THE ROLE OF THE LEADER IN BUILDING
THE MENTAL TOUGHNESS OF THE TEAM OF EMPLOYEES

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Purpose: The purpose of the article is to expand the knowledge on the issue of building mental toughness of the employee team and the role that the leader plays in this process.

Design/methodology/approach: A review of the literature indicates that there are more and more publications in this area, but they still lack conclusions supported by the results of empirical research. This article presents the results of a study on the mental toughness of the leader and team. Empirical material was obtained from 198 managers, representing companies located in Poland. The survey was conducted in 2023 using a diagnostic survey method, CAWI technique and an author's survey questionnaire. The survey was preceded by a critical analysis of domestic and foreign literature on mental toughness.

Findings: A review of the literature points to increasing publications on mental toughness, but they still lack conclusions supported by empirical research. However, these are ratings in the vicinity of the good rating without exceeding it. Of the traits and behaviors that build mental toughness, leaders rated the highest: confidence in their own competence, perseverance in achieving the goal, and precise goal setting. Areas that need improvement are related to properly understood risk-taking and challenge-taking. Building team resilience on the part of the leader mainly manifests itself in supporting employees' creativity, actively listening to them and learning about their strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, to a lesser extent, leaders are concerned with ensuring employees' work-life balance.

Research limitations/implications: Among the problems that accompanied the organization of the study were the disordered terminology of mental toughness in the literature and the diversity of its definitions, which made it difficult to operationalize the concept. The impossibility of expanding the issue of mental toughness on the basis of the results from the study undertaken should also be considered a certain limitation. This is a result of the fact that the questions on the mental toughness of the leader and the team were a small part of the questions in the questionnaire of the survey on leadership during a crisis. It is also worth noting that the results obtained are the result of the self-assessment of managers, and in such situations one should always expect the risk of an overestimation.

Originality/value: The issue of mental toughness of work teams is a little-studied area in both domestic and foreign literature. Publications devoted to it are usually literature reviews or conceptual works. Therefore, the results of the research presented in this article have a cognitive value, especially in relation to Polish realities.

Keywords: mental toughness, mental toughness of the team, resilience, mental toughness of the leader.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

The world described by scientists in the VUKA category, after the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, has been referred to as BANI. The acronym is meant to capture the essence of the reality we find ourselves in: brittle, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible. However, this does not mean that volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity do not still accompany us today (Latek-Olaszek, 2022, pp. 189-190; Sidor-Rządkowska, Sienkiewicz, 2023, pp. 154-158). A series of experiences related to wars (e.g., the war in Ukraine), financial crises (e.g., inflation), environmental changes and other threats, including local and individual ones, affect organizations and the people working in them. In this context, attention is increasingly being paid to the mental toughness of organizations, teams and individuals. The Covid-19 Pandemic, in particular, has forced managers to be more attentive to employee wellbeing issues, listening to employees' needs, noticing their emotions and the states they are in (Latek-Olaszek, 2022).

In the scientific literature, the issue of mental toughness of work teams has been operating for a short time and to a small extent (e.g. Hartwig et al., 2020; McEwen, 2022, p. 2). It is accompanied by difficulties related to the definitional arrangements of mental toughness, but also difficulties arising from the high number of factors influencing it. Among these factors, a significant place is occupied by the leader, who can assist the team in building mental toughness. The literature clearly indicates the links between the competencies of the leader, his behavior, characteristics and the mental toughness of the team (e.g. Vera et al., 2017, McEwen, 2022).

The purpose of the article is to expand the knowledge on the issue of building mental toughness of an employee team and the role that the leader plays in this process, with attention to the reality of companies located in Poland. The article is based on the analysis of secondary materials (research reports, journals and online sources) and the results of the own survey, conducted among 198 managers representing companies located in Poland. The survey used a diagnostic survey method and the CAWI technique. The article presents some of the results obtained within the framework of the research topic on leadership.

