Parental Competence of Women Managers from Romania

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Abstract

Taking into consideration the growing percent of women who occupy managerial positions in Romania, this research focuses on studying the parental competence level of women managers. Based on both the global score of the parental competence and the one specific to each dimension of it, there have been identified a series of differences between two groups of subjects from Romania (31 women managers and 31 women without leadership positions). The results have shown the need for a training program meant to develop parental competence and for adapting this program to women managers.

Keywords: parental competence; child development; woman manager; managerial position; parental role.

1. Introduction

A few decades back, most studies of the managerial activity were conducted on groups of male subjects; nowadays the situation changes due to the increasing number of women seated in manager positions, both in Romania, and at European and international level. A multinational study conducted between 1997 and 1998 (taken from ILO: Yearbook of Labor Statistics, 1999) on the managerial population from 29 countries – including Romania – revealed the following percentages of women managers (in descending order for each percentage group): 35-40% – Canada and New Zealand; 30-35% – Hungary, Poland, Great Britain, Spain, Bahamas; 25-30% – Slovakia, Belgium, Austria, Ireland, Germany, Romania; 20-25% – Slovenia, Holland, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Greece, Israel, Mexico; under 5% – South Korea (Wirth, 2001).

According to Mercer (2012), researches conducted on the population of 40 countries have indicated the fact that 34% of the leadership positions within Romanian companies are being held by women, their share exceeding that of other states such as Italy (22%), Austria (21%), Germany (20%) or Holland (19%). Whereas at an European level the share of placing women on top managerial positions (such as chief executive officers) is 29%,
at a global level, the states with the highest share of female CEOs are Lithuania (44%), Bulgaria (43%), Russia (40%), Kazakhstan (37%), Estonia (37%), Serbia (36%) and Ukraine (35%); however, there are recorded very low percentages also, like in Egypt (17%) or Qatar (7%).

In other words, since 1998, when 25% of the total number of managers in Romania was represented by women, the percentage has increased until the present day to 34%, also as a result of implementing the 202/2002 Law concerning the equality of opportunities between men and women (Parliament of Romania, 2002) and “The National School of Women Managers” program (Romanian Association for Promoting the Woman, 2011), which benefits from European co-funding through the “Sectorial Operational Program for Human Resources Development – 2007-2013” and whose objective is to reduce specific imbalances at a managerial level on the labor market in Romania by means of professional training and development programs.

The women managers possess nowadays basic competences such as the clear determination of the purpose and the short and long-term objectives, identification of priorities, task focusing, delegation of responsibilities, efficient time management, communication and negotiation skills, problem solving, decision taking, stimulation of the subordinated personnel’s motivation in order to render them as productive as possible (Carr-Ruffino, 1983), but also commitment and leader talent – therefore, a strong personality. A series of studies from past decades indicate that women face a harder path towards gaining top management positions; in general, they mostly get assigned to middle management positions – project or product manager (Roberts & Hunt, 1991), personnel management or customer relations (Mullins, 2004).

As their male counterparts do, women managers place career on an important position; however, they also face a challenge that usually has a lower impact on the life of male managers: mixing career with family life and children nurturing, which requires the gain of a high level of parental competence. This concept represents a system of knowledge, skills, capabilities, abilities and habits that allow the parent to successfully fulfill the parental responsibilities and also to prevent/deal with crisis situations in a manner that contributes to the child’s development (Glăveanu & Creangă, 2009). The level of parental competence is reflected in five particular abilities (which define the five dimensions of the parental competence): knowing the child, affective support, disciplining, time management and crisis management.

The ongoing modifications of traditional male/female roles and of the woman’s status (with regard to life style, social attitudes, and the family role) are supported by the new legislative regulations which have stimulated the woman’s ascent and continuity in managerial positions.

2. The Methodology of Research

2.1. The purpose

Starting from a series of researches which indicated that mothers’ professional performance lead to a limited time spent with the children, a certain neglect towards them and the occurrence of deviant behaviors (Bourbeau, 2009), but also from the premise that the required skills for the exercise of the managerial position were also necessary for ensuring an efficient interaction with the child, the objective of this study was centered on investigating the women managers’ parental competence.

