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# Management Students' Expectations towards Organizational Leaders. Polish Case in the Context of other CEE Countries

**Abstract:** In this article the author, after the presentation of some theoretical assumptions, presents the management students' opinions about their expectations towards organizational leaders. The author attempts to determine the similarities and differences in respondents' expectations related to their gender, different level of studies – bachelor, master and postgraduate, and stage of life. The results show that these factors have an impact on individual expectations towards leaders' features and style of behavior. The data obtained is also correlated with author's previous studies in this domain conducted by using different methods of research in groups of students from 12 countries. The author also compares the results of his research to other international studies of future managers'

expectations (students of management) towards organizational leaders, which according to their knowledge and impression are a guarantee of success in their cultural environment.

**Key words:** organizational leaders, management students, international study

## Introduction

This text is then the last of a list of articles in which the author has presented different perspectives of expectations towards organizational leaders related to social and economic categories of respondents (Haromszeki, 2016, pp. 119–128, Haromszeki, 2014a, pp. 81–101; Haromszeki, 2014b, pp. 107–120). As mentioned previously, expectations towards leaders are a result shaped during the process of socialization and learning, the conviction that there is a set of qualifications and competences predestining to playing different roles in groups and organizations (Kozusznik, 2005, p. 117; Lord, Foti and DeVader, 1984; Hall, Workman, Marchioro, 1998; Zaccaro, Foti, Kenny, 1991; Kets de Vries, 2008; Kouzes, Posner, 2010, p. 21).

The main goal of the article is a presentation of ideal types of leadership, the exact features and behavior of leaders expected by the students of management at different levels – bachelor, master and postgraduate (HRM). In different studies (for example: Eagly, Karau, 1991) researchers prove that gender is one of the most important factors which has an impact on the style of leadership, therefore another goal of these studies is to verify the role of gender in a leadership relationship.

The method used was the questionnaire interview method (PAPI). The results of the study verified previously conducted studies and analyses during different individual and group tasks – simulations, role playing, case studies analyses and discussions with students from 12 European countries. Expectations of Polish respondents (students of management) were compared with preferred features and behavior of effectual organizational leader in chosen CEE countries.

## Basic terms

According to my own definition a leadership relationship is a relationship based on superordinate with subordinates (or co-workers, depending on the particular type of organizational leadership), aimed at achieving goals – a vision, dreams, plans and values – based on respect and the trust of the qualifications of the leaders, and often with the fascination of them, rational or irrational commitment to the co-created vision of development (Haromszeki, 2010, p. 40). A leader is a person who gains followers, people who call him/her a leader. This chosen person could be a formal manager existing on different levels and areas of managements or co-workers who work in the same positions in organizations (Haromszeki, 2014c, pp. 155–156).

It is important that expectations towards leaders are a visualization of different perceived, intuitive or empathic features, attitudes, beliefs, skills and behavior.

As mentioned in previous articles, the process of creating human expectations towards others is described by researches for example in the Theory of leadership categorization (Haromszeki, 2012, pp. 158–167). According to this theory people have their own concepts of optimal behavior of leaders in normal and specific situations influencing others based on the perception schemes of leadership styles. There is a so-called perception of leadership. In this process, humans create prototypes, store them in the memory and use this in a specific social context. Effectual leaders are people, who present characteristics of category which compares to the expectations of a specific situation (Kozusznik, 2005, p. 117).

Important questions are also related to the fact that the categories created and stored by humans are shaped differently according to varies expectations towards male and female during the process of socialization. These gender differences in expectations towards leaders could be the result of psychosomatic construct or normative systems existing in any given society. Members of society expect that the male will work in mana-

gerial positions. The explanation of this phenomenon could be the theory of gender roles, which show up in early childhood and are reinforced by the economic and social processes, which differ from social expectations related to cultural circumstances. A conviction that males are predestined to work in higher positions than females could be an effect of the perception of leadership as an activity oriented task instead of requiring social skills (Eagly, Karau, 1991). Therefore, one of the most important questions seems to be the relationship between shaping young people according to the gender roles theory and their expectations towards model features and behavior of an effectual organizational leader.

## Research methods and results of the study

### Main objective

The main objective and most important part of the study was to determine the students' opinions about the desired characteristics of modern organizational leaders.

### Research problems

The main research problem of this study was the similarities and differences in different levels of management students' expectations towards organizational leaders.

Additionally, there are also studies of different expectations towards organizational leaders in several countries in the CEE.

