Social

PROFESSIONAL CAREER MANAGEMENT

ANCUŢA ELENA BONCILĂ, PhD.lecturer ILEANA SIMONA DABU
West University of Timisoara, Romania

ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study is to identify the importance of careers among employees and future high school graduates. I consider that the choice of profession is a fundamental decision, because it marks the good development of private and professional life.*
The reason I choose this subject is the aspiration I have for my future profession, namely, to work in the field of human resources. Therefore, I considered it important to know the perspectives and visions of future new employees in the labor market, to discover the areas in which young people want to work, to identify methods of motivation and aspects that ensure fulfillment at work and to find the necessary balance between work and family life.
Keywords: *professional career; performance; structural planning; active management.*

1. Introduction

The chosen job influences the life of each of us to a great extent, so that in addition to the material benefits from the job, there must be both professional and personal fulfillment to achieve the best performance and results. Young people are more adaptable and flexible to work than employees who have been in the labour market for some time.

This study plans to examine the importance of career choice and the factors that contribute to the motivation and satisfaction of high school graduates and employees. Thus, through this study, the aim is to identify the expectations of high school graduates regarding their future career, to identify the level of knowledge on career management among both high school students and employees. It is also intended to observe the reasons why these students want to follow a training programme on career management activities.

Another aspect that is intended to be pursued among employees, is marked by the factors that provide fulfilment and satisfaction at work and the identification of the favourable stage in their journey in the process of career achievement and development. At the same time, it aims to discover the work-life balance among employees.

Last but not least, among students, the aim is to identify the area of the labour market towards which future high school graduates are heading and the work climate they want in the organisation they will join.

2.Analysis and results

The term career derives from the French language, and in Romanian it is understood as profession, and by extension it can be perceived as a good situation or position in society.

Career is a unique process for each person. This process includes defining factors in the development of a person's career. These factors include: ethnicity, gender, skills, socio- economic status, opportunities, but also family (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Thus, the core of career theories signifies the totality of a person's work experiences over a period of time. Also, objective career is made up of the totality of jobs an individual holds, job duties, while subjective career includes the changes in values, aspirations and motivations each

person experiences over time.

Career management is a combination of structured planning and active management of career choices. It is a process that enables employees to better understand and develop their values and interests in their careers and to use them in the most effective way within the company (Armstrong, 1991). Specific career management activities provide realistic career-oriented assessments, post vacancies, and provide formal career development activities. (Manolescu, 2001) However, in an organizational environment, the focus is on taking action to meet expected human resource needs. Career management plans strive to involve employees in setting their own goals and recognise their strengths and weaknesses.

Work-life balance is about combining work and personal life so that both can be successfully achieved (Casey, Grzywacz, 2008, 45). The traditional view of this work-life stability is illustrated by several models that attempt to explain the relationship between work and life outside of work: segmentation model, contagion model, compensation model (Guest, 2002, 255-279).

The segmentation model is based on the assumption that personal life and work are two completely different domains of life. Today's technological advances are turning the segmentation model into a myth, because today, through modern means of communication, employees can be permanently connected to the organization.

This study is based on qualitative research because it is based on the assumption that individuals confer certain meanings on the environment in which they live, and that these meanings, in a particular way, are distinct from person to person (Myers, 2000).

Analysing how individuals live their life experiences provides opportunities to describe different subjective realities.

The established research instrument is the interview, which is one of the main qualitative research methods.

In the dictionary of sociology, it is portrayed as a "technique of eliciting by question and answer verbal information from individuals and human groups for the purpose of testing hypotheses or for the scientific description of "socio-human phenomena..." (Rotariu, Zamfir, Vlăsceanu, 1998).

For this research, the interview chosen is of a semi-structured type, because the themes and assumptions established in advance are addressed, but the sequence of questions is not predetermined (Chelcea, 2001).

The overall objective of this paper is marked by the identification of the importance of career choice and the factors that contribute to the motivation and satisfaction of high school graduates and employees.

