Features of the relation between the organizational climate and professional fulfillment in the Romanian Public Sector

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relation between the characteristics of the organizational climate and professional fulfillment for the employees in the Romanian public sector. The premise from which we have started was that work-related satisfaction is combination of intrinsic professional satisfaction (connected to one’s type of work, to the job requirements) and the extrinsic professional satisfaction (in relation to work conditions such as the level of wages, the relations with colleagues and superiors, the organizational climate characteristics etc.).

The results suggests that the general perception of the employees is that the public organization rarely achieves its objectives, that is has no efficient use of resources and neither an adequate motivation of the employees. Furthermore, it have been registered medium and high correlations ($p \leq 0.001$) between the dimensions of the organizational climate and those of professional fulfillment, a thing which showed that together with the optimization of the negative elements belonging to the organizational climate it is expected to find a favorable evolution of the employees’ professional satisfaction, as well.

Key-Words: - Organizational Climate, Professional Fulfillment, Employees in the Romanian Public Sector

1 Introduction

The experience accumulated at the work place influences one’s entire personality, having impact on emotional states, on the level of aspirations, on interests, motivations and behavior. Furthermore, professional fulfillment is connected to a general state of well-being, while the lack of such satisfactions is associated with a state of personal discontent in one’s private life (marital status, relations with one’s children etc.) and with a decrease in work productivity.

When one’s work satisfaction is evaluated we refer both to global satisfaction (work in general and all related aspects being taken into consideration), as well as to its component factors. Work satisfaction is, thus, a combination between intrinsic and extrinsic professional satisfaction. The former is determined by the type of work, by the job requirements, while the latter is determined by the work conditions, such as the wage level, the relations with work colleagues and superiors, the features of the physical environment, the features of the organization etc.

1.1 Professional fulfillment and emotional adaptation to public servants

A study on the relation between MHR (management of Human Resources) practices and work satisfaction indicators, conducted in public institutions from Holland, concluded that (a) individual characteristics have an insignificant effect of work satisfaction, (b) MHR practices have a positive effect, but (c) this kind of effect is mainly indirect, mediated by the job characteristics and those of the organization [1].

Professional fulfillment depends on the work-related expectations – what people look for in or demand from a job (job safety, wages, prestige, independence). An inconsistency between expectations and the reality of the work-place can lead to inadaptation and, thus, realism is the most frequently recommended solution: dissatisfaction can appear even when it comes to the greatest of jobs.

Dissatisfaction must not go unresolved, being a barometer of the adaptation to work. It may have serious consequences: the loss of employment, the appearance or increase of mental disturbances
(depression, anxiety, interpersonal problems). It has been proven that job satisfaction is a prediction factor of the life span more accurate than medical predictions based on the physical functioning of the individual, the substance addiction factors, or genetic heritage [2].

Special attention has been given lately to the evaluation of mental health and of the quality of life, including in relation to work. A new form of public management (New Public Management – NPM) is under discussion in this context, since many studies show the fact that an investment in MHR has positive effects on the morale of the employees.

In developed countries New Public Management is used to improve the functioning of public institutions. NPM offers new challenges, by implementing techniques traditionally encountered in the private sector, these techniques being mainly results oriented. Thus, it has been argued the necessity of taking into consideration both the variables which are not work-related and the resources of psychological coping of the employees.

A study conducted on a sample of 1155 public servants has explained the psychological health, the satisfaction obtained from work and the commitment to work of the public servants by the use of a regression model containing as predicament variables: external variables (external resources, support and, to a lesser extent, the degree of control); the authors include here as well the specific situational stressors, especially those which imply incorrect managerial practices – insufficient time to complete a task, not recognizing accomplishments etc.; internal variables, focused on the employee (internal coping resources) [3].

The results have suggested that the professional performances of the public servants involve, above the individual variables, mostly the organizational variables, starting with the defining of the objectives, the support designed for their achievement and up to the reference to the managerial styles of those in charge.

The “burnout” syndrome can be observed to this category of employees, as well, a fact emphasized in a study examining the organizational factors, which contribute to the frustration of the employees at the work place. The sample was of 141 public servants who participated in 2001 to workshops dedicated to the burnout syndrome. The purpose of the workshops was to increase the awareness regarding the organizational factors, which might contribute to the burnout syndrome [4].

