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Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

21

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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Career orientations and motivation of top and middle-level managers

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Abstract

The research is devoted to the motivation of specialists who achieved top positions in organizations. The paper researches career orientations and motivation of 135 managers of state enterprises. The methods used are the test for measuring the achievement motivation, the method of diagnosing satisfaction of basic needs, the authors' questionnaire, and comparative analysis. As a result, the leading career orientations for the sample, in general, are Service and General managerial competence. In conclusion, the career orientation of General managerial competence tends to increase with the growth of success attainment motivation.

Keywords: Career, Orientations, Anchors, Conceptions, Needs.

Orientaciones profesionales y motivación de directivos de nivel medio y alto

Resumen

La investigación está dedicada a la motivación de los especialistas que lograron los primeros puestos en organizaciones. El artículo investiga las orientaciones profesionales y la motivación de 135 gerentes de empresas estatales. Los métodos utilizados son la prueba para medir la motivación de logro, el método para diagnosticar la satisfacción de las necesidades básicas, el cuestionario de los autores y el análisis comparativo. Como resultado, las principales orientaciones de carrera para la muestra, en general, son el servicio y la competencia gerencial general. En conclusión, la orientación profesional de la competencia gerencial general tiende a aumentar con el crecimiento de la motivación para alcanzar el éxito.

Palabras clave: Carrera, Orientaciones, Anclas, Concepciones, Necesidades.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been a transformation of management conceptions in two main directions: from personnel management to human resources management and from advanced training to personnel development. The first trend is manifested in the increased activity of personnel services in managing an enterprise, and the second – in the increased role of social and psychological components of management, i.e., in satisfying the needs of employees and increasing the role of the human factor in management and production. In this regard, the realities of informational society make a great impact on the career experience

of people (Hirschi, 2018), making them review the issues of applying the existing psychological career conceptions to contemporary trends in professional development. The conceptions of personnel development determined the interest in psychological issues of professional growth (Rogov, 2016; Whiston et al, 2015), to implementation of abilities of a person under the conditions of working in an organization, etc. Psychological research highlight such constituents and indicators of career as: stages of professional path; employment in specific fields of professional activity; growth of experience and competence, or skills; development of the personality of a professional; finding one's mission in profession; achieving the desired lifestyle, material wellbeing, social recognition; promotion by positions, achieving official status, promotion in the managerial system (Sheveleva, 2013; Dieringer et al., 2017).

The productive activity of a personality and striving for career growth are largely connected with motivation for achievement, which is manifested in a person's striving to increase the level of their opportunities, to achieve high results, and to professional self-improvement (Rogov et al., 2014; Schein, 1986). The motivation of successful attainment is a positive factor, largely determining the efficiency of professional activity and satisfaction with labor, as well as a positive attitude towards profession and efficient psychological adaptation. This motive directs and regulates the process of promotion and managerial functions' implementation. Making crucial decisions depends on coordination between motivation for achievement and fear of failure, opposing it (Elovskaya & Sheveleva, 2014).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The above determined our research objective as the study of career orientations and motivation in the top and middle-level managers. The research object is the top and middle-level managers of state enterprises. The focus of research is interconnections of career orientations with motivation for achievement, with motivation for satisfying the basic needs, and the circumstances of career paths of the respondents. The main hypothesis is that different career orientations have specific interconnections with motivation for achievement and with motivation for satisfying the basic needs. We also checked the hypotheses about the features of the studied parameters in the top and middle-level managers and in the respondents of the two genders.

3. RESULTS

The analysis of the obtained results showed the following. The leading career orientations for the sample, in general, are Service and General managerial competence. The career orientation of Entrepreneurial creativity is rejected (Table 1, Fig. 1).

Table 1: Hierarchy of career orientations in the sample (analysis by Freidman criterion)

Career orientations	Mean ranking
Technical/functional competence	4.21
General managerial competence	4.94
Autonomy/independence	4.40
Security/stability	4.29

Service	5.11
Pure challenge	4.73
Lifestyle	4.71
Entrepreneurial creativity	3.63

Note: Sample volume = 135; empirical indicator $\chi^2 = 36.104$; number of degrees of freedom $df = 7$; significance level $p = .0001$