A number of specific objectives follow from the central objective: To identify the expectations and criteria of graduates and employees with regard to their careers:

- to identify the factors influencing the career of the individual employee;
- to recognise the ways in which employees were motivated and satisfied at work;
- discovering the balance between employees' family life and work life;
- identifying the level of career management knowledge among both employees and students;
- identifying the motivation of high school graduates to follow a training programme on career management activities.

A target group of future high school graduates and employees was chosen for the interviews. The results of the study are presented below:

2.1. Similarities in career vision between employees and students

By means of item 1, which introduces the respondents to the topic of the theme, i.e. "What does career mean to you?", the

employees' answers were similar to the students' answers.

Thus, T.C, is of the opinion that, "Also, besides the fact that it marks the number of jobs, it also encompasses the experiences, values, interests that an individual holds within the community. Also, student U.D, argues that, career encompasses the number of jobs and experiences during a person's lifetime.

"Career is somehow the interconnected path of jobs and also a person's life experiences throughout their life."

The two interviewees, even though they come from different sectors, namely engineer and student, both believe that career refers to the number of jobs, which an individual holds during his/her lifetime.

Another similarity we identified among both high school graduates and employees is marked by the importance of the presence of passion in the work performed at the workplace.

Thus, S.I, believes that the career she has is more than a job, it is pure passion. "Career is more passion than a job". Likewise, D.A, who is a student, mentioned that, for him, career results from the passion and work you put in throughout your life. "Career is passion intertwined with the work you do throughout your life."

It was noted that both employees and students associate career with financial rewards. So, K.W, who is a student, mentions that the time and effort invested in a job is rewarded through a motivating salary. "Career is a reward for all the efforts and time spent in a particular profession through a motivating salary, benefits and fulfilment." Thus, the similarity identified is marked by the answer that D.V gave in the interview, namely, that for him, the purpose of career is directly proportional to obtaining financial benefits.

"The final goal, of career is related to obtaining financial benefits, so important for personal, family and society development as a whole".

2.2. Level of career management knowledge of employees and students

Regarding the level of career management knowledge, the interviewees, i.e. students and employees, gave different answers, because depending on their age and experience, they have distinct knowledge on the second question of the interview guide.

Thus, P.M, claims that, this knowledge is in line with the job, which means that from the experiences she has had so far, she has gained enough knowledge to be able to help others in career guidance. "The level of knowledge on career management, it's an area that is directly related to my job, because that's what I do, I do career counselling and attract candidates for the positions I recruit for. So, I can say that I have a high level in career management."

Another respondent is also of the opinion that as you get older and have some experience in the labour market, your level of knowledge on career management is higher. "Having reached this age, this experience of working with people, I have gained a lot of experience and I would say that I have quite a lot of knowledge about career management. It was important to know myself as a person, to know my strengths, because because of this I can say that I have chosen the right career."

In discussions with these employees, we also noticed a few differences. So, there is a difference between young employees and those who already have some career experience in terms of this career management knowledge. U.A, being a young employee, mentioned that he currently does not have high knowledge, but wants to develop this knowledge. "My knowledge is at an average level, but every day I try to develop my skills in this regard." At the same time, another young employee, is of the same opinion regarding career management knowledge. "I think I have average skills on this aspect."

Among future high school graduates, we found a number of similarities and differences in the responses received from respondents.

A large proportion of the interviewees, claimed to have average knowledge in this area, thanks to teachers who have dedicated their time to teaching their students. For example, T.D, claims that "Thanks to the headmistress, I was able to learn in-depth knowledge about career management."

In the responses of the interviewed students, we observed that although some have minimal knowledge, many of them want to develop it. Student U.L mentions that, "Even though I have minimal knowledge, I want to improve it to a medium to advanced level in the near future so that I can develop."

2.3. Reasons why students wish to follow a training programme on career management skills development

To this question, we received complex and similar responses from students. All the students interviewed expressed a desire to follow a programme designed to develop their career management skills.