### General research questions

*What are the expectations (characteristics and behavior) of bachelor studies students towards organizational leaders?*

*What are the expectations (characteristics and behavior) of master studies students towards organizational leaders?*

*What are the expectations (characteristics and behavior) of postgraduate studies (HRM) students towards organizational leaders?*

### Research methods

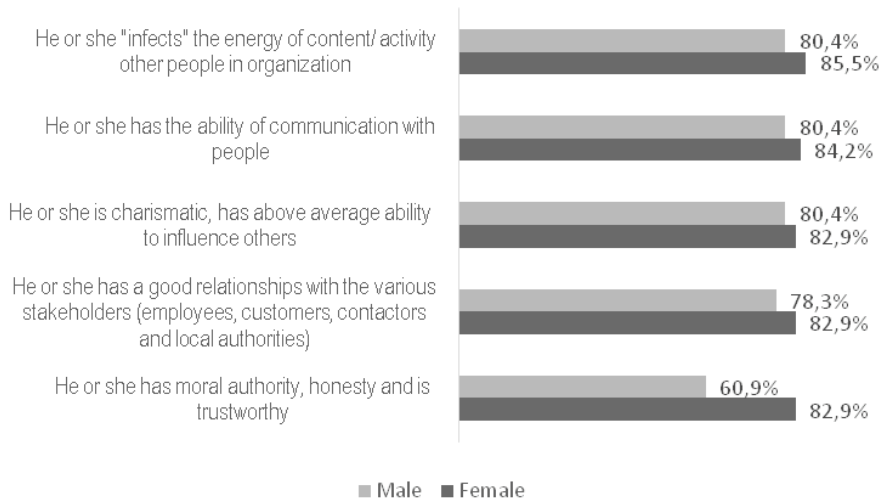
The study was conducted in Poland during workshops with students of management. The method used was the questionnaire interview method (PAPI). This was prepared by author and consisted of 29 statements of effectual leaders' features, attitudes and behavior. The selection of the statements in the questionnaire was the result of critical analysis of theories and previously conducted research in the leadership domain. This tool was previously used to examine employees in the three sectors of the Polish economy.

### Research sample

The research sample consists of 259 students of management. 122 of them there were students of bachelor program (76 women and 46 men). 111 respondents were graduate (master) students (74 female and 37 male). The questionnaire interviews were also conducted with 26 female students of HRM postgraduate program.

### Results of the study

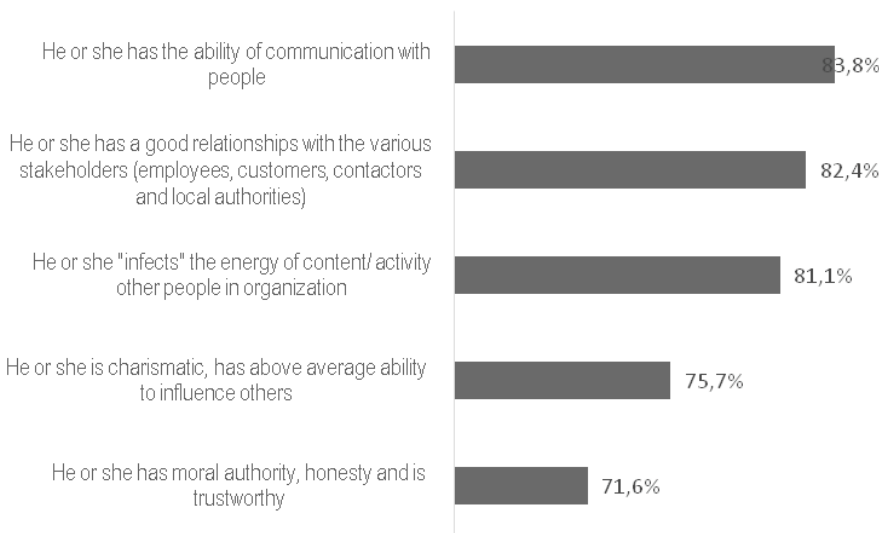
Most respondents (male and female) in the group of bachelor students decided that a successful leader would be a person who: "infects" the energy of the content/activity to other people in an organization. Other very important features were the ability of good communication skills with people and charisma (above average ability to influence others) (Graph 1).