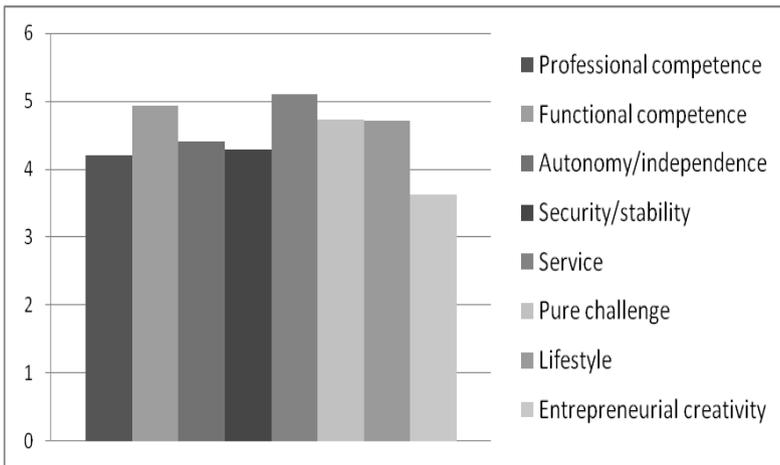


Fig. 1: Hierarchy of career orientations in the sample (analysis by Freidman criterion, average ranking)

By the results of polling with the authors' questionnaire, we revealed the following circumstances of the career paths of the respondents. To the question do you have a goal in life? 76% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. 87% of the respondents emphasized the need for self-improvement. 64.8% of top managers, 77.7% of middle-level managers (men) and 71.5% of middle-level managers (women) are sure that they will be able to fulfill their life goals. Among the reason which may impede the fulfillment of life

goals, they mentioned: health, family, lack of conditions (money, vacancies).

Although the majority (72.1% of the whole sample) had not set the specific career goals for themselves, their desires changed at a certain point: in 35.2% of top managers, 29.6% of middle-level managers (men) and 42.8% of middle-level managers (women). As for the stages at which the changes took place, 69% of the respondents of the whole sample noted that they changed their goals 4-6 years after the beginning of labor activity. In general, the respondents are satisfied with their present job. Correlation of different variants is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Satisfaction of the respondents with their present job (%)

Variant of the answer	Top managers	Middle-level managers – men	Middle-level managers – women
Fully satisfied	47%	37.1%	57.1%
Rather satisfied	47%	55.5%	28.6%
Rather not satisfied	3%	3.8%	14.3%
Not satisfied	3%	3.8%	-

The most attractive aspect of their job is the opportunity to show initiative for male managers and good salary for female managers (Table 3).

Table 3: Attractive aspects at work

Attractive aspects	Top managers	Middle-level managers – men	Middle-level managers – women
Independence	25%	14.5%	20%
Chance to show initiative	35%	29.1%	24%
Promotion prospects	-	10.4%	-
Good salary	25%	18.7%	40%
Good collective	15%	16.6%	16%
Social support of the employees	-	4.1%	-
Something else	-	-	6.6%

Among the aspects which they do not like, the respondents mark the following (sample in general): 41.6% – interrelations with supervisors and subordinates (dependence upon supervisors, attitude to people, difficulties of working with subordinates and with supervisors, behavior or attitude of supervisors, etc.); 20% – stress, a large number of stressful situations; 10.4% – single answers: paperwork, frequent inspections, responsibility, insufficient material-technical provision, dependence upon supervisors, etc. 28% of the respondents answered that they liked everything. As for the striving for a promotion, it is more expressed among men – middle-level managers (48.1%). In the same sample, the share of those who do not strive to be promoted was 25.9%, the rest could not answer.

Among women – middle-level managers, the number of those who strive and do not strive to be promoted was equal – 42.8%. The

rest did not give a definite answer. Among the top managers, only 5.8% of the respondents said they wanted to be promoted. 58.8% no longer want to be promoted, satisfied with the position in their organization. However, 35.4% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

The managers, in general, agree that they underwent internal changes during their professional promotion. They see changes in acquiring professional experience, functional competence, assessing the situation, making decisions. They also note changes in the personality sphere: became more confident, independent; became more farsighted, disciplined, active, firm, committed, responsible, reserved, and realistic towards work, demanding towards oneself and subordinates. Tables 4 and 5 show the percentage of answers to questions what could you forfeit for the career? and What would you never forfeit for the career?

Table 4: Percentage of answers to the question what could you forfeit for the career? & what would you never forfeit for the career?