Respondent D.A, states that the reasons why he would follow a training programme on career management skills development, refer to a more detailed knowledge of the field in which future high school graduates will become new employees in the labour market.

"If these skills were introduced into the education system, we would know the field in which we want to develop and in which we want to work."

Student B.E. agrees, mentioning the importance of knowing the field in which students will work in the labour market. "It would be very important that during high school we focus mostly on the fields in which we want to work in the future."

Another student interviewed, U.D, lists a number of reasons why he would follow this training programme.

A first reason is to manage time properly in order to invest in oneself. "it is essential to know how to manage our time to invest in ourselves."

2.4. The career stage from an employee perspective

In terms of identifying the favourable stage from the employees' perspective, we received both different and similar responses. Thus, a part of them claimed that the stage that played a fundamental role in their lives was marked by the period of high school or university, because they learned and acquired necessary skills and information, and the other part claimed that the first job had a major significance in their development. Thus, T.C, stated that "The stage that mattered the most in my development as an individual was during my student period, where I learned certain things that I did not have before that time."

P.M and U.A respondents were of a different opinion, as for them the first job was the favourable stage. Thus. P.M, stated that the importance of the first job, was noted by his development as a man and the accumulation of new qualities. "As a result of this job, I learned many qualities, which have been of great use to me in my career. Precisely because of this, I am now succeeding in becoming the person, the very employee I wanted to be." From the same perspective, the U.A. employee mentioned that the first stage that played a fundamental role in his career was highlighted by his first job. "The stage that mattered most to me was marked when I started working."

2.5. Work-life balance

The answers received from respondents on this work-life balance point in the same direction. Each employee gave me details about its importance and what the possible

consequences are if this balance is not consistently achieved. So, respondent T.A, listed a category of negative effects that can affect both aspects of an individual's life. "There is a need for this balance, because not having it can lead to some negative consequences".

He also mentioned two negative causes of lack of balance, namely "exhaustion and stress". Of course, these negative causes lead to adverse effects. T.A refers to possible misunderstandings with supervisors, co-workers, leading to reduced performance.

"Leading to misunderstandings with the employer, co-workers, even lack of involvement and decreased performance." Another importance of this balance is provided by interviewee U.A. He is of the opinion that failure to do so can affect the emotional state of the individual. "It is very important for our emotional, mental state as well."

Asking these employees about the meaning of this balance, in their own way, they gave me different definitions, all of them similar, differing only in their expression. Thus, P.M was of the opinion that, "This balance refers to the conscious division of time between work and personal life."

In addition to the existence of negative consequences for this balance, there is also a category of benefits of having a work-life balance. For example, S.I mentioned that this balance plays a fundamental role in both work and family life. "Balance intertwined with harmony is essential for performance, both at work and in personal life."

2.6. The importance of knowing your skills for future career choices

With regard to item 3 of the interview guide, I can say that the students' answers are very similar to each other, leading to the same goal in terms of knowing their own skills related to career choice. Thus, student T.D, stated that for a correct career choice it

is important to evaluate yourself. "It's good to be able to do a self-assessment at the beginning of my career, in which I can point out the aspects about my real possibilities to do what I like, to know my strengths as well as my weaknesses, all leading to the right career choice." The same was conveyed by U.L. "In order to succeed in choosing my ideal career I need to know myself so that I know what areas I am good at."

Another important factor is the performance that can be brought to the workplace through knowledge of personal skills. Student K.W also says that once you are aware of your individual skills, you can easily learn new things and move on to another job. "You'll be able to perform much more easily and you'll be much more able to learn new things and in the future advance from a particular job."

The last aspect that we observed from the discussions with the interviewed students is illustrated by the correct choice of the field of work. Thus, student B.E, stated that "It is very important to know our skills, because this is how we choose the right career." Pupil D.A also expressed the same view. Thus, he mentioned that in order to properly know the scope of activity in the labour market, it is necessary to first understand his skills that recommend him for that career. "It is important to know these skills in order to be aware of the field we want to work in".