The following work hypotheses were launched:

- Women managers display a more advanced parental competence than the women not holding leadership positions.
- Some dimensions of the parental competence are more developed in the case of women managers than in other women’s case.
- The parental competence of women managers varies depending on the child caretaking assistance received from other persons.
2.2. The subjects

Two groups of subjects were formed (by random sampling of twelve small and medium companies’ staff): the first one comprised 31 women managers (M=41.87, SD=13.69) having secondary or higher education, employed by various companies or who manage their own business, and with a length of service of at least two years in their respective positions (that are at middle and entry level management positions); the second group was made from 31 women with secondary and higher education (M=40.76, SD=12.15), employed in positions not involving the coordination of collectives. The subjects from both categories are mothers of children aged between 7 and 10-11 (M=9.63, SD = 2.57), studying from the 1st to the 4th grade. For the first group, the criterion of having at least two years of service in a managing position was taken into account as an indicator of their relative efficiency in the managerial role, starting from the idea that holding that respective position did not occur by accident, but was determined by the existence of certain skills in the case of that person, allowing job stability. Also, women managers were asked to declare if they are supported in childcare and by whom, choosing from six possible responses to an item of the questionnaire; depending on their choice, they were include in six categories that would be analyzed in terms of parental competence.

2.3. The Method

In order to investigate the parental competence of the two groups of subjects, the Parental Competence Questionnaire (PCQ) was applied. The PCQ was developed by us starting from empiric and qualitative studies; it was not founded on a certain typology of parents, but it was meant to offer a holistic/integrate vision over the parental model and it has 81 items distributed into the following five dimensions:

- Knowing the child – is about the parent’s ability of becoming aware of the child’s level of development, therefore being able to understand the child’s reactions and needs and to provide adequate answers.
- Affective support – is about the parent’s capacity of applying efficient methods for both preventing an uprush of the familial stress and coping with it; this capacity is about managing the tensional situations and also, about providing some affective assistance that helps the child to manage and overcome negative emotions.
- Disciplining – reflects the parental capacity of being assertive in relation to the child and of adequately managing the reward-punition system in order to permit and stimulate the development of all the components of a well-balanced personality.
- Time management – reveals both the parent’s ability of defining the amount and quality of the time spent with the child and of guiding the child’s own time by creating stimulative situations for the development of critical and creative thinking, aesthetic sense etc., and also for sustaining child’s social insertion.
- Crisis management – reflects the parental capacity of being a good leader, of finding solutions to the child’s problems together with the child, consequently overcoming the educational, personal etc. crises and stimulating the development of critical (rational) thinking and problem-solving capacity.

The psychometric qualities of the questionnaire (fidelity and validity) were revealed as follows: the calculation of the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient revealed statistical acceptable values (between 0.71 and 0.82); the content validity was mostly ensured by extracting behavior samples from the results of the qualitative research and by using expert analysis (eight experts evaluated the relevance of the items for the investigated construct). PCQ was validated in 2009-2010 (Glăveanu, 2012a) on 535 parents with the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991) (r between 0.5 and 0.9; level 0.01, bilateral).

3. Results

For the investigation of the first hypothesis – that stated that women managers displayed a more advanced parental competence than the women not holding leadership positions – the PCQ scores achieved by the two
groups of subjects were compared using the Independent Samples T-Test statistical procedure. The results showed differences between women managers (M=215.28, SD=84.22) and women without leadership positions (M=216.73, SD=86.19), t(60)=122.28, p=0.06, but these were not statistically significant.

To bring depth and finesse to the research and identify if some dimensions of the parental competence were more developed in the case of women managers than in other women’s case, the Independent Samples T-Test was applied and the score at each of the five dimensions of the PCQ was analyzed.

