

## ROMANIAN YOUNG LEADERS CAPABILITIES: AN EMPIRICAL SURVEY

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims to disseminate the results of a study focused on young leaders, designed to fill the gap in the specialty literature about the capabilities of young leaders in Romania.*

*Capabilities - in our opinion, represents the leader's potentialities, the engine of transformation. They exist in a latent state and by activation they generate economic effects.*

*Through this study we want to identify young Romanian people's attitudes towards capabilities; when we say capabilities, we understand potential. In this article we will present the capabilities from the perspective of potential. Sure, there are also other classifications, but from an economical perspective we consider that the potential of a leader is relevant through the following components: emotional potential, social potential, cognitive potential, managerial potential and behavioral potential.*

*The overall conclusion is that in the realized study we have identified the following key capabilities of young Romanian leaders: character, confidence, empathy, credibility, leadership style, vision, memory, ability to be proactive, optimism, ability to generate respect.*

**Keywords:** potential, capabilities, young Romanian leaders, leadership;

**JEL classification:** M10, M12, M29;

### **1. Introduction**

There are many studies which are linking the leadership and the economic development. Knowing the factors that contribute to an effective leadership is a precondition for the selection of managers who will operate in positions of leadership. Unfortunately, the specialty literature is not so generous in terms of leadership among youth. To want, to know, to can or to have the necessary potential, that's why young leaders need certain capabilities.

When the potential of the young Romanian leader is analyzed there are only a few data available. In Romania the term "leadership" is not very understood, primarily because there are no relevant examples of the successful Romanian companies. It also highlights the empirical practices of leaders and the lack of an adequate theoretical training able to give to the professional leader the security, confidence and support that any training on an academic field gives to the graduates of that domain, which leads to a permanent confusion between management and leadership, to a rare approach of discussions about leadership in Romanian organizations.

### **2. Literature review**

Overtime, studies regarding leadership indicate the fact that most of them refer to the understanding of a good and effective leadership (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011). Many times, wrongly, the terms "youth development" and "youth leadership" are used interchangeably.

Thus, some authors (Pittman & Cahill, 1991) see "youth development" as a process in which young people become competent or able to develop skills necessary for success and challenges. Most definitions (Astaroth, Brown, Pure & Timm, 2002, Carnegie, Council on Adolescent Development, 1989 et.al) also, refer either to specific results that young people want to achieve, or to critical tasks that young people must fulfill in order to achieve positive results. According to the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, "youth development" is a more comprehensive process, which prepares young people to respond to the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a series of activities and experiences coordinated progressively and help them become competent socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively speaking.

A study made by Scales and Leffert (1999) concluded that "youth development" contributes to: increasing self-esteem, popularity, self-control, increasing the capacity of leading and taking public decisions, increasing responsibility towards the work place, better family communication, decreasing psychosocial problems such as

loneliness, shyness, and despair; low involvement in risky behaviors such as drug use, decreasing juvenile delinquency; increasing academic achievement and safety of the environment in which it operates.

Some definitions of the “leadership for young people” describes it as being the process through which a person sets a goal or direction for one or more people and gets them to act together with competence and complete dedication in order to achieve their full.(Nicolescu, 2006).

Leadership is a process in which members of the organization interact with one another, they objectify themselves and they become more responsible (Bailesteanu&Burz, 2008:24). Leadership is the behavior of an individual when he leads activities towards a common goal (Hemphill, JK, & Coons, AE., 1957). In other words, it implies a certain level of voluntary support from group members. Most often, definitions of leadership are focused on the ability of leaders to lead and work with others to establish their priorities properly, create synergy, to be popular but not populist, being authoritarian by recognition, not by imposing (Lobonea, 2014).

Wehmeyer, Agranand Hughes, (1998) define “leadership for young people”, on the one hand as the ability to guide or direct others in the course of proceedings, to influence opinion and behavior of other people and guide them, and on the other hand as the ability to analyze their own points and weaknesses, setting goals and achieving their personal and professional objectives.