In the title of the article and its research section, it was decided to operate with the term resilience, referred to in English as mental toughness. One of the reasons for this solution, was the need to ensure the readability of the content in view of the lack of clear definitional arrangements in the literature on the subject and the different terminology, e.g. resistivity, hardness, resilience, sometimes referring to the same phenomenon. Another reason is the use of the 4C model concept by Doug Strycharczyk and Peter Clought (2022) in the research part of the study. This model was built on the definition of resilience understood as mental toughness. In addition, it should be emphasized that mental toughness in the terms of the aforementioned authors is a broader concept than resilience.

2. Mental toughness of the team in the light of the literature

Interest in psychological resilience and mental toughness in the field of management and quality sciences has emerged relatively recently (e.g., King et al., 2016, p. 2; Ingram, 2023, p. 43). Previously, the term functioned through James E. Loeher, primarily in sports, and was associated with the search for ways to improve athletes' performance (Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022, p. 40). Before it was noted that resilience is important in any profession, the research devoted to it was mainly carried out among representatives of professions exposed to high stress (e.g., policeman, soldier, social worker, nurse or firefighter) (e.g. Jackson et al., 2007; King et al., 2016, p. 2; Raetze et al., 2021, p. 610). Additionally, research has most often focused on an individual's resilience. Only recently has the resilience of organizations and teams been recognized and appreciated.

The main difficulty associated with the study of resilience is terminology. In Polish, resilience is variously translated (Junik, 2011, p. 60; Gruszczak, 2016, p. 8), but two terms also appear in English-language literature: resilience and mental toughness (e.g. Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022, pp. 39-40). The second term (mental toughness) is much rarer, and if it occurs, it is mainly in articles on sports (e.g. Weinberg, 2013). Some conceptual confusion results, among other things, from the fact that some researchers use the terms resilience and mental toughness (MT) interchangeably (e.g. Korber, McNaughton, 2017; Searing et al., 2021). Others, however, clearly emphasize the complexity of the concept of mental toughness, and treat resilience as a component of mental toughness (MT) (e.g. Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022, pp. 39-40). If only for this reason, when discussing mental toughness, it is difficult to omit the issue of resilience. Resilience is usually understood as the ability to cope with stress, adversity (Jackson et al., 2007), effective adaptation in the face of extremely unfavorable conditions (Kaczmarek et al., 2011). It is emphasized that resilience accompanies mental toughness, since its effect is to psychologically strengthen the individual.

To distinguish the terms, D. Strycharczyk and P. Clought define resilience as the ability to recover from failure (2022, p. 35), while mental toughness as "a personality trait that largely determines how successfully we cope with challenges, stressors and pressures ... regardless of circumstances" (Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022, p. 13).

Many authors have attempted to organize the material and establish a clear definition of resilience (e.g. Jackson, 2007; Linnenluecke, 2017; Luthar et al., 2000; Högberg, 2022; Raetze et al., 2021). However, numerous publications emphasize that resilience, is an interdisciplinary, multidimensional and highly complex concept, and therefore difficult to define and operationalize (operationalizing) (e.g., Luthar et al., 2000; McEwen, 2022; Ingram, 2023).

King et al. (2016, p. 2), divide definitions of resilience into two groups. In the first group are concepts that treat resilience as a trait or ability that helps an individual, cope with adversity and adapt positively to it (the terms ego-resiliency and psychological resilience are used here).

The second group includes definitions of resilience understood as a dynamic process consisting of an individual's ability to adapt positively to changing conditions, despite adversity ("as a dynamic process consisting of disruption and reintegration in which an individual displays positive adaptation despite experienced adversity") (King et al., 2016, p. 2).

