles than those working in the male-dominated areas. Detailed survey results are presented below (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Key factors that impede women's work after becoming managers: opinion of the leaders who work in the public administration organizations.

		Public administration organizations	
	Topic	Subtopic	N
Female-dominated occupation	Attitudes and beliefs	Public attitudes towards women (stereotypes)	4
		Colleagues' attitude towards women leaders	4

**Interviewee's statements**

"Immoderate male domination, determined by certain stereotypes formed by society, such as man's ability to make better decisions."  
 "Intolerance to woman's opinion, arrogance, society's stereotypes."  
 "Society's standard – for men to rule, because women are less confident, thus making it easier to manipulate them, to scare them."  
 "I had to deal with the school board's contradictions. The same things were evaluated differently, depending on the gender of the teacher. By the way, women teachers themselves are "assured" that men feature certain character traits "by nature."  
 "Sometimes it felt that colleagues just wait for the moment I fail."  
 "Often there is intolerance toward women's opinion, arrogance towards woman herself."  
 "Women deal with a higher workload than men. Men simply ignore some of the tasks and refuse them if it seems to them that the workload is too high. Women are simply prohibited to behave

			<p>in a similar manner. Sometimes by default, sometimes accompanied by comments.”</p> <p>“Talking about public administration sector, problem is not so much the gender as the use of personal contacts and networks. For a person, who does not have important contact and does not belong to one or another party, it is very difficult to pursue a career and to secure the place within organisation.”</p>	
	Subjective factors	6	<p>“Self-doubt in own strengths and abilities”</p> <p>“Self-doubt in self and constant attempt to meet society’s norms.”</p> <p>“Fear of the woman herself that she will fail.”</p> <p>“Unproductive attempts to please subordinates lead to inefficiencies and mistakes.”</p> <p>“Women can be great specialists, but if they don’t have the courage to reach the top of their careers, no one else will help.”</p> <p>“Attempts to obey the society and the attitudes they create, fear to express their opinions, act on their own initiative.”</p>	
<b>External requirements</b>	Different job requirements for women and men	3	<p>“I had to complete additional studies to occupy this position, although some of my fellow managers-men had lower education.”</p> <p>“In order keep the manager’s position, I had to work more, learn a lot and to give up my leisure time.”</p> <p>“Women are less forgiven for the various shortcomings. Women are required to meet the job position’s requirements to the smallest details.”</p>	
	Dual burden of commitment and the conflict of roles	3	<p>“Unfortunately, good specialists are often judged not by the quality of their work, the results they have achieved, the work they have done, but by whether or not they are “someone’s person”. Here, of course, men take the lead because they are less loaded with tasks both at work and at home - they have time to build those connections.”</p> <p>“Dilemma between family creation and pursuit of the career.”</p> <p>“I think a woman should usually choose between career and a family. Both things are hard to match.”</p>	
<b>Male-dominated occupation</b>	<b>Attitudes and beliefs</b>	Public attitudes towards women (stereotypes)	4	<p>“The most common obstacle is the stereotypes that exist in society.”</p> <p>“Some professions are traditionally masculine, making it difficult for women to rise in the career ladder.”</p> <p>“Often, a lot of effort is needed until the partners recognize that a woman can be equivalent to them.”</p> <p>“Attitudes and pressure of the surrounding people that my chosen area is too masculine.”</p>
		Colleagues’ attitude towards women leaders	4	<p>“Colleagues’ belief and pressure that my chosen area is too masculine for me to keep up the good work for a long time.”</p> <p>“The different attitudes of individuals in senior positions towards a man and a woman are highly felt. In perspective of woman it is not hesitated to express unreasonable doubts, distrust.”</p> <p>“Protecting your position requires a lot of effort, especially among men of other party leaders. This puts a lot of psychological tension. You need to cross over yourself, forget your fears.”</p> <p>“The different attitudes of individuals in senior positions towards</p>