This includes the ability to identify community resources and to use them, not only to live independently, but also to establish support networks for participation in community life and to achieve a positive social change. Based on these definitions, we can make the difference between “youth leadership” and “youth development”. We can say that “youth development” at the same time includes “youth leadership” competences, comprises a wider process of growth of development that occurs during adolescence and that will determine both, teens and adult behavior. Although the leading ability is part of the full range of skills and results achieved in the process of young people development, the leadership for young people is a distinct area of "youth development", with a primary focus on mastery of skills needed for effective leadership, including responsibility, teamwork and vision.

In each case, these skills and results include a wide range of fields, such as: cognitive, social, emotional, managerial, behavioral field.

The empirical study was divided into five parts:

A. *Emotional potential* of young leaders, which in our view includes the following capabilities: character, adaptability, stress tolerance, self-confidence;

B. *Social potential* of young Romanian leaders with the following capabilities: flexibility, empathy, charisma, credibility, authenticity;

C. *Managerial potential* of young Romanian leaders with the following capabilities: leadership style, creativity, vision, appreciative capacity;

D. *Cognitive potential* of young Romanian leaders which includes the following capabilities: concentration, communication skills, mental agility, perseverance, memory and inspiration;

E. *Behavioral potential* of young Romanian leaders which includes the following capabilities: confidence in people, courage, optimism, ability to generate respect and the ability to be proactive.

Finally, we highlighted the main capabilities of young Romanian leaders as they were ranked according to the opinion poll.

### 3. Methodology

To obtain the necessary information in practice, we used an investigation based on a questionnaire, the research tool being the questionnaire. The investigation was doubled by making an interview with every respondent. Thus, we can say that both quantitative methods and qualitative methods of investigation were merged.

Once the basic method of research was established, all the steps necessary for a proper development were followed: the preliminary stage or the pre-investigation, the choice of techniques and drafting of the questionnaire, the actual development of the research, processing the obtained data and the last stage, data analysis and interpretation, writing and communication of the report.

#### a) The questionnaire

The questionnaire was structured so as to allow the obtaining of relevant information about the capabilities of young Romanian leaders and their profile. It was met with general rules of the theory of questionnaire: presentation, questions sequencing, their difficulty, etc. These questions were divided into five thematic modules:

A. *Emotional potential* of young leaders which in our view includes the following capabilities: character, adaptability, stress tolerance, self-confidence. So for this kind of potential we formulated four key questions focusing on the emotional capabilities of young leaders.

B. *Social potential* of young Romanian leaders with the following capabilities: flexibility, empathy, charisma, credibility, authenticity. For this kind of potential we formulated a number of 5 questions focused on the social potential of young Romanian leaders.

C. Managerial potential of young leaders with the following capabilities: leadership style, creativity, vision, appreciative capacity. For this kind of potential we formulated a number of 4 questions that emphasize the managerial potential of young Romanian leaders.

D. Cognitive potential of young Romanian leaders which includes the following capabilities: concentration, communication skills, mental agility, perseverance, memory and inspiration. It comprises a number of 6 questions focused on the cognitive potential young Romanian leaders.

E. Behavioral potential of young Romanian leaders which includes the following capabilities: confidence in people, courage, optimism, ability to generate respect and the ability to be proactive. For the behavioral potential we formulated a number of 5 questions.