The increase in interest in mental toughness and resilience, has not helped to reduce the difficulties accompanying the concept. On the contrary, in the case of defining team resilience, in addition to the above-mentioned problems, other problems are added, such as determining the relationship between individual, team and organizational levels of resilience (Raetze et al., 2021). According to some authors, team resilience is the resultant of the resilience of the individuals that make up the team (Hartwig et al., 2020, p. 178). A similar relationship is mentioned by McEwen and Boyd (2018, p. 259), although the authors emphasize that team resilience, "as a product of team processes and relationships, team resilience should be more than merely the aggregated resilience of individual team members". Similar conclusions apply to the impact of team resilience on organizational resilience. It is undeniable that the resilience of individuals, teams and organizations interact, and existing knowledge and research devoted to these relationships should be integrated (Vera et al., 2017; Raetze et al., 2021).

A review of definitions of team resilience leads one to identify three recurring themes in them: the dynamic nature of resilience, positive adaptation to adversity, and sustained team vitality (Hartwig et al., 2020, p. 176). It can be assumed that team resilience is "the capacity of a group of employees within a team to manage the everyday pressure of work and remain healthy, to adapt to change, and to be proactive in positioning for future work challenges" (McEwen, 2016, p. 14, after: McEwen, Boyd, 2018, p. 259).

Team resilience "it aids in reducing the deleterious effects of work-related stress, enhances work-related well-being, boosts adaptability and job performance, and assists teams to better prepare for future challenges or disruption" (McEwen, Boyd, 2018, p. 259). For some, mental toughness and resilience is the answer to the question: why do teams with similar or even identical levels of competence, experience, with similar equipment and under similar conditions in which they perform a task achieve different results? (Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022, p. 155).

3. Leader as a key factor in shaping team mental toughness

The leader is cited as one of the most important factors shaping team resilience. Important in this case is his behavior, leadership style, emotions, work organization and his own mental toughness (Hartwig et al., 2020, p. 178; Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022, p. 157). The literature most often emphasizes the positive impact of the transformational leader (transformational leader) on the resilience of the team (e.g. Vera et al., 2017; Hartwig et al., 2020, p. 181; van der Beek, Schraagen, 2015, p. 6), but does not exclude other leadership theories, such as authentic

leadership, charismatic leadership or Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX) (Kakkar, 2019, p. 4). A style of leadership that creates a team climate and fosters resilience is appreciated and recognized (Raetze, 2022, pp. 614).

The leader shares much of the responsibility for group processes that affect how the team handles adversity. Above all, cooperation, communication and coordination should be taken into account (Hartwig et al., 2020, pp. 180-183). Good team relationships can give confidence that one has support when difficulties arise (Meneghel et al., 2016). The ability to communicate effectively, the knowledge and experience that team members have also provide this (Hartwig et al., 2020, p. 179). A history of ways to deal with adversity, can provide the team with a powerful resource for solutions in new situations and foster confidence.

Proper organization of work and its coordination makes it possible to achieve high efficiency of the team, but also what is important from the perspective of resilience, i.e. wellbeing (maintaining a balance between work and personal life and a sense of satisfaction and contentment). A leader does not have direct influence on all the factors that determine an employee's sense of mental wellbeing, but he or she can ensure the proper division of labor in the team, can show care in organizing a place and time for rest at work, introduce and respect the principle of not answering phone calls and e-mails after working hours or on vacation, and promote a healthy lifestyle. These values were particularly realized by employees during the crisis caused by the Covid -19 pandemic.

Mental well-being is associated with positive mood (including at the group affective tone level), and this in turn correlates with performance at work, team creativity and trust, as confirmed by research (Warr, Nielsen, 2018, pp. 10-11). The ability and skill to express emotions (including negative ones) influences the team's better performance (Warr, Nielsen, 2018, pp. 10-11).

Other authors list similar sources of team mental resilience: work-life balance, skill development, career development, well-being, equity and communication (Vera et al., 2017, pp. 7-8).