Research data revealed statistically significant differences (p<0.05) in the following dimensions: knowing the child between women managers (M=43.29, SD=19.33) and women without leadership positions (M=57.11, SD=21.89), t(60)=31.8; affective support and stress management between women managers (M=51.9, SD=20.25) and the other women (M=55.02, SD=3.88), t(60)=26.57; time management between women managers (M=47.1, SD=23.14) and the other women (M=34.8, SD=16.54), t(60)=22.85; crisis management between women managers (M=49.03, SD=24.02) and the other women (M=33.9, SD=13.96), t(60)=23.44. Also there were revealed some differences on the disciplining dimension between women managers (M=45.64, SD=22.07) and the other women (M=45.66, SD=22.07), t(60)=19.3, p>0.05, but they were not statistically significant.

The variation of parental competence of women managers depending on the assistance received from other persons in taking care of the child was studied using the One-Way ANOVA and the results of the F (5,30)=2.61, p<0.05), the results indicated that the differences between categories were statistically significant. After analyzing the results, it appeared that the highest average score for the parental competence was obtained by women managers that were supported in taking care of children by nannies (N=5, M=293.8, SD=69.22) and neighbors (N=5, M=274.6, SD=72.97), descendingly followed by those with no support (N=6, M=253.33, SD=61.80), helped by parents (N=5, M=223.6, SD=20.25), by in-laws (N=5, M=209.8, SD=20.93) and by members of the extended family (uncles/aunts, cousins etc.) (N=5, M=191.2, SD=41.8).

4. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this study contribute to the support of the idea that the skills which helped the women to obtain and hold managing positions will also support the increase of the parental competence – at least in some dimensions. According to the recorded score, non-manager women possess a better knowledge of the child and a higher availability in providing the emotional support required by the child during the 7 to 10-11 years age stage. Women managers possess both a higher management capacity concerning the time spent with the child – despite it being significantly more limited – and the organization of the children’s schedule in order to allow their intellectual, social and cultural harmonious development, as well as an excellent ability to manage crisis situations, helping the child to successfully overcome them. The result is confirmed by the researches that reveal the fact that time and crisis management are manager’s essential skill. Moreover, women managers have to face the stress generated also by the effort to maintain an equilibrium between family and professional life; they also may end up dedicating to household duties 15 extra hours every week in comparison with men (Sitterly, 1999).

Nevertheless, as indicated by the data of the present research, the parental competence level does not exclusively depend on the amount of time spent with the child, but is rather a quality indicator of the interaction and educational actions carried out together with them. The method of organizing the said actions is influenced by the parent’s personal characteristics – personality traits, emotional intelligence, stress resistance (Glăveanu, 2012b), but also by those resulted from the development of managerial skills such as planning, organization, guidance, motivation and control. With regard to disciplining, women without leadership positions have a slightly more elevated score than women managers; however, the result is not statistically significant, and both categories have a medium level when their score is compared to the standard, which means that they manage to adequately introduce discipline notions to the child, although they use distinctive skills.
The child caretaking assistance that the woman manager receives from the nanny or neighbors completes the parental competence against a background in which the mother keeps the responsibility for the child education duties and supervises the performance of the child nurturing activities. On the other hand, if the child caretaking and education tasks are entirely delegated to a nanny, the risk of the child subsequently displaying personality disorders will increase (Friedman, 2010). The fact that women managers who do not benefit from assistance in raising their children obtain a medium parental competence score proves once again that some of the leader skills leave traces in the organization and welfare of the family environment. The involvement of the parents, in-laws or other members of the extended family must also be carefully managed by the mother in order to obtain their consensus with regard to the requirements from the child and the desirable conducts which are to be transmitted to them, for the purpose of preventing the incoherence of the educational process – with harmful effects upon the child.

At a general level, women managers’ parental competence is slightly lower than that of women not holding leadership positions. Although this result is not statistically significant, it may become so if the research group is extended, representing an alarming fact for the contemporary society. Thus, it is necessary to conduct a more detailed study which would also take into account other psycho-social variables specific to women managers (such as the number of children, the marital status, the partner’s level of involvement in the family/parental life, the size of the collective coordinated at the workplace, the place in the managerial hierarchy – top/middle/entry-level management, etc.), within the perspective of adapting and applying the parental competence development training program conceived and implemented by Glăveanu during the 2010-2011 interval (Glăveanu, 2012c) on the Romanian parental population.

References