THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ORGANIZATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Eralda ZHILLA[1*], Edita POGAÇE[2*], Arjana MUÇAJ[3*]

[1] *Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Faculty of Social Science, UT*
[2] *Academy of Sciences of Albania*
[3] *Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Faculty of Social Science, UT*
*Corresponding author: email: adazhilla@gmail.com, editadedia@gmail.com, arjanamucaj@yahoo.it

Abstract

This study describes the challenges and barriers that women and girls face in their career progression in the private sector. It contributes to the recognition of women's career development in Albania, the challenges and barriers they encounter in this professional and human journey. The study also tries to shed light by seeing a reality in organizational approaches and policies in the private sector in Albania.

It was carried out mainly in Tirana and in a company of the manufacturing industry based in a small city. The institutions included in the study were, second-tier banks, insurance companies, marketing and sales, financial management companies, industrial production companies and media. The Tirana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as the Tirana Women's Economic Chamber took part in the study.

A sample of 20 women and girls leaders in these companies, with a career development trajectory, became part of the study. The age of the women interviewed was from 26 to 60 years. Women were graduates in many fields and 50% of them had Master's level.

This study is built on the qualitative approach of scientific research and was carried out through two instruments, a demographic questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The results of this study confirmed that the development of women's careers in the private sector in Albania goes through challenges that are globally recognized by other international studies on this topic.

Keywords: Career development, challenges, barriers, leading women, private sector, Albania.

Introduction

This paper refers to the study carried out on the career development of women in the private sector in Albania. The main purpose of the study was to add light to the recognition and understanding of the challenges faced by women during their career development in the organization in private institutions.

Career development and advancement is understood as promotion to higher levels in the organizational hierarchy or to positions of greater responsibility (Bombuwela P. M., De Alwis A. Chamaru (2013). The role of women in private institutions in Albania and the development of her career in these organizations remains an almost unexplored field in terms of research. This study comes as an overview of the role of women in private institutions and the challenges they face during their career development. This study began with a literature review on career development and the challenges women face in their career advancement.

Women's career advancement is a key element in uncovering the barriers women face in moving up the corporate ladder. Barriers create difficulties and limit women's careers and progress making it more complicated than men's career advancement. (Huang.Q, 2006). Therefore, Astin (1984) proposed that career development theory should describe women's careers separately from men's careers (Mbalenhle. P, Ndweni&Aghaegbuna OU Ozumba, 2020).

Based on these principles, this study focused precisely on the development of women's careers in private institutions and companies in Albania. The study selected women and girls leaders with a career development trajectory, from a job position to a leadership role, or from parallel movement to leadership positions. This target group was adapted to the goals of the study, to better understand the challenges and barriers that have appeared in this career development trajectory for women and girls in the private sector.

Literature review

Career development is an "ongoing process, lifelong development, experiences that focus on seeking, acquiring, and processing information about oneself, occupational and educational alternatives, lifestyles, and role options."

A person can decide on a career path within an organization, outside the organization or in a new business as an entrepreneur, depending on that person's career objectives (Baruch, 2004). Career models have evolved from models in which career paths are very linear to more dynamic models.

Traditional career models such as those of Hall and Schein are characterized by their high levels of structure and rigidity, linking professional success to upward mobility and external success factors such as salary and social status (Baruch, 2004)

Career advancement is understood as promotion to higher levels in the organizational hierarchy or to positions of greater responsibility (Hall, 2002). Career development is the process of managing life, learning and working throughout the lifespan (Patton & McMahon, 2001), (Mbalenhle. P, Ndweni&Aghaegbuna OU Ozumba, 2020).

The theoretical construct for this paper is career development for women. In a review of women's career development, the literature found that there are a number of micro- and macro-level contextual factors that influence women's careers (Phillips &Imhoff, 1997)

Other studies have addressed the development needs of women in organizations (Bierema, 1998; Mallon &Cassell, 1999; Tanton, 1992; Tharenou, 1999, 2001), and it has been argued that the nature of women's development is different from their male counterparts. Ramli. K, Johari. H &Akmar. N (2016)

Women do not pursue linear or life-long careers as men tend to do, rather they see themselves as the interplay between career and relationships (Powll&Mainiero, 1992). As Bierema (1998) suggested, women's development is different from that of men because women experience more interruptions in their careers. Discontinuities are mainly due to the family responsibilities faced by women as the main providers of care for children and the elderly (Albrecht, 2003; ILO, 2004). The nature of women's development is changing and contextual (Bierema, 1998).

The changing nature can be attributed to changes driven by the information age, career transitions, demands for work-life balance and inequalities in the workplace (Bierema, 1998), For women, demands for work-life balance and existence of gender inequalities are critical factors for success. Women face unequal pay for the same type of work that men do or have fewer opportunities for promotion at work (ILO, 2004, Tharenou, 1999). Yes there. At the same time, social and organizational contexts have influenced women's development because, traditionally, norms, values and assumptions have imitated men's career development models in which women do not find a place (Bierema, 1998). According to Bierema (2001),

These theories predict development in terms of stages of advancement, in which certain specific experiences are needed to move from one stage to another (Mainiero, 1994).