When studying the issue of the formation of team mental toughness, the question of the mental toughness of the leader, who must have a high level of resilience, cannot be ignored. D. Strycharczyk and P. Clought (2022, p. 165) prepared the 4C model, in which overall mental toughness is built on 4 pillars: challenge, confidence, commitment, control. This model is used in identifying the mental toughness of both individuals and teams. It also became the inspiration for the preparation of questions in the survey questionnaire constructed for the study.

4. Methodology of the study and characteristics of the research sample

The presented results are part of the research conducted within the framework of the research grant entitled "Leadership and Communication with Stakeholders in the Changing Conditions of Organizational Operations" (UGB No. 853/2023). The study was carried out using a diagnostic survey method with the Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) technique and a proprietary survey questionnaire, which included questions about the mental resilience of the leader and the team. The survey was conducted in September 2024 by an external research firm the Research Institute IPC Sp. z o.o.

A total of 198 people representing various companies participated in the survey. The selection of companies for the study was stratified randomly and included companies from 16 provinces in Poland.

The respondents were: company owners (60 people), board members (35 people), senior managers (21 people), middle managers (50 people) and line managers (32 people). 89 women and 109 men participated in the survey. They represented small enterprises with 10 to 49 people (66 respondents), medium-sized enterprises with 50 to 249 people (66 respondents) and large enterprises with more than 250 people (66 respondents). Equal groups (66 each) were from the following industries: trade, manufacturing and services. The form of company ownership was also taken into account. A partnership was represented by 133 people, while a corporation was represented by 65 people. Companies with predominantly or exclusively Polish capital (166) and predominantly or exclusively foreign capital (32) took part in the survey.

Calculations were carried out using the PS IMAGO PRO 6.0 statistical program.

An analysis of the literature indicates an increased interest in workforce team mental toughness. However, the published materials are usually literature reviews or conceptual papers. It is less common to find papers that present research results from primary sources. The material presented in this article is an excerpt from the author's study and the basis for answering the following research questions: 1. To what extent do the surveyed leaders support the mental toughness of their team of employees? and 2. How do the surveyed leaders assess their mental toughness? The following research hypotheses were adopted: 1) Leaders have a low degree of awareness regarding team mental toughness and care for its formation among employees, and 2) Leaders rate their own mental toughness as good.

5. Results of the study

Based on the literature (e.g. Jackson, 2007; McEwen, 2016; Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022; Ingram, 2023, p. 33), exemplary leader behaviors that can support team mental toughness have been identified. They fit the characteristics of a high-performing team (shared goals and objectives, good communication, interpersonal skills, continuous improvement and problem solving, a sense of success and commitment) (Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022, p. 165) and the 4C model by D. Strycharczyk and P. Clought (2022). They focused on positive leader behaviors that contribute to strengthening team mental toughness, leaving out those that may undermine mental toughness (e.g., narcissistic behaviors and excessive risk-taking). Examples of both can be found in the literature (Ingram, 2023, p. 33).

Table 1.
Actions taken by the leader to shape the mental toughness of the team (N = 198)

No.	Activities to foster mental toughness of the team		Scale *					Mean value
			1	2	3	4	5	
1.	Ensuring that employees maintain a work-life balance, such as through training on the subject, work organization, and time for rest.	wellbeing	2.5%	9.6%	23.2%	39.9%	24.7%	3.75
2.	Include in the organization of work and enforce rest time for employees.		5.1%	6.1%	21.7%	39.4%	27.8%	3.79
3.	Creating an environment that promotes focus at work, such as employee availability only at certain times and during working hours, the ability to turn off notifications, a day without meetings.		4.0%	9.6%	23.7%	37.4%	25.3%	3.70
4.	Clearly defining and prioritizing goals.	commitment	3.0%	7.6%	25.8%	39.9%	23.7%	3.74
5.	Equitable assignment of tasks in the team.		1.5%	7.1%	22.7%	41.4%	27.3%	3.86
6.	Involving employees in change.		5.6%	5.6%	20.7%	42.4%	25.8%	3.77
7.	Supporting employee creativity.	challenge	4.0%	3.5%	17.7%	41.4%	33.3%	3.96
8.	Concern for smooth communication within the team, e.g., by setting rules for smooth communication.		4.0%	5.6%	22.2%	44.4%	23.7%	3.78
9.	Active listening, including talking to employees about their needs.		2.0%	7.6%	20.2%	43.9%	26.3%	3.85
10.	Getting to know the strengths and weaknesses of employees.	confidence	2.5%	6.1%	22.2%	44.4%	24.7%	3.83
11.	Support employees in building appropriate interpersonal relationships within the team, such as holding meetings to get to know each other better.		4.0%	9.1%	23.7%	41.4%	21.7%	3.68
12.	Education on how to deal with stress.		5.6%	12.6%	24.7%	31.8%	25.3%	3.59