2.7. Career expectations and prospects

Students released a broad category of examples of personal expectations related to future employment. Thus, T.D, mentioned a number of fundamental aspects for maintaining a harmonious climate in the work environment. "I expect to be respected at work by my bosses, even when I make mistakes." K.W. has the same expectation that mistakes should be interpreted as learning opportunities. "To be aware that mistakes are not a punishment and to be

treated as an opportunity to grow, to learn."

Another point related to students' expectations about their future job is to receive correct information about the tasks they have to perform in the organisation. Thus, respondent U.D, mentions about the importance of effective communication. "The expectation I have is to receive accurate and concrete information about job responsibilities."

In the students' opinion, salary is an important factor. For this reason, several interviewees launched responses regarding the salary corresponding to the work performed. Thus, in the opinion of student D.A., "Motivating salary, of course in relation to the work I do."

2.8. Field of work chosen by students

Observing the answers that students gave to this question, we found a number of occupations that young people of the contemporary generation are moving towards. Also, another aspect that we identified relates to the fact that students chose their potential future careers according to the profile they studied during high school.

In addition to the choice of profession (IT field), students also mentioned a number of benefits of this profession. K.W., mentioned that "I would like to work in the IT field, because after finishing the mathematics-computer science profile, I can say that I am quite familiar with the concepts". Another fundamental factor of this generation is that they choose their careers according to their passions. The same idea is supported by student K.W. "I am interested in this field, probably because it is a passion for me." In the context of what has been said about young people's prospects for their future careers, U.D. also mentioned several other benefits of choosing the IT profession. "It's a constantly evolving field, it's a dynamic field that won't face monotony." Young people also have the adaptability to work from anywhere, according to U.D. "A first benefit that I consider the most important is related to the availability to work from anywhere."

2.9. Factors impacting on a person's career choice

Analysing the responses received from young employees, I can say that the criteria according to which they chose their career are similar to students' perspectives on their future job. There are also many similarities between the employees who gave me answers to this question.

A first important criterion, which most respondents mentioned, is marked by career choice based on what you enjoy doing as an individual. Thus. T.C stated that "This is the most important criterion, liking what you do". S.I. also agreed: "The salary is just a bonus, because everything I do at school, during working hours, is just a passion." Another defining criterion in the young employees' career choice was job security.

The interviewees mentioned that they chose their current career as a result of researching the labour market. For example, T.C. "It is a job that will be in demand on the labour market for a long time, which also ensures job security." Employee U.A. agrees: "I looked for my future profession to be in demand on the labour market in 15-20 years, because job security is very important."

The third criterion we identified in the principles that mattered when deciding on the profession they wanted to pursue was financial status. Thus, S.I., was of the opinion that, "Another criterion that guided me in choosing this career was salary." According to T.A., the salary part also made contact for this employee. "The financial side, the legal profession, enjoying to some extent financial stability".

When we asked employees about the factors that influenced their choice of jobs, we received different answers, each of them

being influenced in an individual way, but among two employees we found a similarity between the answers.

2.10. Methods of motivation and job satisfaction

From the focus group interviews, I received both different and similar responses, and was able to produce a category by which employees are motivated at work. A first aspect that I identified among the employees was autonomy at work. T.C. stated that "Another aspect that motivates me at work is related to the autonomy I have in my department." He also motivated his answer. "It gives me a sense of satisfaction because I know that they have confidence in my abilities and the work I do."

Another method of motivation that I identified in the discussions I had with the interviewees was illustrated by the importance of an effective team contributing to the smooth running of the company, because as a united team they have the same goals, contributing towards achieving performance. Therefore, P.M. stated that "Being in a multinational company, my team is made up of members from several countries, I like that all colleagues have somehow the same personality, it is an easy place to work in". The same view of the importance of the team is held by respondent U.A. "Also, the team I am part of gives me soul satisfaction, which motivates me to get more and more involved every day in all the tasks assigned."