Women's careers are affected when they lack experiences that are critical to success (Tharenou, 1999). It has been suggested that male-dominated organizational cultures represent a barrier to women's advancement (Marshall, 1995; Ragins et al., 1998) because in such cultures men typically accumulate more power and resources than women. Therefore, the successful development of women's careers is highly dependent on the context in which it takes place.

Methodology

This study focuses on the career development of women in private organizations and institutions in Albania. The goals and objectives of the study are recognition and understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by women during the development of their career in the private sector. The study aims to increase knowledge on women's career development in the private sector in Albania.

This research is based on theoretical models and numerous studies that have been conducted in many countries with similar topics on the development of women's careers. To answer the research question and the goals of the study, it was considered reasonable to use descriptive qualitative research.

This study shall answer the research question: What are the challenges and barriers that have influenced the development and advancement of women's careers in organizations in the private sector?

In this framework, the subjects of the study were women who worked in a private institution or organization and who had a leadership role in that institution. Consequently, the institutions of the private sector in Albania would also be the main supporters of this study.

The number of institutions requested to cooperate was 50. They were contacted through their reception offices, email addresses, and also direct contact was taken even with Human Resources managers or other managers.

Results

The data obtained from the interviews were coded by analyzing, comparing each statement for the same question, comparing it with the objectives and goals of the study.

Each question was turned into a theme to achieve coding and comparability for each of the study subjects' responses. Each answer was evaluated and reviewed several times to understand differences and similarities in function of the reference question.

Topic 1

This topic is related to the way that the subjects of this study, became part of the organization they were working for, at the time of the study interview.

The question made was: Tell me how you became part of this organization?

The answers showed that the interview was the main method of recruitment, or selection for promotion, or employment. The interview could come as a result of the announcement of a vacancy by the company, as a result of the establishment of a new structure, but also as a case of referral from third parties or from specialists within the company.

In some companies, the position of director was given with the consent of the owners without interviews, only by appointment. These are mainly in the production industry, but also from managers who do not delegate competences to their subordinates. However, even in the banking system, beyond the interview as a standard procedure, according to the statements, the preference of senior managers was used in the selection for the vacant position of the bank's coordinator. MP cites: "I applied within the institution only when the vacant position for Coordinator opened. We were in four candidates interviewed for this position and I was selected. In this selection it influenced also the 10 years of acquaintance I had with the Director of Human Resources, as a bank employee".

The study showed that many of the applications are tailored to their education. A. LL.H quotes that: "I became part of this organization through efforts, research and interviews, for a job that was related to my education and academic level."

Even, in some cases, the orientation to education has been directed by parents, who had their own companies, or had a high management position in the company. AD quotes that: "Since I was a teenager I wanted to study acting because I liked it, but my parents influenced me to study business administration, in order to lead our company and as a result I started to have expectations for this and I was educated in Prague for that position. When I completed the University, I wasn't sure if I wanted to do the job I do today."

The study shows that for the first topic as part of the history of the employment form, application and interviews constituted the majority of the format. But within the context of the interview, reference and preference played a role in the selection.

In conclusion, almost all women and girls affirmed that the application has been the main form to become part of an organization, while in terms of the trajectory of promotion in the position they held at the time of the interview, the ways of moving to these positions have been as follows:

4 were promoted to office by competition.

3 are appointed by reference.

8 have won the position through applications and interviews.

3 are appointed by preference and delegation.

2 have set up the companies in cooperation and holding the management position by accord.

Topic 2

This topic examines the experiences and perspectives of the subjects when they became part of the organization. This means the beginning of the work in each of the roles and in each organization, since the question also foresees the movements from one organization to another, in order to better understand the organizational climate and the personal approach to a new individual in the organization.

The question was: Tell me about the beginnings of work in this organization, how was it for you, what did you face, how were you accepted and how did you see yourself at that time?

What emerged from this question was the personal challenge experienced by almost all women and girls interviewed, undoubtedly also as a cause of the atmosphere at the beginning of a new job. EM quotes that: "I have felt myself as if I am a little incompetent due to pressure and lack of experience, I had to take sedatives to reduce anxiety in my beginnings".

While the VP cites that: "No young person is well received at work, there is always a need to adapt and understand the work". AT also claims that: "The beginnings are not easy, there is meaninglessness in interactions with others. I was the lady for the job, but I had insecurity".

AD affirms that: "Moving into this position was a very big transition, I came from a world full of dreams, but I had a great difficulty adapting and looking at myself very responsibly, due to the very expectations I had for myself and those delegated to me this position". S.Gj. states that: "When you take on a leadership role, you are always under pressure, as the expectations for yourself are mixed with those of the leaders, and you are not sure even though you are competent at what you do."

EV said that: "Since I felt prejudiced by my colleagues, this feeling transformed me into a rigid person and for a while I did not give confidentiality either to my colleagues or to the family members". MP quotes that: "The moment you become part of the organization, there is definitely an emotional development and you feel monitored by everyone about how you will do the job, how capable you are, and here you encounter professional difficulties more than interpersonal ones, but what is important is the possibility of career development and you focus on it". SN said that: "The new environment has difficulties in adapting both in the human and professional aspects, you feel prejudiced and on trial".

Topic 3

This topic is related to history and professional development. The question for the interviewees was: Tell me in detail about your work history and professional development.

The statements showed that from the beginning of career development, challenges and barriers are present in a professional journey.

The VP emphasizes that: "There are obstacles in professional development, there are always people who prevent you from developing. I started working as a student and I wanted to have a career, and in addition to my education, I completed several different trainings to adapt to work positions". AD quoted that: "Professional development has started since when I was studying abroad, I experienced various challenges related to company culture, or even from colleagues who doubted me. But I insisted on showing myself and I overcame the prejudices or even the lack of appreciation, either in salary or in increasing the position".

While AT claims that: "I grew up with the job, because of the change of position I experienced anxiety and uncertainty if I would succeed". ED states that: "In professional development, the role of the manager feels the change of concepts and the responsibilities are increased, putting you in professional and human difficulties".

AH emphasizes that: "I grew up in this organization and started working after graduation. Once I had to understand the work as best as possible and I also did trainings, now I have to control others and be there advising them, this has increased my responsibilities and it has become more difficult".

EM states that: "After graduation, at the beginning of my work, I had problems with payment, because I was considered young at work and without experience".

OA states that: "In the position I have, I would like to do some training for human and financial management, although I came after a leadership experience in a state institution".

AF emphasizes that: "In many companies you have to fight hard to achieve what you want, but also to get what you deserve."

Topic 4

This topic affects interpersonal relationships both professionally and personally. The question related to this topic was: Tell me about work dynamics and professional and interpersonal relationships with supervisors and colleagues, how do you see these relationships?

The study shows that relationships are crucial in career progress. They produce challenges and barriers in this development. J. Watson Wilson has quoted that: "In any kind of problem, if you dig deep, you will find "people". Manjhari, M. (2013).

The VP states that: "The lack of friendship from colleagues is expressed through maintaining confidentiality in the professional aspect when you are at the beginning of a task. There is a professional challenge, a professional elbow, a predilection for taking matters into his own hands. If you don't have the professional education, but you are selected for the skills you have, then the prejudice and contestation is tangible, "the rumors says, this is the boss's favorite".

AT emphasizes that: "I had problems with professional communication, an unprofessional work culture, and no work ethics. Misuse of confidentiality in interpersonal communications due to my divorced status."

EM says that: "I have kept professional relationships with work colluaeges, which I consider them normal, because I think it is better not build familiarity and confidences between colluages as your friendship can be used to sexually harass you. I had permanent harassment and offers for a long time until they understood that they could not achieve their goal".

MP states that: "Human and professional relations within the organization are only related to the work process and its philosophy to acquire the process. What is not discussed are the extended hours and the lack of salary increase".

AD states that: "Relationships have many prejudices behind them and it has been a challenge to merge professional and interpersonal relationships."

I.Ç. states that: "Interpersonal relationships are often guided by prejudices and when you are imposed due to profession and work, they remain present for a long time".

EV says that: "At work, you don't see interpersonal relationships outside of work objectives, so I don't give much importance to you. In a job where your supervisors are above your head, you cannot help but stand above your subordinates, and this undoubtedly creates a pressure for everyone, there have also been prejudices, but this is the job".

Conclusions

The objectives of this study highlighted the challenges that appeared as barriers in women's career development. Family responsibilities fulfilled the objective of identifying barriers and challenges that appear from outside the organization, influencing career development for them.

Also, challenges from within the organization, as another objective of the study, were identified with organizational policies, discrimination, harassment in the workplace, etc. In this sense, the research question related to the recognition of challenges and barriers that have influenced the development and advancement of women's careers in organizations in the private sector was also answered.

The findings and conclusions of this study coincide with all similar studies conducted in many countries around the world. Challenges, known as "global challenges" are also present in life and organizational relationships in the private sector in Albania.

Also, along the scientific journey and scientific research, it was found that there are no similar studies in Albania, even, it can be said that, with a similar topic on the development of women's career in Albania, I did not come across any published scientific studies.

This study shows that family responsibilities were the main challenge for women's career advancement in the private sector, also related to other challenges such as individual challenges, discrimination and prejudice, organizational policies and workplace harassment.

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