Career management and advancement from the individual context of the Albanian manager, under the perspectives of professionalism and personality related to business performance

Abstract: The paper aims at rendering a tableau of the career management in the Albanian reality in the large and medium enterprises seen from the individual context of the manager. To this objective, a survey was undertaken using the face-to-face approach, focused on communication, measuring two independent variables: the actual professionalism of the manager and the manager personality, considering the Big 5 personality traits, in respect to the dependent variable: business performance. The objective is obtaining results upon the path to a successful career advancement form the individual perspective. By permeating onto the concrete work environment, tracking the developments in various hierarchical management levels and the relevant factors influencing respectively, we intended to depict salient challenges to the career management seen from the manager perspective in the Albanian business environment, wherein the subject of career management is not much discussed and recognized.

Keywords: professionalism, Big 5 personality traits, career management, business environment, face to face approach, Albania.

Introduction

Living in the 21st century the work reality has considerably changed, jointly to it the career itself had undergone substantial transformations, proposing new approaches to its development. The focus of attention has shifted from the organization to the individual and social-constructivist perspective on career is gaining prevalence. These transformations are attributed to the profound changes occurring in the context of employment, such as pressure due to the globalization of economies, the increasing workforce diversity, technology and innovations progress etc [1]. Furthermore, the frequent staff changes, the innovative patterns of work and the equally innovative notions of marketability and employability have become accepted features of career [2]. As a result, new rules, expectations and conditions not encountered before have become palpable, creating new experiences with regard to the employees' outlook upon the career management and development [3].

Meanwhile, the contemporary career realities often do not support the traditional bureaucratic career [4]. These forms are described as “a clearly distinctive phenomenon compared to the traditional career patterns” [1]. Changes in the world of work have opened new horizons to the career theory. The center of attention has shifted from the individual towards the organization and the new patterns have become increasingly influencing upon the career perspectives. Its is not discussed anymore in terms of having a life-long career, but aiming at the cultivation of knowledge and capacities necessary to achieve the goals related not exclusively to the context of work, but beyond.

Organizations are striving to cultivate the concept of a career guiding the individual towards finding the internal and external development opportunities to career advancement. They are no longer offering the due conditions to establish a life-long career and instead suggest providing the conditions in which the individual can increase the skills, improve the core competencies and therefore increase the market value. They emphasize the short-term character of the employer-employee relationship, and offer a lateral career development instead of the hierarchical progress. Studies have suggested that employers, in modern times, talk about providing opportunities to enhance employability of marketability [5]. Having a career for life is being replaced by the individual management opportunities and the promise of future rewards based on loyalty, it is being replaced by the promise for short-term based contracts in exchange to performance upon attaining the agreed objectives.

Additionally, the success in career, besides the capacity and skills development part, is considered as a sum of the individual natural traits, i.e. personality [6]. Significant analysis and considerable representative samples of adult individuals have amounted in the selection of five factors resulting almost a generalization to all cultures [7; 8; 9; 10; 11]. Such a grouping provides the human traits typology and the personality aspects proposed
by psychologists, known as the “Big Five” dimensions of personality. According to this approach, the individual behavior is determined by the characteristics of his/her personality. It is therefore necessary to determine which personality traits are required and adaptable to each job position. It is important that personal characteristics fit to the requirements of a specific position, thus fulfillment can be achieved. The employees’ personality is a major factor of individual behavior in the workplace [10].

Consequently to this reality, career management is a key factor to achieving the personal and organizational goals [12; 13]. Prestigious business organizations are characterized by a firm commitment to career management. Most companies appreciate skilled workers and do their utmost to hire and retain them, thereon the career management approaches serve best to precisely assist qualified and competent employees to achieve the business objectives [14; 15]. Effective career management facilitates the development of employees and their work [14]. The efforts made by the individual to career development are the main driving force for a successful career, with a reflection over the business performance. Meanwhile the companies pay attention to the design and implementation of career management programs, the individuals in turn can develop their career, without waiting for career development support by their organizations [16]. Individuals who focus on professional goals, preferring a long-term career development and aim to be successful in their careers, in normal organizational circumstances succeed [17].

On the above rationale, the factors enabling career success should include the individual. In this context, the study considers two main aspects: the current professionalism of the manager and the manager personality. The manager is a central figure in the organization. In the work context he/she interacts with numerous individuals, having distinct intellectual potentials. Thus, his/her professionalism is constantly exposed to the subordinates. Professionalism is depicted as a characteristic of the manager individual activities, representing a physical, educational and intellectual capacity. Asserting that professionalism refers to a certain intellectual capacity, it cannot pertain to a fixed quantum, the intellectual capacity moves between two extremes: the mediocre and excellent. Personality in turn, as a set of individual (manager) characteristics – makes him/her distinct. Part of these features are the skills, capacity, etc. that impact on building relationships in the context of work. From this perspective, the personality of the manager also affects his professionalism. All the above, reinforce the belief that professionalism and personality are two components conditioning the individual professional career. The paper sheds light on these measurers of career management, namely on: the actual professionalism of the manager and the manager personality.

**Methodology**

The research methodology is intended to be stable in order to minimize the errors occurring during the data collection and analysis. Functional to the methodology a direct contact is established with the respondents in order to prevent as much as possible the void answers, which could result in distorted feedback and create an unrealistic picture of the Albanian managers’ career management in the agro-processing enterprises and afterwards in approaching the interrelations between the variables.

Attention is focused on two approaches.

1. **Table work**
   a) **Literature review.** The research was focused on the relevant literature in the field of career management published in English language, as in spite of our efforts to find literature basis in Albanian language, they resulted unsuccessful, as no study in career management field is undertaken, confirmed by our research near the National Library in Tirana and in the National Register of PhD thesis, in the Committee for the Assessment of Academic Titles (CAAT), near the Ministry of Education and Science. This fact obviously served as a stimulus to the undertaking of the study.

   b) **Questionnaire preparation.** The scientific research methods emphasize the importance of choosing the due cognitive instruments. The cognitive instruments in the paper refer to the questionnaire preparation. The problem will be studied in:
   - Management level, in order to investigate the extent of the phenomenon object of study and aiming at explaining the specific phenomena in order to test the hypotheses.

   *The questionnaire* – in order to recognize the managers’ perspectives the surveying method was used. The questionnaire prepared to this purpose is a fully-structured questionnaire, the assertions are assessed based on the Likert scale. The respondents are asked to express their approval/disapproval measured on several levels, usually five, but the scale may vary from 3 to 7 [18].

   The questionnaire was intended to collect data on: the professional specialization within the company related to soft skills in managing people and hard skills, as knowledge on the workbooks, technical know-how; the importance of creating social networks, maintaining the work-life-recuperation balance; the attention given to the influence of Big 5 personality traits (openness to
experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) to making career choices etc.

The sample

Definition of the sample size was decided in respect to the survey type, being a general observation. The sample considered the total of active businesses and comprised a sample of 100 managers working in agro-processing enterprises. The sample of the study is crucial as it significantly conditions the research results. Thereon Ken Black states: «The sample tends to be less variable than the population, as in many environments extreme elements of the population may not be available. The researcher will select more elements of the “middle” of the population» [19].

Target Group

• Business managers (of various levels)

Object of Study: The agro-processing industry businesses/enterprises. The selection considered the fact that agro-industry is a prosperous perspective sector for Albania and represents 4% of GDP in the country [20].

Geographical Coverage: The study is focused on the capital, Tirana, on the reasoning that is the most developed area in the country, wherein the business concentration is higher and thus it is presumed the managers’ interest on career advancement is higher.

Hypothesis

H1: Among the actual manager’s professionalism, career advancement and business performance, there is a positive interrelationship.

H2: The manager personality characteristics, as an element in career advancement are expected to positively influence the business performance.

Data processing

The data processing was obtained by means of the statistical methods in order to identify the factors influencing the phenomenon, object of study. To this regard, Kothari states: the role of statistics in the research process is to function as a tool in the design process, in analyzing data and drawing conclusions from them [18].

In this paper two kinds of research have been considered, namely:

1. **The descriptive research** — descriptive statistics, aiming at drawing feedback on the general characteristics of the situation. The descriptive statistical method aims to extract from the real world the essential phenomena, which consequences determine the professionals’ behavior. The method aims at identifying the problem in focus and the respective limitations.

2. **The verifying research** — statistical analysis. In cases wherein the gathered data pertain to the qualitative character, to their processing the non-parametric statistical methods are considered, necessary to explain and highlight the relations existing among the variables.

The quantitative data processing was done via the SPSS version 20.0 software, by means of which the factor analysis was conducted to evidence the links between the independent and dependent variables and the measurement of their respective impact.

These methods are used separately and in combination, enabling the formulation and materialization of the phenomena in the paper focus.

II. Terrain work

The questionnaire aims at gaining the managers’ feedback and also finding the appropriate approach into obtaining their utmost engagement, so that the results generated amount to a comprehensive realistic assessment of the situation.

The field work consisted in gathering data via:

• Managers’ questionnaires

The surveying was approached through a direct contact: face-to-face method. This method creates the opportunity for a more in-depth review of the problematic and obtaining an immediate feedback.

The gathered data is:

• Primary (field interviews)

Results attainment was conducted focusing on the above rationale, which made possible drawing the conclusions, formulating ideas and providing objective recommendations. The paper results and conclusions are aimed to be simple, understandable and realistic, which would obviously contribute to the managers’ as well as to a personal benefit.

Results

In order to measure the sample adequacy the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistics is utilized, indicating the variance percentage of the studied variables, being caused by invisible factors. Thereon Kaiser [21] orients that the values higher up to 1.0 indicate that the factor analysis is useful to the provided data, meanwhile the KMO value lower than 0.5 indicates the factor analysis results probably may not prove useful. Furthermore, the reciprocal relation is controlled via the Bartlett test.

From the table 1 provided data, we evidence that the KMO statistics reached the value of 0.758, being within the defined limitations. Furthermore, the Bartlett test results within the limits, having a significance level amounting to highly significant p < 0.0001, consequently the factor analysis is useful and we can further proceed with it.
Table 1. – KMO and Bartlett’s Test

| Component                                      | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                                | 0.758                                         | Approx. Chi-Square          |
|                                                |                                               | df                          |
|                                                |                                               | Sig.                        |
|                                                |                                               | 155.646                     |
|                                                |                                               | 21                          |
|                                                |                                               | 0.000                       |

Following, is considered the analysis referring to the total explained variation and the Varimax rotation. Based on the analysis results, indicated in Table 2 it is evidenced that the total explained variation regarding the components having the Eigen value > 1, amounts to 56.876, a value satisfying the Kaiser criterion [22].

Table 2. – The explained variance

| Component | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
|-----------|-------|---------------|--------------|-------|---------------|--------------|-------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 — Actual professionalism       | 2.871 | 41.014        | 41.014       | 2.871 | 41.014        | 41.014       | 2.759 | 39.410        | 39.410       |
| 2 — Personality                  | 1.110 | 15.862        | 56.876       | 1.110 | 15.862        | 56.876       | 1.223 | 17.466        | 56.876       |
| 3                                      | 0.902 | 12.881        | 69.757       |       |               |              |       |               |              |
| 4                                      | 0.699 | 9.992         | 79.749       |       |               |              |       |               |              |
| 5                                      | 0.603 | 8.616         | 88.365       |       |               |              |       |               |              |
| 6                                      | 0.465 | 6.638         | 95.002       |       |               |              |       |               |              |
| 7                                      | 0.350 | 4.998         | 100.000      |       |               |              |       |               |              |

**Note:** Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Regarding the factor analysis grouped as below, the “Cronbach Alpha” data reliability analysis is considered, measuring the compatibility degree between the variables [23] To both components, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient results as follows (Tables 4, 5).