#### b) The sample

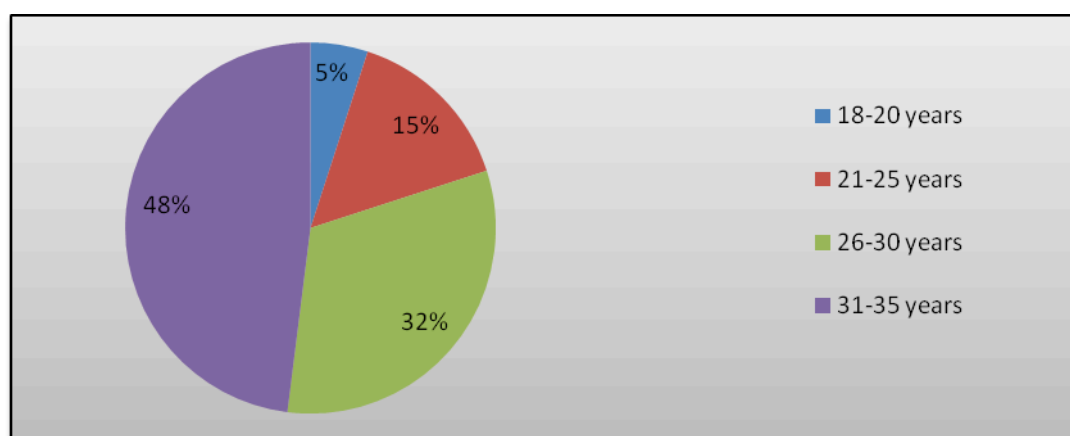
The analysis was done on a sample of 20 SMEs-micro, small and medium-lead by young leaders, women and men belonging to the age group of 18-35 years. Subjects were chosen at random, according to three criteria:

- 1) They have to be young leaders (18-35 years);
- 2) They must be employed (not less than 3 years of employment);
- 3) They must be willing to participate in the study.

According to their age, 5% of leaders surveyed had between 18-20 years, 15% had between 21-25 years, while 32% had between 26-30 years (table no.2). The largest percentage, 48%, belongs to leaders aged 31-35 years (figure no.1).

**Table no. 1. Sample according to age**

No. of respondents / Age	18-20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years
TOTAL 196	10 (5%)	29 (15%)	63 (32%)	94 (48%)

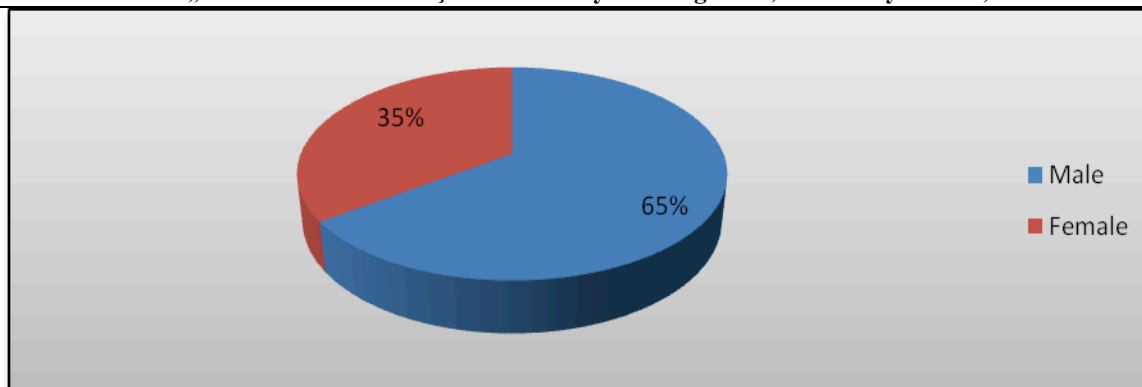


**Figure no. 1: Sample according to age**

By gender, 35% of leaders interviewed were females and 65% males (table no. 2). Although they do not hold a majority share, women still occupy a large percentage, which means that during the last years, they are increasingly involved in the management of companies (figure no. 2):

**Table no. 2: Sample according to gender**

No. of respondents/Gender	Male	Female
Total 196	130 (65%)	66 (35%)