**Graph 1. Expectations towards leaders – bachelor studies students**

**Source: own study.**

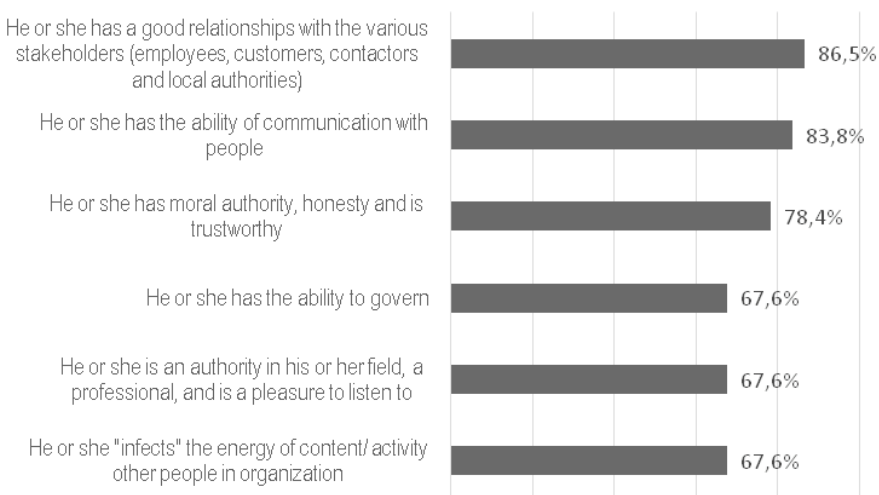
Male and female respondents in the group of master students present a different list of most expected features and behavior from organizational leaders. Women think that successful leaders should have, above all, the ability of communication with people. Whereas men prefer good relationships with different stakeholders. Other answers show that males choose the more pragmatic and females the more emotional approach to the leadership relationships (Graph 2).

**Graph 2. Expectations towards leaders – female master degree students**



Source: own study.

**Graph 3. Expectations towards leaders – male master degree students**



Source: own study.

The Postgraduate students in Human Resources Management (only females were featured in this edition) chose the two most important features and behavior (84,6%) similarly like the respondents in the group of bachelor students. Giving examples of activities, which are attractive enough to copy their behavior and having above average communication abilities and skills are, according to respondents in this category, the key factors in creating a good leadership relationship. The other most popular answers in this group of respondents relate to their stage of life (private and professional experience). The more experienced respondents think that effectual leaders should be also successful, well-educated and pragmatic managers, who build good relationships with different stakeholders. Students of management faculty in first two levels of higher education answered differently than postgraduate students who did not answered "he or she is a moral authority". Their approach to morality (honesty, trustworthiness) is similar to the respondents from the public and private sectors of the Polish economy (Haromszeki, 2014a), who also decided that these characteristics are not the most important elements of a successful leadership relationship.

**Graph 4. Expectations towards leaders – students of HRM postgraduate studies (females)**



Source: own study.



As presented before in my previous text (Haromszeki, 2016, pp. 119–128) the least expected elements of leadership relationships in the category of bachelor students, there are features and behavior characteristic for Polish managers which, according to results of different studies, have not changed for years (Mączyński, Wyspiański, 2011, pp. 7–18; Koopman, Maczynski, Den Hartog, Witkowski and 48 European co-authors, 2001, pp. 7–22). There is a lack of strategic thinking, reluctance to rational risk-taking and lack of the need for informal relationships building and the need for power. Master and HRM postgraduate studies students also chose the same two features: the lack of strategic thinking, reluctance to rational risk-taking, admitting above all that, this is not a leader who uses people, applies penalties and dismisses employees, even when necessary.

## Critical analysis of the results and comparison with previous studies<sup>1</sup>

According to previous studies (Haromszeki, 2014c) management faculty students listed features desired from leaders, which are:

- charisma,
- effectual impact on others based on their psychological characteristics,
- responsibility for their actions and the activities of the team /organization,
- ease of communicating with people based on oratorical skills,
- ability to deal with any situation.

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1. Own observations and analysis of activities during workshops, case studies, simulations and role playing in groups Polish and foreign (Spanish, Portugal, French, German, Italian, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish) Erasmus Program students. International studies of expectation towards leaders conducted in CEE countries.

It is important to state that the participants of the presented study (about 500 students of management who could be tomorrow's leaders or managers) answered – a leader thanks to his charisma and oratorical skills, efficiently convinces people of their ideas, using a variety of tactics to influence them and motivating tools. In addition, an effective leader is a person who when interacting with employees, is remembered in a way that ensures their image is invoked in the future of the context of the next task. It is also important that an effective leader binds people together for a long time, thanks to a coordinated vision which takes into account the role of each employee involved in each activity. An effective leader, though judged by potential supporters mainly in a rational way, induces a state of long-term emotional involvement related to these subordinates/coworkers. European Erasmus students attending the University of Economics in Wrocław have expectations similar to Polish students' towards organizational leaders. Polish and foreign respondents also admitted that there is a real problem to meet people to collect all the characteristics in an existing economic reality.

An interesting benchmark for analyzed representatives of the different levels of management studies (bachelor, master and postgraduate) is the expectations of CEE countries management students towards organizational leaders (Čater, Lang, 2011). Analyzing the outcomes of international studies some similarities and differences to expectations presented by Polish student of management were found. In the Czech Republic and Romania the most important expectations towards organizational leaders is to be an effective negotiator (intelligent and always well informed). In The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania team oriented leadership was preferred. Charismatic leadership was joint first in the Czech Republic and Romania.

There are also differences in expectations between chosen CEE countries (Čater, Lang R, 2011). According to Czech respondents organizational leaders apart from being negotiators: should be inspirational, diplomatic and boost morale, decisive, communicative, trustworthy, interested in temporal events and act logically. They should also be dynamic which means

highly involved, energetic and enthused, visionary and a team integrator. As presented in previous texts (e.g. Haromszeki, 2014)– compared with middle managers from the Czech Republic, several East European countries e. g. Hungary, Poland and Slovenia of the GLOBE project in 2004, Czech Students gave less emphasis on team-oriented and participative leadership behavior. Romanians future managers, like Czechs, admitted that an effective leader should be, besides being a negotiator: diplomatic, intelligent, communicative, administratively skilled, good coordinator, inspirational, able to motivate, trustworthy, decisive, informed, and a dependable team builder. Slovaks are definitely more people oriented than the other nations from the research sample. According to their expectations the most effective and worthy leaders should possess such characteristics as: kindness and consideration towards others, the ability to unify people, diplomacy, being visionary and inspirational, administratively competent, with personal integrity, performance oriented and decisive, they should think long-term and be strongly performance oriented through empowering team-work and team-spirit, should empower decentralization, establish informal relations and not be autocratic in an organizational environment. They should encourage their subordinates to take the initiative and sustain participation of team members in decision-making as well as pragmatic and open relationships in teams.

## Conclusion

Management students have clearly defined expectations towards organizational leaders. Bachelor and Master students admit that the most important features which create a leadership relationship are styles of shaping reality based on personality traits. Postgraduate students expect other skills learnt during formal education and practical experience. Their expectations are similar to those presented in previous studies conducted in the

three sectors of the Polish economy. Experienced workers of public, private and NGOs appreciate more professionalism and experience than is expected by students – to impact people by inspiring and giving them positive examples of conduct. Young respondents – future managers from other CEE countries present lists of features (skills and knowledge) and styles of management which are a guarantee of success in their cultural circumstances. Especially Czech and Romanian students have similar expectations to Polish students, for example charisma, inspiration and good communication skills useful in building relationships with different stakeholders.

The results of perceptions of organizational leaders confirm an ideal or practical dimension of social expectations in this regard related with professional and life experience. Bachelor students appreciated above all the ability and skills in inspiring people and increasing their level of energetic approach and commitment. It was important for them to be good communicators and charismatic (understood as being above average in the ability to influence others). They prove their approach to this issue in different activities (role playing, case studies, simulations and discussions) during workshops. Master students expect from leaders good communication abilities and skills which help build good, long lasting relationships with various stakeholders. They presented a common declarations approach to leadership relationships during preparing and presenting projects in this domain. This was different to what was observed in group of bachelor students. Students of master program of management, presented similarities, but have some other expectations towards organizational leaders. Females in master students category expect energy in presenting model roles, charisma and moral authority. Males in the master students category look for organizational leaders who are moral authorities, with the ability to govern and show professionalism in the chosen domain. Postgraduate students, who unusually were all female in 2015/1016, start the list of expected features and behavior the same like bachelor student. They chose the ability of showing patterns of behavior implementing energy and good

communications skills. Other characteristics of effectual leaders depend on the difference in life and professional experience between HRM specialists and managers (postgraduate students) and the mostly unemployed young students of bachelor studies. Participant of HRM postgraduate studies besides the above presented features value success in management, education helpful to be flexible in adapting to all situations and establish good relationships with various stakeholders. The Czech and Romanian students admitted that an effectual leader should be charismatic, good negotiator, inspirational, diplomatic and presents team oriented leadership. Their expectations in aspects of influencing others and using autocratic style of leadership are similar to the Polish students and employees of the three sectors of the Polish economy. The Slovaks presented a totally different approach to leadership relationship, and are colloquially treated as a "carbon copy" of the Czechs. Their ideal organizational leaders should be a team player, who is considered toward others and has the ability to unify people. Their proposition is closely related to the model of leader or even a manager presented in literature in this domain, who is more a coordinator than charismatic, values the role of their co-workers and influences others according to build on the foundation of natural abilities and/or previous skills learnt in the style of leadership.

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