* The question was closed-ended and used a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates a low degree and 5 a high degree of actions taken by the leader to shape the team's mental toughness. A value of 3 on the five-point scale is interpreted as a medium degree of actions taken by the leader to shape team mental toughness.

Source: own research.

An analysis of the results in Table 1 shows no clear differences in the ratings of individual leader actions supporting team mental toughness. The arithmetic averages of the ratings for all the leader's behaviors range from 3.59 to 3.96. None of the listed behaviors received an average rating of 4 and above, although the most frequently appearing rating in each behavior category was 4 (the dominant 4). Research hypothesis 1 can be considered false. Leaders represent a similar to good level of awareness regarding team mental toughness and care for its formation among employees. Summing up the answers marked on the scale as 4 and 5, it can be said that supporting employees' creativity was rated highest (74.7%), followed by active listening, including talking to employees about their needs (70.2%) and just behind that learning about employees' strengths and weaknesses (69.1%). After summing up the answers marked on the scale as 1 and 2, the lowest rated behaviors of a leader can be considered: educating employees on how to deal with stress (18.2%), creating conditions conducive to focus at work, such as the availability of an employee only at a certain time and during working hours, the ability to turn off notifications, a day without meetings, (13.6%), supporting employees in building appropriate interpersonal relationships in the team (13.1%). Attention to employees' maintenance of work-life balance, such as through training on the subject, work organization, and time for rest (12.1%), also received low ratings.

The Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Rs) obtained indicates a very weak but clear and statistically significant (p) negative correlation between the size of the workforce and the following leadership behaviors for shaping team mental toughness: educating on how to deal with stress ($Rs = -0.125$; $p = 0.079$), incorporating work organization and enforcing rest time for employees ($Rs = -0.038$; $p = 0.599$), learning about employees' strengths and weaknesses ($Rs = -0.030$; $p = 0.671$), active listening, among others. e.g., talking to employees about their needs ($Rs = -0.045$; $p = 0.528$), concern for efficient communication within the team, e.g. by setting rules for efficient communication ($Rs = -0.044$; $p = 0.541$), supporting employees' creativity ($Rs = -0.044$; $p = 0.539$), involving employees in change ($Rs = -0.068$; $p = 0.344$), supporting employees in building appropriate interpersonal relationships in the team, e.g., holding meetings to get to know each other better ($Rs = -0.083$; $p = 0.243$).

Based on the value of Spearman's R correlation coefficient (Rs), one notices a statistically significant (p) positive correlation between the size of the workforce and explicit goal setting and prioritization ($Rs = 0.017$; $p = 0.814$). No statistically significant correlations are seen between the size of the workforce and other leader behaviors such as ensuring that employees maintain a work-life balance, equitable allocation of tasks within the team, and creating conditions conducive to focusing attention at work. Statistically significant relationships also do not appear between the scope of the company's activities, the form of ownership of the company, the ownership capital, the position or function held by the respondent, gender and the leadership behaviors listed in Table 1.