<b>External requirement</b>			a man and a woman in managerial position, unjustified doubts, distrust.”
	Role of the colleague women who do not occupy leader’s position	4	<p>“First and foremost, [supported] stereotypes of women [co-workers] themselves, ignorance.”</p> <p>“I had to put in a lot of effort not to steer from the work tasks into relationships. Especially when it comes to women, a rule of thumb is that there was less support from them.”</p> <p>“Women support women less than they support men.”</p> <p>“Colleagues consider me arrogant because I don’t spend time for female conversations by the coffee.”</p>
	Subjective factors	5	<p>“To keep my position, I had to put in a lot of work, often to refuse entertainment, communication with friends.”</p> <p>“The constant desire to be a good manager, the need to prove that you are equivalent, is very tiring.”</p> <p>“Lack of self-confidence, hesitation is an obstacle.”</p> <p>“For women leaders, life is made worse by their own fear of making mistakes, creating invisible barriers to themselves.”</p>
	Dual burden of commitment and the conflict of roles	7	<p>“Choosing between family and career, difficult to coordinate between family and professional life.”</p> <p>“Difficult coordination between family and professional responsibilities.”</p> <p>“I think the main aspect is family welfare. It is difficult to be a good mother and to be fully engaged in the work at the same time. In order to occupy high positions, systematic coordination between family and career needs to be constantly pursued. It is much easier for men in this regard.”</p> <p>“For a woman, the family holds more tasks, and being the leader, family is the first to suffer. Therefore, such decision of women must first be accepted by the spouses.”</p> <p>“Husband is constantly complaining about me not coming home in time.”</p> <p>“It’s difficult, both spiritually and physically. The child is growing in kindergarten. My mother helps as much as she can physically, and my husband tries to help spiritually.”</p>

*Source:* the authors’ research.

In the Table 3, the key factors that make it more difficult for women to become managers in business organizations can be observed.

The survey shows that women, working in the business organizations’ sector are exposed to the stereotypes and colleagues’ pressure in the workplace unevenly. Women working in the male-dominated area twice as often as those working in the female-dominated area have noted that they have experienced society’s pressure on their job or occupation, as well as negative attitudes, contempt and direct competition, mostly by men, including leaders.

**Table 3:** Key factors that impede women’s work after becoming managers: opinion of the leaders who work in business organizations.

		<b>Business organizations</b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Subtopic</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Interviewee’s statements</b>
<b>Female-dominated occupation</b>	<b>Attitudes and beliefs</b>	Public attitudes towards women (stereotypes)	4 “An unwritten requirement to obey the society and its attitudes.” “I think the most important factor is the still traditional attitude of the society towards a woman as a housewife.” “Society’s attitude, because in large companies, management is increasingly looking at women positively as leaders.” “Society, especially older people, is still looking suspiciously towards the women as career-seeking leaders. Young people may not even assign the leader role to a man or a woman, as long as the person is a good specialist.”
		Colleagues’ attitude towards women leaders	3 “It seems that if it is a female work area, there can be no difficulty for another woman, but there are lots of gossip, intrigue, which makes it very hard to work.” “Envy and ongoing emotional battles.” “Well, there is fault of the women as well - character traits. Women tend to dramatize, panic in extreme situations, cause intrigue, anger with their gender... I am not saying that everyone, but really know a lot of girls who have such flaws.”
		Subjective factors	2 “I am mostly confronted with internal psychological barriers, because during my studies I idealized this job.” “I think the biggest obstacle is the fear and distrust of the women themselves, the fear of disappointing themselves and the others, the fear after the first failure.”
	<b>External requirements</b>	Dual burden of commitment and the conflict of roles	2 “Another obstacle could be family, childbirth and upbringing that take a lot of time for women, which they could spend to improve their field of expertise and career advancement.” “Planning and raising children.”
<b>Male-dominated occupation</b>	<b>Attitudes and beliefs</b>	Public attitudes towards women (stereotypes)	8 “The traditional way of society’s thinking really does not help.” “The main obstacle is that a woman is not a man.” “Opinion that women are too sensitive and therefore unable to take the managerial position.” “The attitude towards women leaders is critical, ironic, they are bullied, seen with distrust.” “Society often sees a woman who achieves a career as cold and arrogant, therefore I came across comments that I am arrogant.” “Many believe that a woman got a good job not because of her abilities, but because of her appearance.” “It has to be admitted that there are very strong templates in society about which area is masculine and feminine. As a rule, leadership, technology, army, cars - an area for men, where the presence of a woman quite often leads to a surprise (that is hard to hide), so sometimes it has to be proved that you deserve the position and have sufficient qualifications.”