Table 3. – The components matrix

| Rotated Component Matrix * | Component |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| -7. I have complete knowledge on the workbooks. | 0.793     |
| -6. I find it easy to maintain the balance: personal life – work – recuperation. | 0.764     |
| -2. I systematically try to improve/cultivate my technical skills needed to achieve career success. | 0.718     |
| -5. I am satisfied with the achievements/professional specialization within the company. | 0.671     |
| -1. I assess as considerably good my skills in “people management” (communication, empathy, coping with difficulties, supporting, etc.). | 0.659     |
| -3. I believe that creating a social network, both within and outside the company, is a determining factor in my career success. | 0.877     |
| -4. I believe the Big 5 personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) are closely related and influence the career choices. | 0.543     |

**Note:** * — Rotation converged in 3 iterations; Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Table 4. – Factor 1 — actual professionalism

| Reliability Statistics |
|------------------------|
| Cronbach’s Alpha       | N of Items |
| 0.483                  | 5          |

Table 5. – Factor 2 — personality

| Reliability Statistics |
|------------------------|
| Cronbach’s Alpha       | N of Items |
| 0.397                  | 2          |

Referring to the above tables, we observe an acceptable degree of internal compactness. Claiming that the compactness is acceptable if we consider the fact that some assertions represent a rather un-encountered reality in Albania, as it is the case of knowledge concerning the workbooks, the Big 5 traits etc. Cronbach Alpha results lower than 0.7, nevertheless this fact should not prevent us from further proceeding with the analysis [24].

The components designation is done as below:

- **Component I: Actual Professionalism of the Manager** represents a basic condition to career. In this component, five assertions are included, as below rendered:
  - I have complete knowledge on the workbooks. (factor weight 0.793);
  - I find it easy to maintain the balance: personal life – work – recuperation (factor weight 0.764);
  - I systematically try to improve/cultivate my technical skills needed to achieve career success (factor weight 0.718);
  - I am satisfied with the achievements/professional specialization within the company (factor weight 0.671);
  - I assess as considerably good my skills in “people management” (communication, empathy, coping with difficulties, supporting, etc.) (factor weight 0.659).

The explained variation amounts to 39.410.

- **Component II: Personality of the Manager** Integral part of this component are the below assertions:
  - I believe that creating a social network, both within and outside the company, is a determining factor in my career success (factor weight 0.877);
  - I believe the Big 5 personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) are closely related and influence the career choices (factor weight 0.543).

The explained variation amounts to 56.876.

Both the above components, regardless of the impact degree condition the manager career and facilitate success in the achievement of the individual and organization goals.

**Multicollinearity measurement**

The multicollinearity estimation is indispensable as it evidences the correlational relationship between the independent variables. If we consider the limits of correlation values varying in two extreme limits –0.7 and +0.7, the correlation between the components belonging to the “individual manager context” results within the due limits. As noted in the table 6 the link between these two components is positive and having a significant Significance, which means that if the intensity of one component increases, the personality traits, the other component increases accordingly, the actual professionalism. However, the correlation between them does not result strong, it is a moderate correlation, drawing evidence that there are other not considered factors influencing, thus pointing to the importance of engaging in a more in-depth future study, to this regard.

Table 6. – Correlation table

| Correlations | Actual Professionalism | Personality |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Actual Professionalism | Pearson Correlation | 1 | 0.200 * |
|                  | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.046 |
|                  | N | 100 | 100 |
| Personality     | Pearson Correlation | 0.200 * | 1 |
|                  | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.046 |
|                  | N | 100 | 100 |

*Note: * — Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Factor Analysis**

Career advancement in the individual context of the manager considered two components: Actual Professionalism and Personality. The components are studied referring to the hypotheses raised to this purpose:
H1: Among the actual manager’s professionalism, career advancement and business performance, there is a positive interrelationship.

H2: The manager personality characteristics, as an element in career advancement are expected to positively influence the business performance.