Another factor that contributes to employee motivation is their hierarchical advancement at work. Interviewee D.V. stated that for him it is important to have the possibility of advancement, thus giving him the necessary motivation to evolve, to properly perform the tasks given at work. "Also advancement up the ladder is a motivating factor, because the moment you have certain knowledge, do your job

properly, you will automatically be recruited and sent to higher positions."

2.11. Aspects that provide motivation and fulfilment among employees

With regard to the last question in the interview guide, concerning aspects that provide satisfaction and fulfilment to employees, we received a number of different answers, but in a few cases they show some similarity. For example, S.I. believes that "The appreciation of students as well as parents gives me personal fulfilment and the motivation to continue to give my best to future employees." T.A. also agrees with the gratitude received from customers. At the same time, this thanks and appreciation also contributes to personal satisfaction. "The satisfaction received from my clients is fundamental to my professional as well as personal satisfaction, as it results in the benefits of the efforts made during this time."

Another factor I recognised from discussions with employees was related to working in a conflict-free environment with the opportunity for professional advancement. Thus, T.C. stated that the supportive work environment gives him job satisfaction. "I am satisfied with the fact that I can work in a pleasant, conflict-free team that gives you the opportunity to develop." D.V. also feels the same way: "I also feel fulfilled at work because I work in a positive, dynamic team and I am satisfied with the salary I receive, which is commensurate with the work I do."

As regards non-salary motivation, there is a similarity between the answers given by S.I. and U.A. Thus, these employees expressed their perspective on the methods that provide them with personal fulfilment. An example in this context is illustrated by S.I, saying that for him, children represent fulfilment and job satisfaction. "As I've said before, children give me the most satisfaction

and fulfilment at work."

A final aspect that provides fulfilment at work is illustrated by the financial side.

So, some of the employees mentioned about it. For example, P.M. also said that, in addition to the salary part, he is satisfied that he can carry out his work at home and does not have to return to the office. "The salary part gives me satisfaction, the fact that I work from home and it works very well for me, this, again, gives me satisfaction, the fact that I don't have to go back to the office." D.V. has the same perspective on the financial side "The financial reward, because you're actually going to work to earn money."

3. Conclusions

The overall aim of this paper was to identify the factors that contribute to the motivation and satisfaction of high school graduates and employees. Following the interpretation of the data obtained, we obtained a number of similar responses. Thus, among employees, similarities in salary motivation were noted. The majority of the interviewees, both among students and employees, stated that financial motivation is an important criterion in the career choice process, but also in the aspect related to job fulfilment. Future employees on the labour market want autonomy, they want to work in an organisational climate that is as stress-free as possible, they want their results to be recognised and rewarded.

Among employees, I wanted to find out what the work-life balance is. The results on this objective were similar, and for these employees, balance is a fundamental factor in both family and work life.

It was also noted that this balance helps employees to achieve performance at work, harmony in the family.

As a result of this research, we identified a number of reasons why high school graduates would like to follow a training programme on career management activities. It is important for students to know the field in which they want to work in the future, to have the necessary information to invest properly in their future career, and more than that, students want to follow this program for the recognition of personal skills that will lead them to the right career choice.

Looking at the factors that influenced the employees' careers, the majority of responses were related to the influence of family members or the group of friends they came from. Also, grades, the influence of teachers and information conveyed through the media were a number of factors that impacted the individual's choice of career.

In terms of the level of career management knowledge among both employees and students, it was noted that the accumulation of knowledge is directly proportional to work experience and advancing age. Also among employees a higher level of this knowledge was observed than among students.

For students, the acquisition of career management knowledge is related to teachers' involvement in extracurricular activities.

These activities consist of role plays between an employer and an employee, imagination games, such as setting up a business with the student as the entrepreneur, or games about the career the students want, in line with the students' abilities and aspirations.

The role of these games is to build students' knowledge of career management, to understand the important aspects of a job and to choose a career according to personal skills.

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