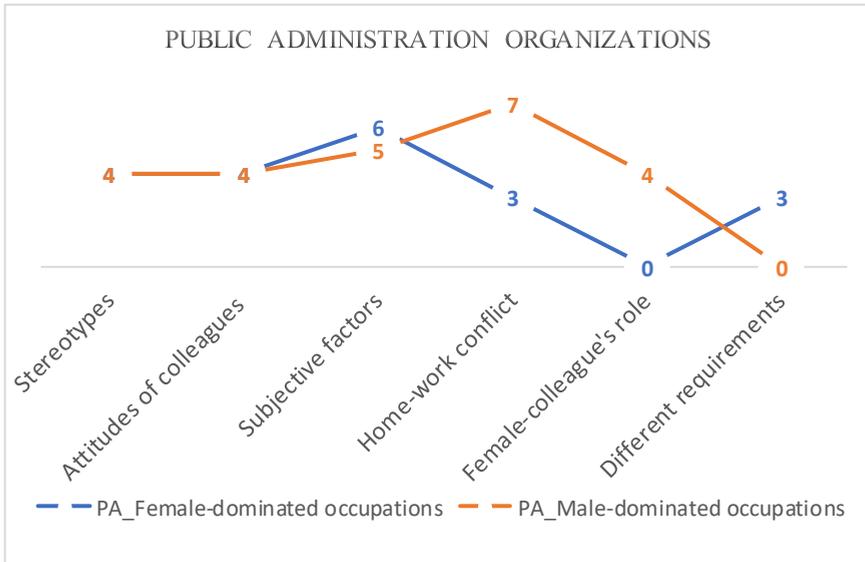
		“Chauvinistic attitude of some men towards women.”
<b>External Requirement</b>	Colleagues’ attitude towards women leaders	8 <p>“A negative attitude towards a woman as a leader, an unwillingness to admit that a woman can successfully lead a group of men and that she may be an equal partner or opponent. Especially when there are more intense situations, [the woman] cannot use the “masculine” language.”</p> <p>“Among the colleagues, especially men, there is increased pressure, competition, mistrust, and disbelief of women leaders, so they need to withstand a lot of psychological stress.”</p> <p>“Men’s attitude towards women, a lot of time you have to prove that you are worthwhile and would be able to deal with duties and responsibilities.”</p> <p>“I am saddened by my colleagues’ suspicions that I have my job position not because of my abilities and competences.”</p> <p>“At my work, I still face men’s view that a woman cannot be a good leader, because the skirt is still associated with the weak gender and the housewife, which is described as woman.”</p> <p>“Managers have greater confidence in men. Fearing that women will do a better work, cause competition.”</p> <p>“A great support is felt from women. Often, from the men’s side, I face confusion and they do not always recognize the woman as a leader.”</p> <p>“In the case of a woman leader’s failure there is more glee (“she will know her place now”) than in the case of a man’s failure. That’s why it is hard to “get up”.”</p>
	Subjective factors	2 <p>“Self-doubt, hesitation.”</p> <p>“Thoughts “I cannot, I do not know how”.”</p>
	Dual burden of commitment and the conflict of roles	3 <p>“Commitment to the family - it requires a lot of time and effort.”</p> <p>“There is a lack of time and strength. You have to share the tasks with other family members and regret not being the ideal “home/fireplace spirit.”</p> <p>“We cannot choose air or water, because we need it both. We also need both work and family. You will not be happy by only being dedicated to your work, but I doubt you will feel self-realized only being at home, running around with children.”</p>

*Source:* the authors’ research.

It should also be noted that in business organizations, women are relatively more self-confident than in the public administration sector. They more than twice less often noted that leadership is complicated by the personal qualities and behaviour of women themselves.

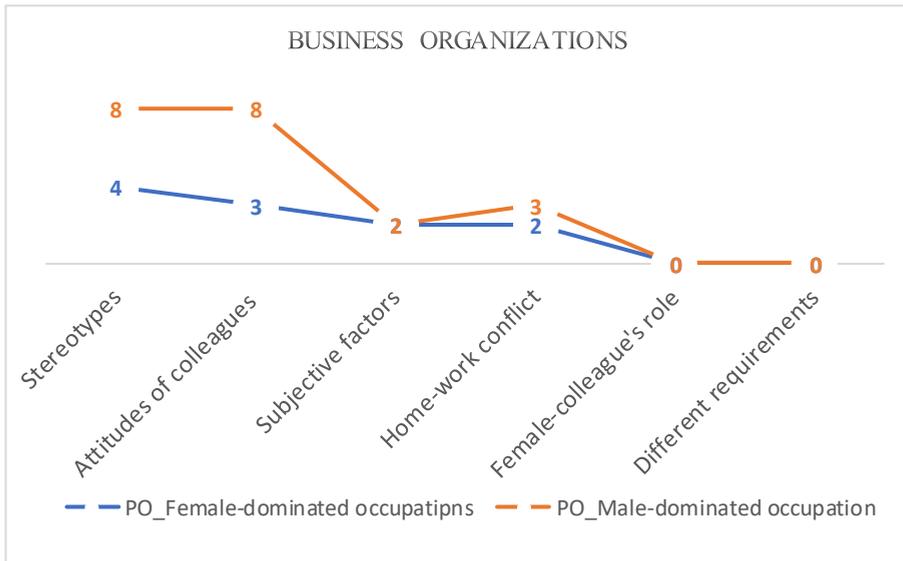
Summarized research data is presented at Figures 1 and 2.