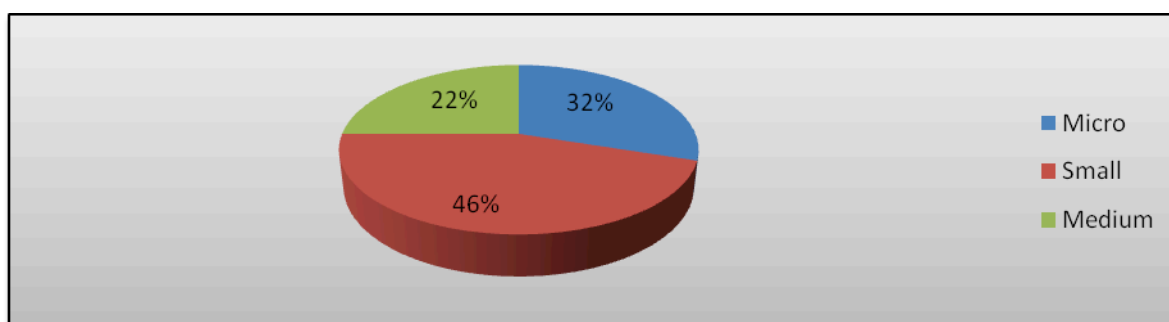


**Figure no. 2: Sample according to gender**

Regarding the size of the enterprises from where the young leaders were interviewed:

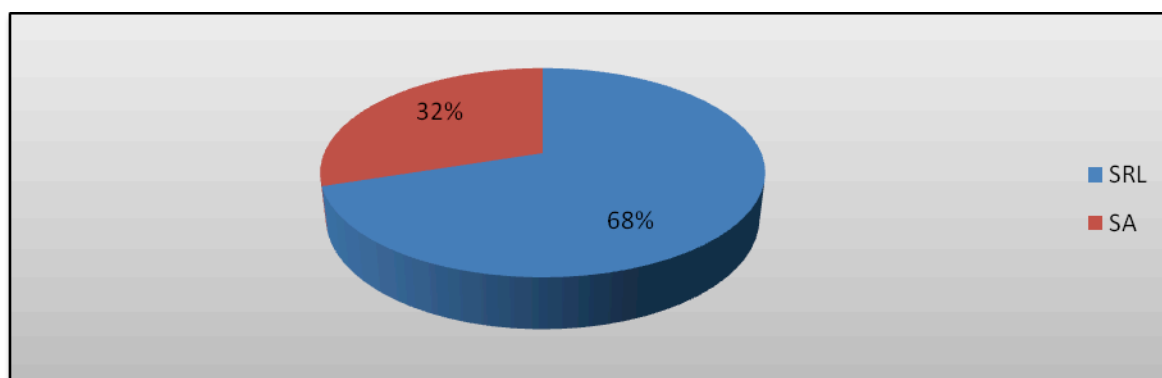
- Micro-enterprises represent 32% of all SME survey;
- Small businesses represent 46%;
- Medium-sized enterprises represent only 22%.

This classification was made according to the number of employees declared in the questionnaire, namely: 1-9 employees for micro, 10- 49 employees for small and 50-249 employees for medium-sized enterprises (figure no. 3):



**Figure no. 3: Sample according to size of young SMEs**

Regarding the legal form, 68% of surveyed companies are limited liability companies (SRL), 32% are joint stock companies (SA). It can be said that the legal form of a limited liability company is preferred by young leaders, being also the most comfortable for them, because it is more flexible than other forms of organization (figure no. 4):



**Figure no. 4: Sample according to legal form of young SMEs**

Based on their activity, the structure of the investigated companies is the following: 19% of companies are operating in services, 24% in retail, 10 % in tourism, 14% are operating in industry, 5% are active in agriculture, the rest in construction (14%)and transportation (14%). We have considered the main activity, and many of the companies surveyed include more fields (figure no. 5):