Results have indicated that the factors with direct impact on the subjects had a predicament power more powerful than that of the indirect factors (the quality of services or the professional independence of the workers). The feeling of lack of power and that of isolation have been also indicators of frustration, suggesting the fact that participants viewed their work issues more likely as individual, private matters, than some which are public, organizational.

Recent studies have approached the matter of the relation between the emotional status and the capacity of the public servants to form mature interpersonal relations with their clients. Thus, a research has attempted to investigate the relation between the level of anxiety and the style of interpersonal transaction in the work of public servants, by coming to the following results [5]:

- anxiety is a feature source for the immature transactions in which public servants are engaged; moreover, these transactions are marked by variables such as age and the level of education;
- the level of anxiety of the public servants and the result of professional socializing, not only that of a person’s reactions to work and living conditions;
- the organizational culture influences the display of some types of behavior undesirable from the perspective of social interaction;
- even though there are institutional frameworks (such as the Statute of the Public Servant) meant to insure the betterment of the public servants’ work, the process of socializing in the organization has to permit the clear definition of the professional role, its adoption and putting into practice at high levels of efficiency;
- a framework for socializing, adequate to the objectives and the features of the organization, well conceived and applied with perseverance, can lead to a decrease in the frequency of neurotic manifestations and in unproductive interpersonal transactions in what the public servant – client relation is concerned;
- Higher education proves to be a protection factor from anxiety, either to the plus of competence which it brings, either to the much higher social status, which becomes a source of confidence in oneself and one’s capabilities.

1.2 The perception on Romanian public institutions

In what the perception on Romanian public institutions and of their performances is concerned, most authors show that an acute distrust is being developed, more likely a type of manipulating than resolving abilities. Moreover, there are talks about the flexibility of the state’s institutions, about the
importance given to power relations, which might facilitate institutional and social chaos [6].

Considering the numerous situations, when negative remarks regarding the level of performance of public servants have been made, we quote a fragment from the public opinion poll conducted by the Public Policies Institute (The Gallup Organization Romania, in October 2004), a poll addressed to public servants. The work-related dissatisfaction, the perception on the level of corruption, the level of education is only some of the matters analyzed in this study.

The authors have attempted to identify the causes which keep public servants from observing the conduct norms specific to their field. The following causes have been invoked from the perspective of the public servants: the low level of wages (77%), the citizens’ behavior towards public servants (27%), the lack of a clear mission when it comes to a public position (20%), the lack of organizational culture (18%), the low level of training of public servants (17%), corruption (12%), the low level of morality when it comes to public servants (9%), the insufficient support on the part of the management in what assuming values and ethical standards is concerned (7%).

1.3 The organizational climate

Even though widely used in psychology, the concept of organizational climate is pretty hard to define, having a great deal of intuitive components. By summing up more definitions, one acquires a multitude of elements, which determine the organizational climate: structure, hierarchy; management, leadership; the system of adopting decisions; rules and regulations; the activities and interpersonal relations, the pattern of relations in an organization; human motivating strategies; means to transmit and circulate information, communication; physical and material factors, work conditions; the belief system, values, meanings; the nature of the work, job requirements, the job description; the established objectives; the personality features of the employees; the wages and the selection and recruiting procedures; the influences exterior to the organization.

People have the tendency to accept and internalize the organizational climate in which they work and the way in which they perceive the climate has an important role on their behavior. For instance, perceiving an organizational climate as positive has been significantly correlated with satisfaction regarding one’s workplace. The types of environment which are stimulating, with a high morale, supportive and cooperating, in which the employees feel supported by their colleagues and the management, which permit individuals to assume the responsibility and offers them the possibility of adequate ways of informing themselves and of transmitting ideas, constitute sources of satisfaction for the employees.

The positive work conditions such as: heat, the differentiated system of rewards, the care take for new employees, the supportive monitoring, the information regarding all aspects of the organization, various tasks, independence, cooperation, clear and high standards and authenticity are favorable to an efficient work behavior [7].

A study (1996) conducted on managers (from different hierarchical strata) from three public institutions revealed the fact that both the women and men who took part in the research valued environments which offered them the possibility to accomplish challenging, interesting and creative things. Moreover it has been noted a convergence between their values and aspirations and the pressure for organizational change.

Furthermore, analysis has proved that when it comes to aspirations and values, both sexes considered as important the same job-related aspects: personal fulfillment and integrity, doing interesting and challenging things, testing one’s own abilities, the opportunity to prove creative and innovative. Moreover, the least important aspects of a job have been identified as well, being similar to men and women: aspirations related to personal power and status (to have a job which promotes the social status in society), to be in the proximity of powerful people and to have a work environment with a strict structure.