The data indicated in the tables no. 7, 8, 9, evidence the correlations between the independent variables: Actual Professionalism and Personality and the dependent variable: Business Performance. The table data show that $R^2 = 42.6\%$ having a considerably meaningful significance $p < 0.0001$ which indicates that 42.6% of the change in the business performance is dedicated to the independent variables related to the career advancement.

The relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable is expressed via the equation: 

$$Y = -3.627 + 1.265 X_1 + e,$$

where $Y$ — business performance;

$X_1$ — actual professionalism of the manager;

e — casual term.

The equation indicates that a linear, statistically significant relation ($p < 0.0001$) exists between the independent variable – Actual Professionalism and the dependent variable – business performance. Meaning that career advancement is highly possible if the manager actually commands a certain level of professionalism. The regression coefficient of this component results $+1.265$. The above data empirically evidence that upon intensification of the manager professionalism, increase the chances of a better business performance. From a philosophical standpoint, this result explains the fact that managers are confident that professional based meritocracy is undoubtedly reflected in business performance. Thus, H3 is confirmed.

Meanwhile, the second component Personality results not affecting career advancement. Managers believe that the personality traits do not constitute a conditioning factor for career advancement. During the field survey was insisted upon the connection of “Big 5” personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) and career advancement, but managers do not believe that personality traits result in an influencing component upon the business performance. So H4 is not confirmed.

The situation relates to the appropriate understanding of each personality trait in particular and all together considered, by the part of the managers. The lack of due knowledge of the personality traits leads to a un-objective assessment as a factor influencing on business performance.

### Table 7. Model Summary

| Model | R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1     | 0.653* | 0.426    | 0.414             | 0.87524                   |

**Note:** * — Predictors: (Constant), Personality, Actual Professionalism.

### Table 8. ANOVA *

| Model        | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig.   |
|--------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|--------|
| Regression   | 55.221         | 2  | 27.611      | 36.043 | 0.000**|
| Residual     | 74.306         | 97 | 0.766       |        |        |
| Total        | 129.528        | 99 |             |        |        |

**Note:** * — Dependent Variable: Business Performance; ** — Predictors: (Constant), Personality, Actual Professionalism.

### Table 9. Coefficients *

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t    | Sig.  |
|-------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|-------|
|       | B   | Std. Error | Beta |       |       |
| 1     | (Constant) | -3.627 | 0.894 | -4.056 | 0.000 |
|       | Actual professionalism | 1.265 | 0.159 | 0.626 | 7.977 | 0.000 |
|       | Personality | 0.176 | 0.140 | 0.098 | 1.250 | 0.214 |

**Note:** * — Dependent Variable: Business Performance.
Conclusions

Career has ceased to being handled as a static situation and is increasingly recognized as a complex, dynamic and ever-evolving process crossing the organizations boundaries. Nowadays the perception is shifting from the classically defined career to a more comprehensive outlook, embracing the professional and personal life. Its is not discussed anymore in terms of having a lifelong career, but aiming at the cultivation of knowledge and capacities necessary to achieve the goals related not exclusively to the context of work, but beyond. One of the main concerns is to raise awareness on the continuous learning, the accumulation of skills and knowledge, being the ultimate goal of career management and advancement. Thereon employers in modern times, talk about providing opportunities to enhance employability and marketability. A know-how acquisition approach would undoubtedly contribute to the construction of a sustainable professional figure. Professionalism is considered highly significant, pinpointing to the prominence of cultivating the skills and abilities in order to obtain the aimed objective, those being interrelated to business performance. On the other hand, the employees’ personality is a major factor of individual behavior in the workplace, but to this regard the study highlighted a lack of information on the part of Albanian managers related to the influence of Big 5 personality traits in particular and all together considered.

The study comprised professionalism, personality and business performance as variables, but in future studies various other aspects within the individual and/or organization context can be traced. Studies can be undertaken to explore other grounds or a comparative analysis can be performed to this regard.

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