The study undertaken was also interested in the mental toughness of the leader as affecting the mental toughness of the team, and in selecting statements for the survey questionnaire, the 4C model was inspired. Each dimension forming the 4C model (challenge, confidence, commitment, control/impact) in the survey questionnaire was represented by descriptions of two views (Strycharczyk, Clought, 2022). Self-assessment of managers' mental toughness is presented in Table 2.

The results obtained allow us to conclude that the arithmetic averages of the ratings of each category of manager's resilience oscillate within, but do not exceed, the rating of 4 (Table 2). Therefore, it is necessary to consider hypothesis 2 as true, since leaders rate their own mental toughness well. Summing up the answers marked on the scale as 4 and 5, it can be said that self-confidence (71.2%), perseverance in achieving the goal (68.7%) and precise goal setting (69.7%) were rated highest. It is worth noting that the last two responses relate to the "commitment" dimension from the 4C model.

Table 2.
Self-assessment of leader's mental toughness (N = 198)

No.	Categories		Scale *					Mean value
			1	2	3	4	5	
1.	I have the belief that success, work efficiency, etc. depends on me, and that I can handle all adversities.	control/sense of influence	3.0%	6.1%	30.3%	43.9%	16.7%	3.65
2.	I understand my emotions and can quickly return to emotional equilibrium, such as after unforeseen events, unpleasant situations or statements made by others.		0.5%	6.6%	27.3%	41.9%	23.7%	3.82
3.	I set precise goals to achieve. They are a source of motivation and direction for me.	commit-ment	1.0%	5.6%	23.7%	46.0%	23.7%	3.86
4.	I am persistent in achieving the goal. I can focus my attention and effort to achieve the set goal.		2.0%	7.1%	22.2%	39.9%	28.8%	3.86
5.	I find risk exciting and interesting because through it you can grow and learn something new.	challenge	4.5%	11.6%	32.3%	33.8%	17.7%	3.48
6.	I like to take on challenges. I can learn from my experiences and learn and grow from failures as well.		2.0%	10.6%	25.8%	39.9%	21.7%	3.69
7.	I believe in my own competence, so that I can take on a specific task (even a difficult one), and complete it.	confidence	0.0%	7.1%	21.7%	41.9%	29.3%	3.93
8.	In interpersonal relations, I am assertive. I can present my own opinion and defend it effectively if necessary.		1.0%	7.1%	28.8%	39.9%	23.2%	3.77

* The question was closed-ended and used a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates a low degree and 5 a high degree of behavior affecting a leader's mental toughness. A value of 3 on the five-point scale is interpreted as a medium degree of behavior affecting a leader's mental toughness.

Source: own research.

The results, regarding the behaviors rated lowest, are interesting. Both behaviors come from the "challenge" area from the 4C model: willingness to take risks understood as a challenge and opportunity for growth (16.1% - summed values from assessments on scales numbered 1 and 2) and willingness to take challenges (12.6% - summed values from assessments on scales numbered 1 and 2).

Spearman's R correlation coefficient (Rs) indicates a very weak but clear and statistically significant (p) negative correlation between employment size and confidence in one's own competence, (item 7 in Table 2) (Rs = -0.020; p = 0.778), understanding of one's emotions and quick return to emotional equilibrium (item 2 in Table. 2) (Rs = -0.021; p = 0.768), love of taking on challenges (item 6 in Tab. 2) (Rs = -0.044; p = 0.542), belief that much depends on me otherwise intrinsic controllability (item 1 in Tab. 2) (Rs = -0.069; p = 0.336).

Based on the value of Spearman's R correlation coefficient (Rs), it is noted that there is a statistically significant (p) positive correlation between the size of the workforce and the leader's ability to accurately set a goal (item 3 in Tab. 2) (Rs = 0.013; p = 0.860), his assertiveness (item 8 in Table 2) (Rs = 0.023; p = 0.751), persistence in achieving the goal (item 4 in Table 2) (Rs = 0.040; p = 0.572), risk-taking (item 5 in Table 2) (Rs = 0.047; p = 0.515).

No statistically significant correlations were noted between the scope of the company's activities, the form of ownership of the company, ownership capital, the respondent's position or function, gender and the indicators of leader mental toughness listed in Table 2.

6. Summary and conclusions

Mental toughness, according to a 2020 survey of HR managers, is one of the most important leadership competencies for any managerial level (Development Priorities, 2020). A leader is obliged to take care to shape his or her own mental toughness, but also the mental toughness of the team. These issues were highlighted more clearly after the Covid-19 pandemic. The aforementioned research (Development Priorities, 2020), illustrates the fairly high mental toughness of senior managers, but at the same time emphasizes that managers have a hard time helping shape the mental toughness of other employees. They also note that 42% of surveyed middle managers have trouble with mental toughness (Development Priorities, 2020).

The results of our own research presented in this article indicate a fairly high self-assessment of mental toughness. However, it is a good rating which suggests that there are areas that need improvement. The highest ratings were given to competencies related to the dimension of self-confidence and commitment from the 4C model. These include confidence in one's own competence, perseverance in achieving a goal and precise goal setting. At the same time, the image of a leader is drawn as conservative. The survey results indicate that leaders are

cautious about taking risks and challenges. Both behaviors come from the "challenge" area of the 4C model of resilience. Properly understood, risk allows the search for new opportunities, is associated with courage and hardens resilience, among other things, by becoming accustomed to different situations (including failures).

In order to build team mental toughness, it is important to have a leader's mental toughness, but also their support. Research shows that leaders emphasize supporting employees' creativity and active listening. These are leader behaviors from the challenge area (4C model). Also represented in high places was the area, called in the 4C model, self-confidence. In this case, the leader's behavior was about knowing the strengths and weaknesses of employees.

Unfortunately, it should be noted that the surveyed leaders are less likely to educate employees on how to deal with stress and less likely to support them in building appropriate interpersonal relationships within the team. The area related to *wellbeing* is also neglected, yet work-life balance, the opportunity and ability to rest affect employee effectiveness.

With the annotation that there were no clear differences in the respondents' answers in both questions, the control/sense of influence dimension is still noteworthy, especially the low scores for the answer concerning the belief that success, work efficiency, etc. depends on me.

It is worth noting the limitations accompanying the study:

1. The disordered terminology in the literature and the variety of definitions of mental toughness made it difficult to operationalize the concept.
2. Questions on the leader's mental toughness and his behaviors affecting the team's mental toughness were included in the questions of the survey questionnaire on leadership during crisis. Therefore, the possibilities of expanding the issue of mental toughness in the conducted survey were limited. However, the results obtained provide some insight into leader mental toughness. In addition, they provide a cognitive value in relation to Polish realities, and it should be noted that in the domestic literature the issue of mental toughness of teams is taken up by few authors.
3. The results obtained are the result of self-assessment of managers. In such situations, the risk of overestimation should always be taken into account.

In summary, the results obtained from the study allow us to sketch a picture of a leader who is confident in his competence, is able to precisely define the goal and persistently pursue it, but at the same time is not fully convinced that the success and effectiveness of work depends on him. In addition, he presents a conservative attitude towards taking challenges and risks. He has a reasonably good assessment of his own mental toughness, which can be a good predictor of the formation of team mental toughness.

Building team mental toughness on the part of the leader mainly manifests itself in supporting employees' creativity, actively listening to them and learning about their strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, to a lesser extent, leaders are concerned with ensuring employees' work-life balance. The actions taken by the leader to shape the mental toughness of

the team were well appreciated by the respondents.

The survey conducted, provides a basis for further in-depth research in the area of leader and team mental toughness. In this regard, it is worth exploring the perspective of employees as well. This is because it can be predicted that interest in team mental toughness in organizations will increase.

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