Even though there haven’t been noted many differences between managers women and men in what regards the work-related aspirations, the study has shown that women managers perceive in a different manner the organizational climate in comparison to men managers. Regarding this aspect, women have emphasized the support from superiors and colleagues and correctness (all employees to be treated in an equitable manner), considering that these influence the most their work-related satisfaction. Men have correlated the satisfaction for their work with the absence of obstacles, interdictions – a climate which does not keep one from completing one’s projects. The results of the study have shown that the organizational environment has a greater impact on the projects and on the work-related satisfaction of women manager, than in the case of men having the same hierarchical position.
Based on the results, the authors of the study suggest that organizational change must not be focused on the upper ranks of management; the work environment in the public institutions involved in the research has been described in favorable terms by those in the upper ranks than by those in the lower echelons [8].

A different study (2001) regarding the organizational climate evaluates the relation between its dimensions and types of misconduct at work. The results of the study show the low levels of misconduct of work when the organizational climate is perceived as a positive one. The types of climate which offer emotional support and comfort have a positive impact on the positions taken in relation to the workplace and on the behavior, as well as on organizational performance [9].

2 Methods
We have conducted this study on a number of 120 employees from the public sector, by using 2 questionnaires (which came as a proposal from Ticu Constantin), after which we went on to identify the relations between the studied variables.

2.1 Research objectives
1. the diagnosis of elements characteristic to the organizational climate in public organizations;
2. the diagnosis of elements characteristic to work-related satisfaction in public organizations;
3. identifying eventual correlations between the diagnosis elements caught and their integration in unitary structure, which would permit to formulate a possible intervention path of an OD (organizational development) type.

2.2 Instruments used
The two instruments used are [10]:
The “Organizational climate” questionnaire.
The questionnaire measures eight factors:
I. The task refers to the way of defining tasks and objectives, both at the level of the entire organization and for each employee in particular.
II. The structure aims the way work is organized, with reference to efficiency, flexibility and adaptability of jobs and functions.
III. The relations evaluate the quality of the interactions between employees, with reference to the communication and collaboration from a professional point of view; non-conflicting climate.
IV. The motivation refers to elements regarding retribution, promotion, competence, development etc.
V. The support aims resources and work conditions ensured by the organization for the accomplishment of a performatant activity.
VI. Management refers to the efficient way of leadership, supporting individual and collective performance, assuring the conditions for efficiency.
VII. Change measures the general stand regarding change in the organization, reflected in a flexible style, adaptability, initiative and creativity.
VIII. Performance aims the performance of the organization, evaluated according to the accomplishment of objectives, the reduction of costs, and the positive image.

Validation criteria: general Alpha Crombach coefficient = 0,964; coefficients on factors – I = 0,710, II = 0,812, III = 0,789, IV = 0,770, V = 0,813, VI = 0,842, VII = 0,777.

The Alpha Crombach coefficients for the two halves of the questionnaires (the split-half method) have been 0,929 and 0,941.

The “Work-related satisfaction” questionnaire
This instrument measures four factors:
1. Remuneration and promotion evaluates the degree of satisfaction of the employee regarding the reward for his work (wages, other financial rewards, acknowledgement or possibilities for promotion).
2. Management and interpersonal relations measures the satisfaction of the employee regarding the social climate and work relations, from the point of view of the relations with colleagues or with the boss, as well as from that of the loose, non-conflicting climate.
3. Organizing and communication refers to the degree of satisfaction of the employee regarding the way in which work is organized and accomplished: defining tasks, the effort involved, communication, feedback etc.
4. General satisfaction evaluates the degree in which the employee is satisfied with one’s work, both in what regards its organization and that of the rewards (material or moral) received for one’s activity and interpersonal climate in which one works.

Validation criteria: general Alpha Crombach coefficient = 0,872; coefficients on factors – Remuneration and promotion = 0,820, Management and interpersonal relations = 0,760, Organizing and communication = 0,738.