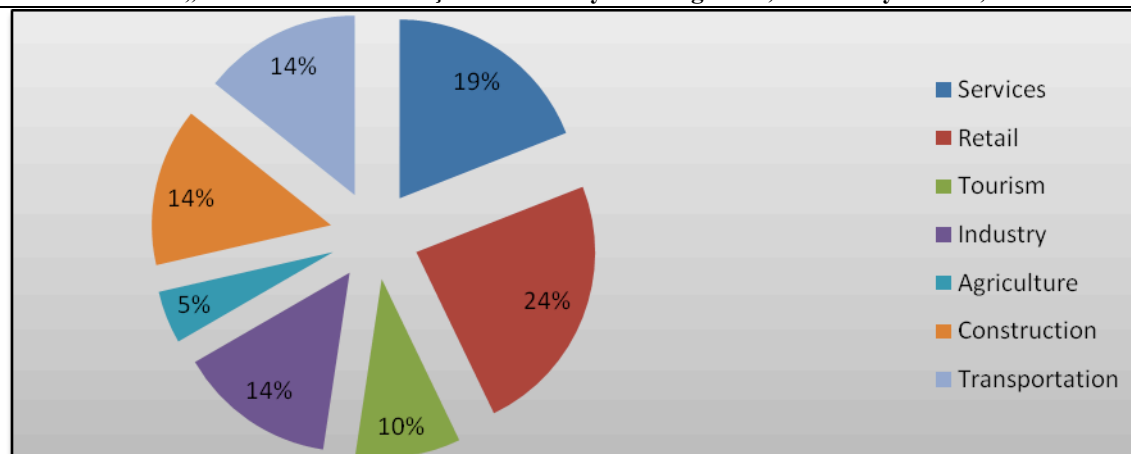


Figure no. 5: Sample according to main activity of young SMEs

#### 4. Results

##### A. Emotional potential of young Romanian leaders.

The first part of the research targeted the emotional potential of young leaders. On the question related to the importance of capability called *character*, 56% of respondents said that it characterizes them to the greatest extent, while 25% of respondents gave full points to self-esteem, 10% gave importance to adaptability, and 9 % felt that stress tolerance characterizes them the most (figure no. 6):

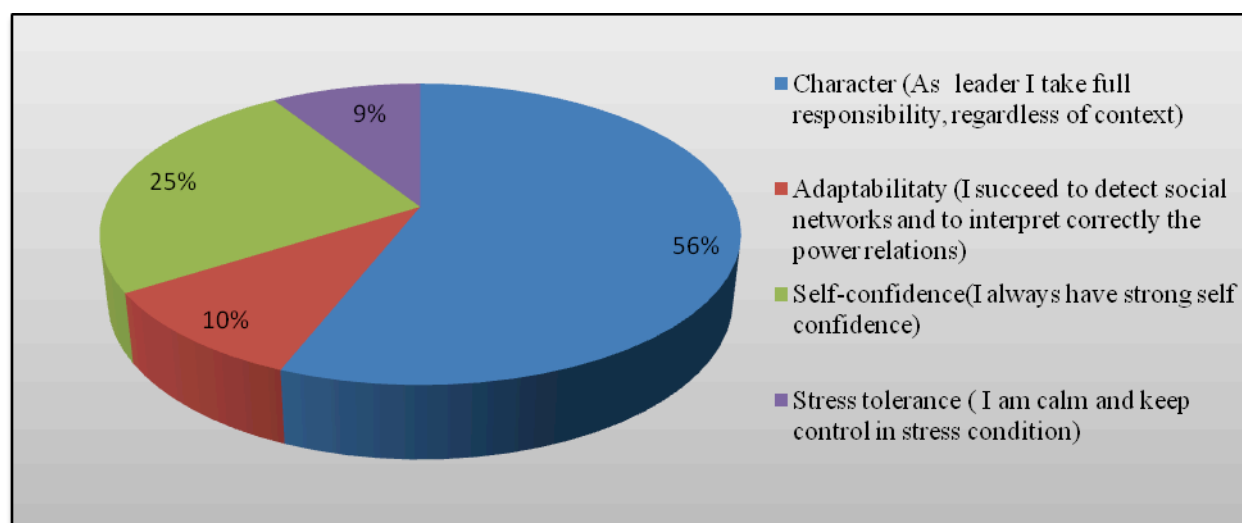


Figure no. 6: Emotional Potential of Romanian young leaders

B. The second category of potential that we analyzed was represented by the social potential of young Romanian leaders. This dimension which includes outdoor-oriented skills contains the following capabilities: flexibility, empathy, charisma, credibility and authenticity.