**Figure 1:** Main constraints of women’s leadership in public administration organizations (PA); female and male-dominated occupations.



Source: the authors’ research.

**Figure 2:** Main constraints of women’s leadership in business organizations (PO); female and male-dominated occupations.



Source: the authors’ research.

The second open question for women leaders was to find out what specific challenges women face when reaching for managerial position in an organisation. Respondents have basically identified the same factors that they have identified in their previous question on what factors make leadership more difficult for them while already working as managers. Significant differences between respondents in the public administration and business organizations were not detected.

Finally, on the third question, respondents were asked to give their opinion on women's career assumptions. Interestingly, the suggestions made for women seeking a job as a manager are not gender specific. Respondents marked things such as: the courage to take the desired action and achieve set goals; purposeful efforts; commitment to learn and improve; strengthening of their self-confidence; networking; and the area of activity chosen with consideration („[...] choose a job that you would work from all the heart“). It can be seen that these things are equally important for both men and women.

Analysing respondents' answers, it can be seen between different groups that respondents working in female-dominated area feel safer, so they evaluate other women's leadership opportunities more positively. Respondents from public administration organizations claim, that “When you really want, you can achieve everything, all the conditions are in place for that”; “I do not think that competitive conditions with men would be different in order to become a leader”. Respondents also mention the need for internal strength, determination, support from colleagues and ability to communicate effectively: “The most important feature that a woman manager needs are stubbornness and determination”; “[...] in order to lead, ability to communicate, communicability is a must”; “It is important to build strong people around you, which requires great communicability.” Women in public administration male-dominated areas also claim, that “To become a leader in your field, you need a quick orientation, analytical thinking”; “A woman leader needs perseverance, strength, ability to plan, high intelligence.”

Respondents working in business organisations also pointed out the need for improvement (“Improvement and new knowledge is important”) and did not think that any specific change would be needed for women's leadership (“The leader is just a person who is not afraid of responsibility, loves people, has vision and ability to inspire others to go towards it. If it is like that, gender is not that really important criteria.”).

In general, a survey of female leaders showed that the obstacles to women's leadership remain the same at all stages of the vertical career, and there are no obstacles that are only specific while trying to become a manager or after becoming one.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that women leaders in Lithuania, both in the public administration and business organizations, are faced with similar leadership burdens. They can be divided into two main groups: provisions and beliefs, and different environmental requirements. Provisions and beliefs include: i) stereotypes of women in society; ii) specific attitudes of colleagues towards female leaders; and iii) subjective factors such as lack of self-confidence and possible

opportunities. Specific external environment requirements for women usually occur through the requirement to choose between family and work which causes internal role conflicts.

When analysing research results, certain peculiarities of different groups of respondents emerged. Respondents working in female-dominated areas in public administration organizations pointed out that women are faced with more difficult career conditions than men: women are required to have a higher level of education and a greater commitment to work, while women working in male-dominated areas did not mention these aspects completely. Thus, in public administration female-dominated areas, it still happens that a man is chosen over a woman if there is a possibility to choose a candidate by gender. On the other hand, respondents working in male-dominated areas in public administration organizations pointed out that they were faced with negative attitudes and behaviour of fellow females who do not occupy managerial positions. This likely reflects the high level of competition between women.

In turn, in business organizations, women are affected by stereotypes and colleagues' pressure unevenly. Female leaders working in male-dominated areas twice as often as those working in the female-dominated areas have pointed out that they have been under pressure from society for their work or occupation, and negative attitudes from colleagues, contempt and direct competition that is mostly expressed by men, including managers.

What is more, women in business organizations are relatively more self-confident than in the public administration organizations. In average twice less respondents here noted that leadership is complicated by the personal qualities and behaviour of women themselves.

Leaders in all respondent groups have mentioned the problem of balancing family and work. However, it can be stated that women working in female-dominated areas manage to overcome the conflict between family and work roles than those working in the male-dominated areas.

Finally, the study revealed that the obstacles to women's leadership remain the same at all stages of the vertical career, and there are no specific obstacles that are only specific while trying to become a manager or after becoming one.

The key conclusion of the research is that stereotypes still do not disappear despite statutory gender equality in perspective of professional careers.

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