What could you forfeit for the career?	Top managers	Middle-level managers – men	Middle-level managers – women
Family	-	3.8%	
Friends	-	7.7%	-
Rest	20%	34.7%	42.8%
Habitual way of life	50%	53.8%	57.2%
Nothing	30%	-	-
What would you never forfeit for the career?	Top managers	Middle-level managers – men	Middle-level managers –

What could you forfeit for the career?	Top managers	Middle-level managers – men	Middle-level managers – women
			women
Family	47%	54%	66.7%
Friends	3.1%	16.2%	13.3%
Your principles and convictions	17.5%	16.2%	13.3%
Deserved respect of colleagues or friends	11.8%	10.8%	
Habitual way of life	3.1%	2.8%	13.3%
Nothing	17.5%	-	-

It can be noted that professional career can compete with such spheres as rest and habitual way of life, but is virtually unable to make a person reject one's interpersonal relations, as well as principles and convictions. Assessing their promotion, most of the respondents consider it to be significant: they occupy a much higher position than at the beginning of their career path (66.7% of top managers, 57.7% of men and 61.6% of women among middle-level managers). The majority of the respondents' mark that at different stages of the career they were helped by other people (parents, friends, family, colleagues, influential acquaintances, etc.). Estimating the help from other people, about half of the respondents marked the greatest assistance from colleagues (Table 6).

Table 5: Sources of assistance in the career

	Top managers	Middle-level managers – men	Middle-level managers – women
Parents	11.1%	4.5%	9.2%
Friends	-	18.2%	18.1%
Family	11.1%	31.9%	18.1%
Colleagues	55.6%	40.9%	45.4%
Influential acquaintances	11.1%	4.5%	9.2%
Somebody else	11.1%	-	-

Assistance was rendered in the form of advice, personal practical participation, significant information, emotional support (Table 7). Many managers keep being assisted by these people, mainly in the form of emotional support and advice.

Table 6: Type of assistance in career

	Top managers	Middle-level managers – men	Middle-level managers – women
Material means	-	-	-
Connections	10%	-	-
Important information	10%	32%	33.4%
Personal practical participation	30%	24%	25%
Advice	30%	16%	16.6%
Emotional support	20%	28%	25%

By the results of psycho-diagnosing, the motivation of success attainment dominates in the sample. However, with the increase of age and working experience of the respondents, it tends to decrease (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = -0.495$ at significance level $p = 0.0001$, and Spearman correlation coefficient $r = -0.436$ at significance level $p = 0.0001$, accordingly). Among the motives of basic needs satisfaction, Esteem and Self-expression dominate. The least significant are interpersonal needs (Table 8, Fig. 2).

Table 7: Hierarchy of needs satisfaction in the sample (analysis by Freidman criterion)

Basic needs	Mean ranking
Material needs	2.84
Safety	2.89
Interpersonal needs	2.66
Esteem	3.36
Self-expression	3.25

Note: Sample volume = 135; empirical indicator $\chi^2 = 18.896$; number of degrees of freedom $df = 4$; significance level $p = .0001$

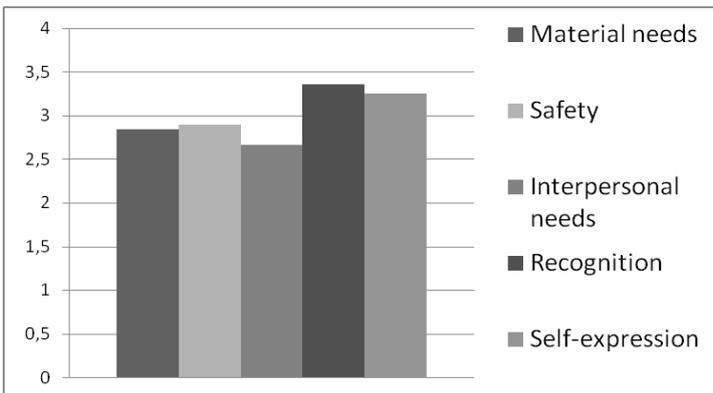


Fig. 2: Hierarchy of needs satisfaction in the sample (analysis by Freidman criterion, average ranking)

Statistical analysis of the obtained psycho-diagnostic data allowed revealing correlations between the studied parameters. As for the sample in general, the career orientation of General managerial competence tends to become more expressed with the growth of success attainment motivation (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = 0.19$ at significance level $p = 0.027$). Orientation towards stability tends to increase with the experience of working in a managerial position (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = 0.172$ at significance level $p = 0.046$), and orientation towards challenge increases with age (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = 0.19$ at significance level $p = 0.027$).

Also, weak correlations were found between the motivation of satisfying the need in esteem and the following career orientations: General managerial competence (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = 0.153$ at significance level $p = 0.075$) and Stability (Spearman correlation coefficient $r = -0.148$ at significance level $p = 0.087$). Statistically, significant features of various studied parameters were found in managers of different levels.

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the fact that the leading career orientations for the sample in general are Service and General managerial competence, and the rejected one is Entrepreneurial creativity, one may conclude that the key values of career are working with people, serving to humanity, assistance to people, desire to make the world better, as well as integration of other people's efforts, full responsibility for the result, and combining the various functions of an organization. Based on the characteristic of enterprises where the respondents work, we conclude that achievement of these goals is associated with the work of a hired manager, not with personal entrepreneurship and running one's own business.

The circumstances of career experience revealed by questioning are associated mainly with comprehension of one's own life goals, confidence in one's ability to fulfill the life plans, comprehension of possible obstacles in their fulfillment (mainly health, family, lack of conditions – money, vacancies – were mentioned). Managers of different status and gender are characterized by changing their career goals 4-6 years after the beginning of labor activity. This correlates with the literature data on professional development and career (Chernyshev, 2007).

By the criterion of striving for a status promotion, the sample is heterogeneous, as there are respondents occupying different positions in the hierarchy – among the middle-level managers, this striving is much more expressed than among top managers. The majority of top managers consider it sufficient to remain in their position within their

organization. Interestingly, among the female respondents (all – middle-level managers), the number of those who are and those who are not oriented towards promotion is equal. We believe that the lower, compared to men's, claims for promotion among women reflect their comprehension of the existing situation in the business world. This refers to the difficulties perceived by women when joining the management of organizations, obstacles in promoting women compared to men with the same educational and professional experience (Sheveleva, 2013; Bendas, 2009; Kenan, 2018).

It should be noted that a lot of the respondents gave no answer to the question about their plans for promotion, probably not willing to let other people into them. The motives for career promotion of managers mainly refer to the interpersonally and individualistic ones – striving for professional growth, striving for independence, autonomy, material wellbeing and social status. The factors associated with responsibility are significant, too – the necessity to take care of the family. For women, these factors are more significant than for men.

5. CONCLUSION

Summarizing the above, we can make the following conclusions which confirm the proposed research hypotheses.

1. The leading career orientations for the sample are Service and General managerial competence. The career orientation of Entrepreneurial creativity is rejected.

2. The integral conceptions of managers about their own career are based on general satisfaction with their job, the attractive aspects of which is the opportunity to show initiative and good salary.

The negative factors of professional activity include relations with the supervisors and subordinates and a large number of stressful situations. The moving causes of a career are: striving for self-implementation, striving for professional growth, the necessity to take care of the family, striving for independence and autonomy. For promotion, managers are ready to work more than others, fulfill tasks with higher responsibility, master new skills and knowledge. As for the resources necessary for achieving career success, the managers emphasized functional competence, leadership abilities, and responsibility to be the most significant ones. Assessing the presence of the necessary qualities in themselves, the managers marked discipline and diligence alongside with responsibility and functional competence.

Professional career, in the opinion of the respondents, may compete with rest and habitual way of living, but it actually cannot make them reject their significant interpersonal relations (family, friends, and colleagues), principles and convictions. The assistance of other people in implementing the career of the respondents occurred

mainly in the form of advice, personal practical participation, significant information, and emotional support. The greatest role was played by assistance on the part of colleagues. The internal changes taking place in the course of implementing the professional career of the respondents consisted in acquiring experience in the profession, functional competence, assessing the situation, decision making, and in the personal sphere.

3. The motivation of success attainment dominates in the sample, decreasing with the period of working and the age of the respondents. Experienced managers try to minimize the risks of undesired events.

Among the motives of satisfying the basic needs, Esteem and Self-expression dominate as most significant.

4. The career orientation of General managerial competence tends to increase with the growth of success attainment motivation. Orientation towards stability tends to increase with the period of working in a managerial position, and orientation towards Pure challenge – with age.

5. Career orientations have their specific features depending on the respondents' rank in the managerial hierarchy, and on their gender.

Top managers are more oriented towards General managerial competence and Pure challenge in their career.

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**UNIVERSIDAD
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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 35, Especial N° 21, (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.
Maracaibo - Venezuela

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