As a result, respondents gave the following answers: 50% gave importance to empathy, 15% to credibility, 14% to flexibility, 11% to authenticity and 10% to charisma (figure no. 7):

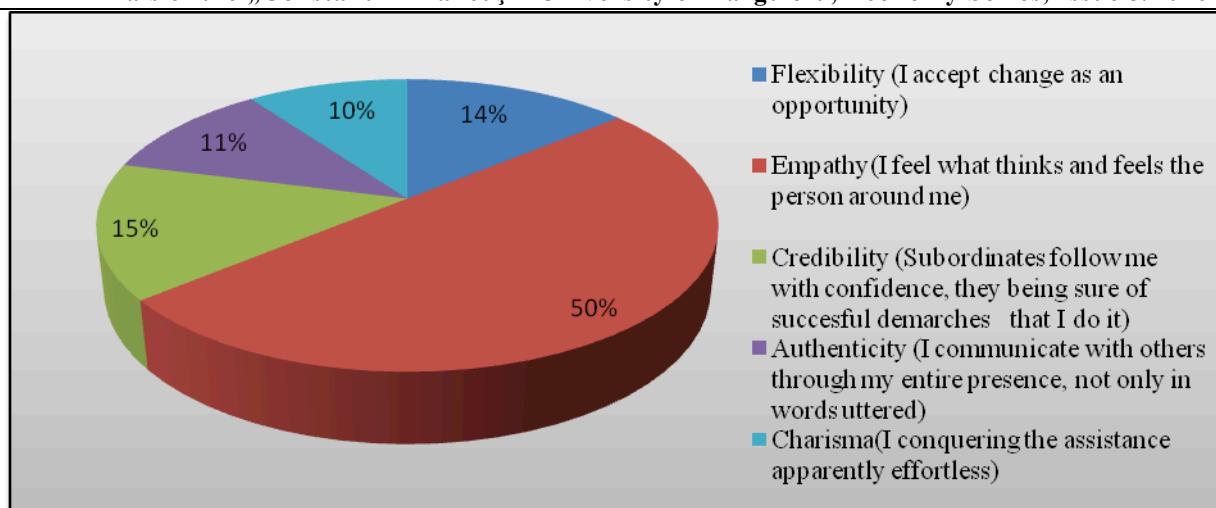


Figure no. 7: Social Potential of Romanian young leaders

C. Regarding the managerial potential of young Romanian leaders, 55% of the respondents gave the highest score to the leadership style, 16% to creativity, 22% to vision, 7% focused on the appreciative capacity and 22% of the respondents considered vision to be the most important (figure no.8):

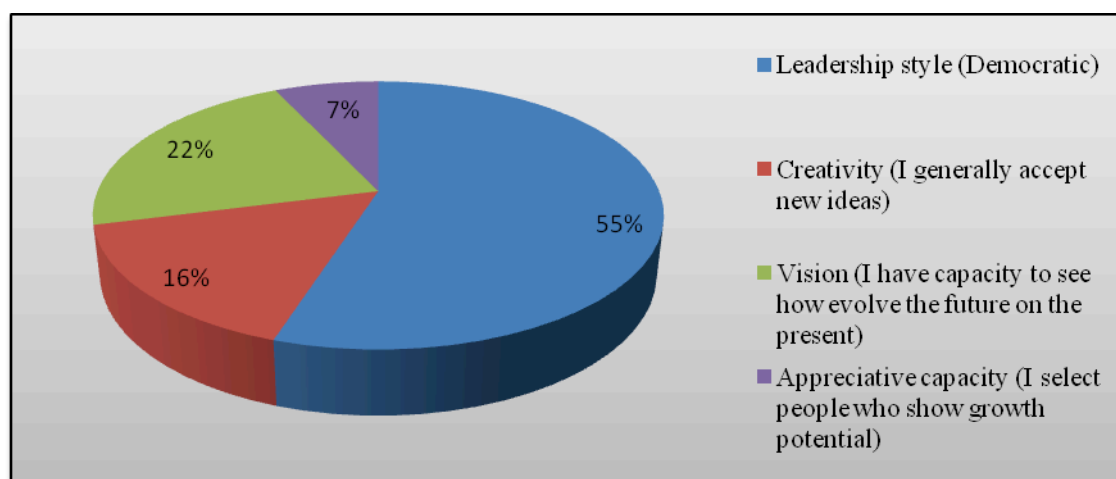


Figure no. 8: Managerial Potential of Romanian young leaders

D. The cognitive potential reflects the ability of intellectual analytical and rational order and includes the following capabilities: communication, mental agility, perseverance, inspiration, concentration and memory. Hence: 40% of the respondents put a maximum emphasis on communication, 16% on perseverance, 12% gave importance to mental agility, 12% to inspiration, 12% give importance to memory and only 8% were focused on concentration (figure no. 9):

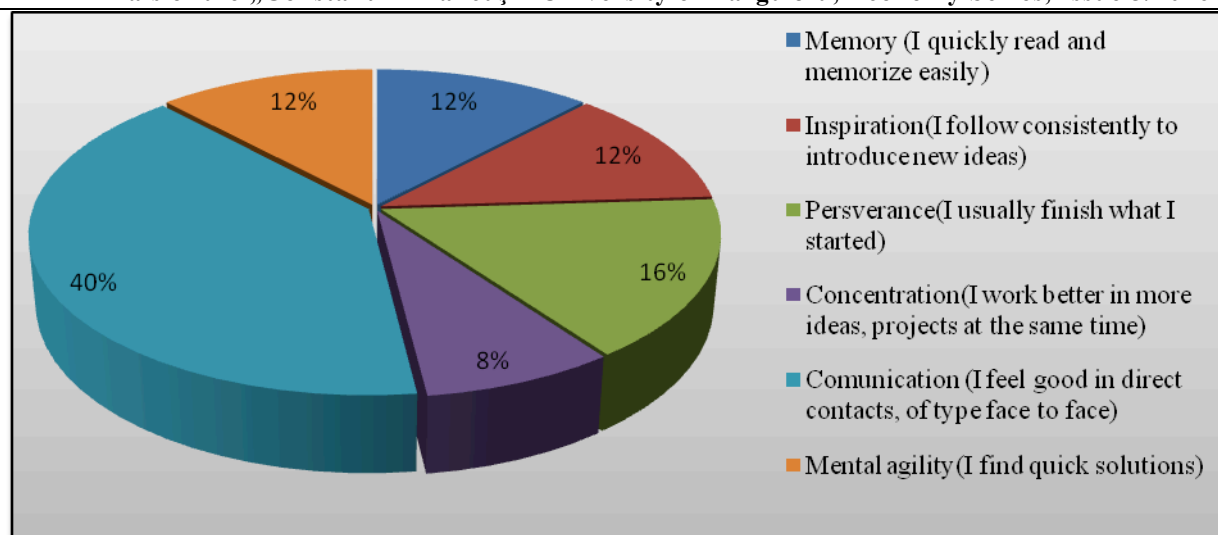


Figure no.9: Cognitive Potential of Romanian young leaders

E. For behavioral potential of young Romanian leaders we analyzed the following capabilities: confidence in people, optimism, courage, and capacity to generate respect and capacity to be proactive. A big percentage of the evaluated young leaders (34%) gave importance to courage, 24% gave importance to the capacity to be proactive, optimism was chosen by 17%, 13% chose the capacity to generate respect and 12% chose confidence in people (figure no. 10):

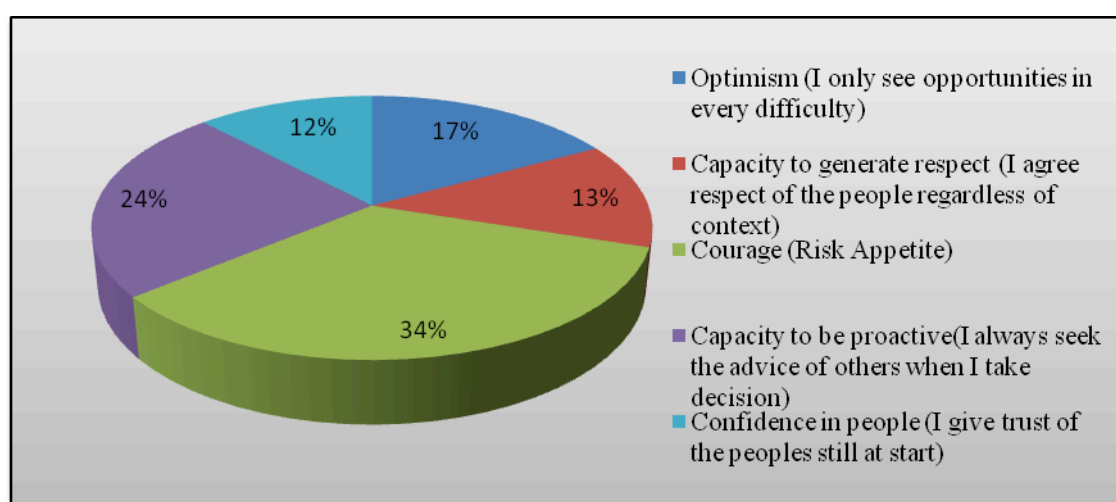


Figure no. 10: Behavioral Potential of Romanian young leaders

## 5. Conclusions

The survey allowed us to identify some key capabilities of Romanian young leaders:

- Young leaders like to take full responsibility regardless of context;
- They are able to detect social networks and correctly interpret the power relations within the organization in which they operate;
- They are people who always have a strong self-confidence;
- Under stressful conditions they manage to remain calm and to keep control;
- They are flexible, accept change as an opportunity;

We can say that Romanian young leaders are able to create stronger interpersonal relationships, they motivate themselves and motivate easily subordinates, they adjust to change, cooperate more easily, are at peace with themselves, create resonance and are regarded with trust by subordinates (Lobonea, 2015). Besides the fact that they must automatically identify what people around them feel, they are able to imagine very well how that person should feel even if they have never been exactly through the same situation.

- Education and educational institutions have positively influenced their career;
- A democratic leader is someone who can work with people with particular focus on: the importance of feedback; employee support initiatives; staff contributions to the organization's performance;
- The young Romanian leaders have the ability to see how the future evolves from the present; they have the capacity to find a way to make the vision be seen, implemented and increased by others.
- Accept uncertainty as something natural in business, they have an appetite for risk, see more opportunities in difficulties. For them, competition is a real challenge.
- The ability of young leaders to be proactive helps to intuit and prevent problems before they occur (24% of respondents gave importance to this capability). We believe that what stops the young Romanian leaders and others from having their own anticipatory strategies and become themselves trendsetters, is the economic environment as the Romanian one, characterized by legal changes, inflation, price fluctuations in raw materials, equipment and transport, low bank rates that make it difficult to stay in business. It's hard for young Romanian leaders to be leaders of market, as long as they are still in a learning phase. Today, the Romanian economy adopts methods and strategies brought by international companies in all the areas: banking, legal, real estate etc. To become a leader you must have a solid base and this solid base must be built now. All you need is patience, because young leaders have everything they need to become proactive in the future. It takes time until young Romanian leaders will have their own strategies and become trendsetters themselves.
- Unfortunately the Romania market suffers from the absence of a reliable capital of trust (12% of respondents said they trust others). We believe that in those 25 years since the collapse of communism a moral value was lost in the Romanian society: trust. Trust between people. In business, for example, you need some time to make sure your potential partners are men of confidence and proof, to demonstrate, in return, that you can be trusted. In Romania businesses have always run into uncertainties, suspicions and fear. Confidence is gained through competence and professionalism. Trust is communication. Trust is a resource for prosperity. Trust is hope.
- In our opinion, leadership in Romanian companies is not necessarily dependent on the age of the leaders. We can say that some leaders have a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of desire to learn new things. A top manager of a company needs several years to obtain good results and we believe that this is a great challenge for young leaders: to remain captivated in a process of knowledge.

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