3 Results and discussion
In what the climate of the organization is concerned, the data obtained suggests the following:
• regarding the diagnosis of the organizational climate, one observes an intensity below average of the task factor, which suggests the need for a more clear definition of tasks, most probably at the level of each employee in particular;
• the way in which work is organized (the structure factor) is evaluated as having a low intensity, most employees perceiving the way work is organized as less efficient, with a lower flexibility and adaptability of positions;
• regarding professional relations among employees (the relations factor), they are perceived as being most often of a non-conflicting nature, the factor having a medium intensity;
• The motivation factor has a low intensity, which suggests that the motivational climate in the organization is not based on efficient motivational strategies;
• in what regards the support factor, it is manifested with weak intensity, most employees appreciating as below average the resources and work conditions the organization has to offer for work;
• regarding management, the factor has an intensity of manifestation of below average, being appreciated that the styles of leadership employed are rarely efficient;
• the attitude towards change is characterized by a below-average intensity, the employees considering that the organization adapts well to the socio-economic reality;
• Finally, regarding general performance, the factor manifests itself with a low intensity, which suggests the perception of the employees that the organization rarely achieves its objectives, that it does not have an efficient employment of resources and neither does it have an adequate motivation of the employees.

In what regards work-related satisfaction, the obtained data suggest that:
• the wages and promotion factor is evaluated as having a very low intensity, which suggests the dissatisfaction of employees in relation with their work, in what regards wages, the possibility of promoting and other financial rewards;
• in what regards management and interpersonal relations, the factor has a very high intensity of manifesting itself, which permits us to assert that there is a high degree of satisfaction of employees regarding the social climate and work relations;
• regarding the organizing and communication factor, it is manifested with medium intensity, which suggests that employees take measures of compromise in what regards their level of satisfaction for the way in which work is organized and done.
• Finally, regarding the general satisfaction factor, one may observe that it has a weak intensity of manifesting itself, which suggests that employees are not pleased with their work, both regarding its way of organization, and in what regards the rewards received for their work. This general dissatisfaction is maintained, though most of the employees declare themselves satisfied by the interpersonal dimension of their work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OC task</td>
<td>4.7593</td>
<td>1.2039</td>
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<tr>
<td>OC structure</td>
<td>4.1250</td>
<td>1.6649</td>
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<tr>
<td>OC relations</td>
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<td>OC performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>OC-general score</td>
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<td>1.2585</td>
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Table 1 – Results for Organizational Climate Questionnaire” (OC)

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>WS_wages and promotion</td>
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<td>WS_management and interpersonal relations</td>
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<td>.8460</td>
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<tr>
<td>WS_organizing and communication</td>
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<td>.8247</td>
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<tr>
<td>WS_general score</td>
<td>3.5888</td>
<td>.6580</td>
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Table 2 – Results for „Work – related Satisfaction (WS)

The analysis of the correlations between the dimensions of the organizational climate and the dimensions of professional satisfaction show between these two variables medium and high correlations have been registered, at \( p \leq 0.001 \), which shows that together with the optimization of the negative elements belonging to the organizational climate we expect to find also a favorable evolution of the employees’ professional fulfillment, on all three dimensions.
Regarding the identification variables, one notes there is no significant difference between men and women when it comes to general scores obtained for all four questionnaires administered. In other words, belonging to a certain sex does not seem to influence the work-related satisfaction and neither does the way in which a person perceive the organizational climate in the public sector.

The average age of those questioned was of 42.8 years old with a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 58 years old, the average work experience being of 8.1 years.

Unfortunately the identification data are sometimes incomplete, a thing which decreases their informational value. This fact suggests either a misunderstanding of the work tasks, or (and more probable) a skepticism on the part of the employees, a need to have the confidentiality protected, given the critical notes, observed as a result of the organizational diagnosis.

4 Conclusion

- the general perception of the employees is that rarely the organization attains its objectives, that it has no efficient use of resources and no adequate motivation of the employees.
- the employees are unsatisfied with their work, both in what regards the way in which it’s organized, and in what concerns the rewards the employees receive for their activity;
- this general dissatisfaction persists even though most subjects declare themselves satisfied with the interpersonal dimension of the climate;
- the employees strongly demand change and are willing to accept the initiatives for change which contain: 1. a change centered on personnel (optimizing the motivational system; improving communication; optimizing hierarchical relations and the relations between employees (interventions on the social system); the increase of the degree of personal involvement; interventions on working conditions; interventions on the degree of personnel satisfaction); 2. a change centered on productivity (changes at the level of the economic system of the organization; interventions on the organizational structure; a more efficient organization of the activity; improving collective performance; increasing productivity; improving the quality of services).

References: