CHANGES IN ENVIRONMENT, COMPANY POSITIONING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

Considering the dynamic development of technology, the knowledge economy, and the overall improvement of the quality of life, new concepts have inevitably emerged in business practices within human resource management. Employment, the work of employees in a harmonious company environment, and the creation of opportunities for personal expression and progress, both on an individual and professional level, are important topics addressed in this paper. The system of values and the understanding of work ethics, as well as the ideal concept of a career, are constantly changing, and companies strive to respond to the new demands of employees who perform purposeful activities within the company, for them to fulfill their purpose: business success, social responsibility, and human resource development.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the changes occurring daily, both in the business world and in other aspects of life, business practices in human resource management are also evolving. Globalization, the progressive growth of innovative technological solutions, demographic changes, downsizing, and high unemployment rates are the basis for these changes. The increasing share of young people in the workforce implies many talented candidates in search of employers who will facilitate their development both professionally and personally. Companies find themselves competing for the young talents, devising creative ways to offer better working conditions and paying increasing attention to human resource management. Fierce competition among employers has largely resulted in positive outcomes for young candidates, allowing them to choose between employers to get the desired working conditions (Snell, 2022).

Today's companies understand that the value of human resources is high, primarily because employees generate the value they deliver to customers and, consequently, revenue for the company, which is then reinvested in the employees' development, for mutual satisfaction. Satisfied employees, in addition to the increased productivity that enhances the company's chances of success, signal good working conditions within the company and communicate them to candidates. Talented candidates want to apply to work in a company where they will be satisfied, one that enables their development and the acquisition of new skills. Companies are compelled to adapt promptly to changes on the labor market and overall business environment if they aim to develop their business and employee network (Sharf, 2014).

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper represents a synergy of the theoretical context and a review of relevant literature in the field of human resource management, which has been enhanced through the analysis of primary data collected through research. In the study of this topic, scientific papers on career development, career counseling, and contemporary trends in the field of human resources were used.

Human resource management is a strategically vital process for a company since employees directly impact the company's operations (Rotich, 2015). The contemporary labor market is oversaturated with employers and candidates, making it increasingly challenging to create distinctive competencies. Therefore, companies are turning to investment in their employees, transforming them into brand ambassadors. Developed technology for producing quality products and innovation, on its own, does not guarantee the success of a company. It can contribute to a company's progress only if qualified employees stand behind it (Sims 2006 & 2007).

2.1. Contemporary Trends in Human Resource Management

The factors that have significantly shaken the field of human resource management are globalization, rapid technological advancement, a significant generational gap between employees, unemployment, reduced workforce due to budget cuts, as well as changes in the understanding of the career concept and work ethics (Conlon, 2004). Companies need to direct their efforts towards studying contemporary trends on the labor market, creating human resource management strategies, and implementing technology and knowledge into their daily operations (Beardwell et al., 2004).

2.1.1. Technology development

Changes in the field of technology have fundamentally altered the future of certain professions, business practices, internal communication, and all aspects of human life (Riccucci, 2012). With the advent of the internet, many activities have been simplified, both from the perspective of candidates and from the perspective of employees within a company. Traditional meetings have been replaced by Zoom and Teams meetings, while traditional job advertisements in newspapers and on television have been replaced by job search websites. International companies are outsourcing their call centers to countries with cheaper labor (Scullion et al., 2007). Computerization has made many professions obsolete, as they are now fully automated, but it has also given rise to new professions that require expertise in managing modern technology.

The selection and recruitment processes have been accelerated through the use of job posting websites, social media, and online candidate interviews. Thanks to technology, location and working hours flexibility has enabled remote work and a better balance between work and personal life, which are valuable benefits for employees. The development of technology has brought many advantages for human resource management but also many challenges (Dessler, 2013; Ivanchevich, 2010). Due to the arrival of international companies on the domestic market, there is a transfer of knowledge and technologies, transforming the modern labor market into a global one.

2.1.2. Globalization

Information technology has not only connected the world but also brought changes like reduced cultural differences and English proficiency, allowing companies to hire globally. Job offshoring is common as production moves to cost-effective countries. Globalization broadens job options for candidates, challenging employers to adapt to the global market and enabling technology exchange. However, it can lead to lower salaries in lower-income countries. Operating globally requires HR departments to navigate diverse legal, cultural, linguistic, and ethical frameworks.

2.1.3. Competition

Competition brings both opportunities and challenges for employers and candidates alike. Changes can be either good or bad, but they drive creativity, innovation, and new ways of thinking. Talented candidates and quality employers can choose, thus ensuring a variety of values are satisfied. Over time, many employers have led to an oligopoly, making international companies giants with the ability to offer the best benefits to employees in exchange for their productivity and, consequently, to hire high-quality workers. Young candidates without work experience typically get the opportunity for internships in such companies, which means career development for them and working for a company with a strong employer brand. For the company, it means the infusion of young innovative thinking and lower labor costs. Competition, in every sense, leads to greater proactivity and competition, reduces costs, and provides more choices for all players on the labor market.

2.1.4. Demographic changes

Diversity in human resource management brings significant advantages for employers, but it also presents considerable challenges in adapting to different perspectives, ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and communication styles. Managing human resources that differ in terms of age, gender, education, race, religion, nationality, and culture requires extensive knowledge, adaptability, and patience. Differences should be respected and understood rather than ignored, as this is the only way to create a pleasant work environment and a flexible organizational culture. Different worldviews contribute to better ideas and team cohesion but present a challenge for managers.

When it comes to age diversity, companies today have three generations of employees, each with notable differences in their perception of work and the benefits they expect from their employers (James, 2002). Lester suggests in his work that "older employees are rigid and inflexible, younger employees are irresponsible and think they are always right, and those in the middle do not understand either the younger or older employees" (Lester et al., 2012, p. 351). Older employees embody a work culture and upbringing that emphasized loyalty to one employer, progression within one company, adaptability to all aspects of the job, and great responsibility. With changes in contemporary business, an increase in the number of employers, and higher employee turnover in companies, whether due to leaving jobs in search of better conditions or cost-cutting measures by employers, there have been changes in the perception of career and loyalty among young workers (Knowles et al., 2015). Continuous development seems more important to the younger generation, who still lack extensive work experience, so they seek companies that will facilitate their development through education and provide a strong work-life balance (McHanon et al., 2003). Young candidates have grown up in parallel with technological development and easily adapt to it, making them a valuable resource for companies, so efforts to understand their needs should not be underestimated.

2.2. Career development

A career, as an abstract concept, can be understood in various ways, with a certain degree of subjectivity. Its meaning can be viewed from the perspective of the individual, but also from the perspective of the employer and development within a single company. Its scope also depends on whether a career is perceived solely in professional terms or if it represents an individual's lifelong development. In the past, it was common for employees to remain loyal to one company from the start of their career until retirement, and career development was seen

through the lens of progressing within that company's hierarchy, reaching top management positions. As workloads and responsibilities increased, so did benefits and position status (Schuler et al., 2014). Today, it is often talked about frequent changes in employers, jobs, as well as dramatic shifts in career paths and requalification (Filmer et al., 2010). In addition to the concept of a career, daily life and values have also changed, affecting expectations from employers and career development opportunities in modern times. It is crucial for employers to develop a career path for all employees to enable them to progress in their profession (Ivanchevich, 2010). Workers seek better working conditions and do not hesitate to leave an employer who does not provide the desired value package, no matter how unacceptable this may have seemed in the past. The desire for personal development and progress is particularly evident among the younger generation, that pursues lucrative professions, compete for leadership positions, and attend courses and training programs. The current job market is characterized by job insecurity and transactional relationships, which is a significant shift compared to older generations, who often spent their entire careers with a single company after securing their first job (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006).

Career can be seen as "the role we play in life" (Zunker, 2012) if its broader context is considered. Each individual views their career in their own way, whether as professional or overall development. Companies can also view career development as an opportunity for all their employees to develop individually by working in the company, attending relevant courses based on their interests and skills. Clayton Alderfer sees a career as one of three basic needs of employees (along with existence and the need for connection with colleagues) (Alderfer, 1971).

Although the concept of employment has changed in the modern business world, the need for individuals to find a meaningful activity that aligns with their goals and interests, while providing some level of security and stability in the work environment, remains the same (Brown & Lent, 2013).

According to Super, an individual plays various roles throughout their life: family member, society member, citizen, student, partner, and someone who has their free time. Through stages and periods, while considering the influence of society, reference groups, family, and others, people develop and change their aspirations regarding careers and career development goals (Super et al., 1990).

2.2.1. Types of careers

The changes discussed in the first chapter have led to the emergence of different types of careers and various understandings of the career concept. Traditional career understanding implies an employee's progression within

a single employer in a hierarchical manner (Flamholtz et al., 2004). Young people today do not accept the idea that career development requires a long period of gaining work experience and maturity. With the acceleration of life's pace, processes such as career development have also sped up, leading many young individuals to turn to entrepreneurship (Yaneva, 2018). Over time, as the workload increases due to adaptation to market changes, individuals within a company also embrace the activities of their colleagues, learning about new areas and expanding their competencies. Changes in the economy also influence frequent changes in individuals' career plans. The former security has been replaced by today's uncertainty. In this manner, employees acquire novel knowledge and attain the requisite qualifications for alternative employment opportunities. Subsequently, enticed by improved conditions offered by another organization, they opt to depart from their initial employer. Gradually, the understanding of a career ceases to be limited to one company and one type of job, as well as the responsibility of the company. It becomes an individual, multi-faceted path through various activities in different places that lead to a goal (Watts, 1998). In contrast to the earlier understanding of an employee, where their identity was closely tied to the company they worked for, along with a sense of loyalty, today an individual is employed by a company until the moment the employer ceases to meet the employee's expectations. This cycle of value exchange and satisfaction creation for both parties is an ongoing process. When one party stops receiving benefits in exchange for their engagement or work, the process ceases to function. Today, companies invest significant efforts in enabling employees to develop both personally and professionally. For example, Walmart, in addition to providing financial benefits, healthcare, and benefits related to spending more time with family, also offers various education and training opportunities for employees to facilitate their development (https://careers.walmart.com/). Although individuals manage their own careers today, employers play a significant role in building specific abilities and skills.

2.2.2. Career development phases

When it comes to the individual, with a particular understanding of the career as a concept, their personal development begins with themselves. Self-assessment is an important initial step on the path of career development (CEB, 2002). Every individual should assess their affinities, knowledge, skills, talents, and predispositions and align themselves with a specific goal based on these traits. Employees are satisfied when they do a job they love, they are more productive, better at managing their time and activities, and consequently, they bring success to the company (White, 2012). "Choosing a profession is an expression of personality" (Holland, 1973), and later

the choice of employer is in line with personal values. For young people, the image of what their desired career development and path to success look like is usually unclear (Campbell et al., 2010). Self-assessment is, therefore, a good starting point. When knowing one's interests, skills, and talents, an idea of a desired profession can be formed. After self-assessment and observing opportunities in the environment and job market, it is necessary to set a specific goal as the beginning of the planning process. The goal is guidance in the process of finding the right path to a solution (Cappelen et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2014). When knowing the destination, the path to reach that goal needs to be determined (Tarasco et al., 2006).

3. METODOLOGY

To meet methodological requirements and fulfill the purpose of better understanding this area, the paper synergizes analysis of relevant literature and data collected through the research. The general scientific method used in this research is the hypothetico-deductive method. The goal of the formulated hypothesis is to prove or disprove facts, while also achieving the objectives. The sample consists of 84 respondents giving opinions on 24 statements in a survey. The hypothesis was formulated: "Candidates consider personal development to be an important factor in choosing an employer." The research was conducted through the Google Forms platform in July 2023, and the responses were assessed using Likert scale. The initial 4 questions are in the form of multiple choice and are of a demographic nature.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The focus of this research is examination of the role employers play in the career development process of young candidates. It aims to understand how candidates perceive and evaluate the factors that attract them to potential employers in their professional lives. Additionally, the study explores the current business and labor market dynamics as they relate to career development.

This research involved 84 participants, encompassing both genders, with the majority being women (62.3 percent). The largest number of respondents belong to the younger age group - 18 to 35 years old (73.3 percent). A significant percentage of respondents have completed undergraduate and master's studies (64.3 percent).

The hypothesis has been confirmed based on the respondents' views: 51.2% of the respondents agree with the statement that personal development is crucial when choosing the employer, and that employers should provide employees with adequate education, training, and workshops.

Young candidates, who make up most of the respondents, aim to choose jobs that will positively impact their personal and career development. Respondents consider job satisfaction at a long-term level and have clearly defined goals, expecting the company to establish a career path. The conclusion is that the results are directly related to the age structure of the respondents. (Figure 1)

Furthermore, the research results indicate that 41.6% of respondents agreed with the statement that when choosing an employer when applying for a job, the brand and name recognition were important to serve as a steppingstone for further career development. 28.6% of respondents were undecided in giving their opinion, while 29.8% were against it. (Figure 2)

On the market, both employers and candidates face significant competition, which is why this research has examined attitudes related to the influence of the company's brand on career development (Figure 3). It is interesting to note that 44% agreed with the statement, but a significant number disagreed (35.7%), and 20.2% of respondents were undecided.

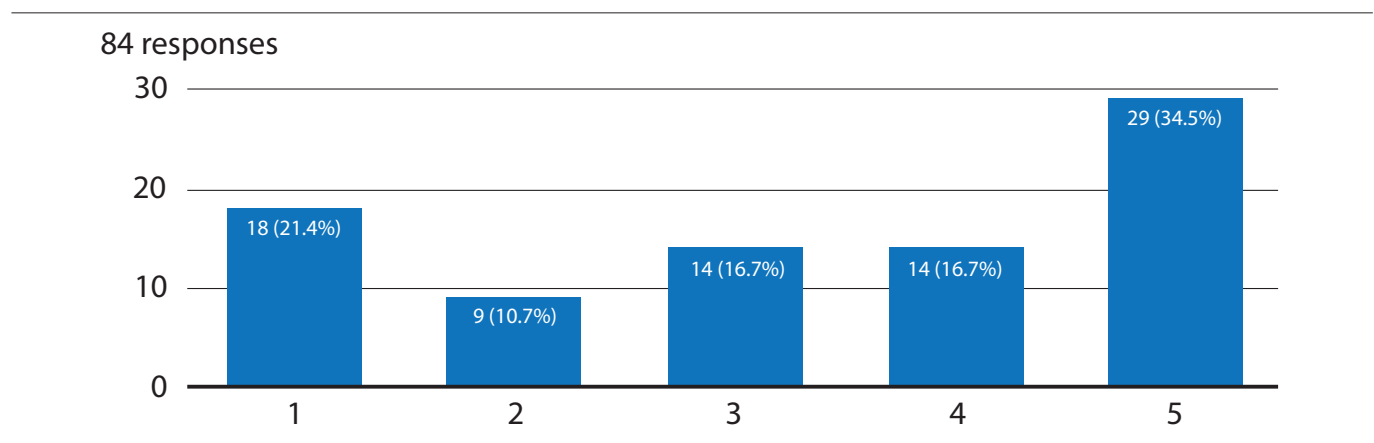**Figure 1.** The importance of education when choosing an employer.

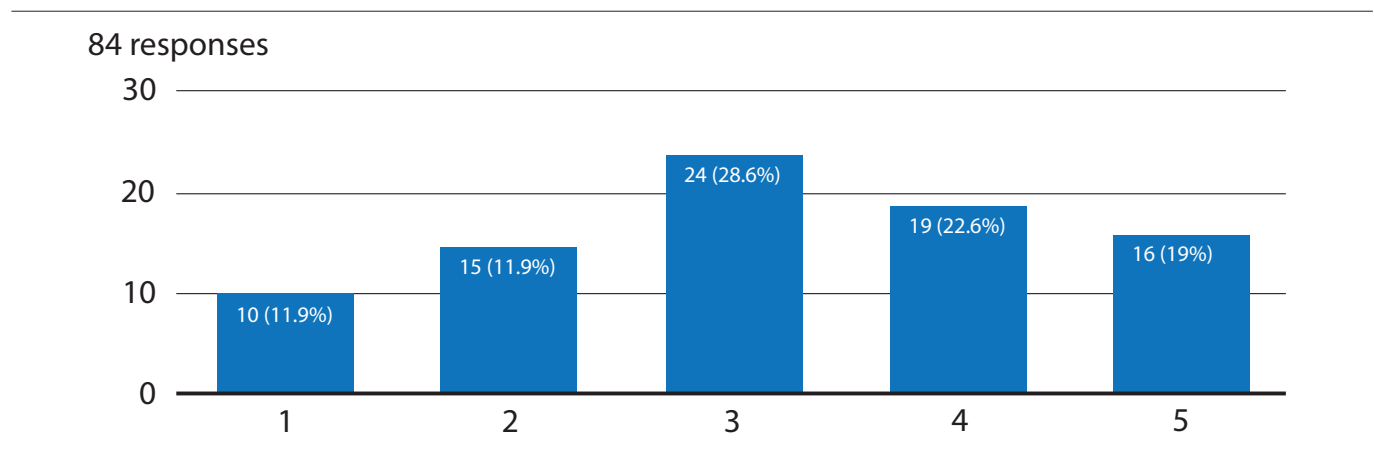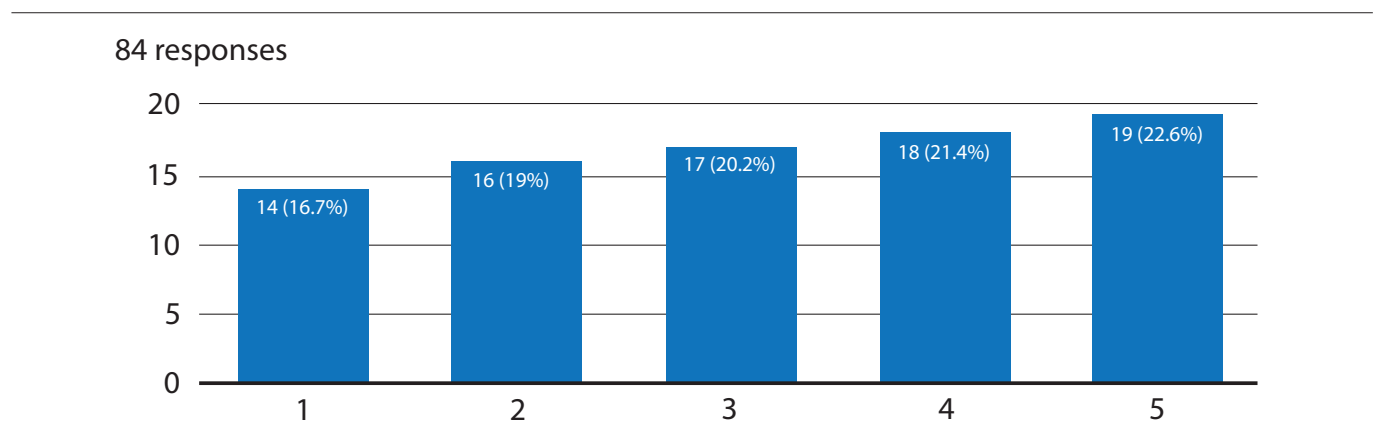**Figure 2.** The importance of brand for career development.

Figure 3. Company's market recognition as a factor for job applications.

Candidates aged 18 to 35, i.e., most respondents, prioritize jobs that positively impact their personal and career growth, through education. They seek long-term job satisfaction and expect companies to offer clear career paths. The research underscores the importance of employer branding in candidate choices, signaling favorable working conditions and employee happiness. Established brands are preferred for ongoing growth and future job searches. Based on the research it has been concluded that the role of the employer, as well as the company's brand, is important in career management.

5. CONCLUSION

Contemporary circumstances in the field of human resource management differ significantly from the past. What remains the same is the value of individuals as bearers of knowledge and skills within an organization, as well as individuals with specific interests and affinities. The progress of individual employees also affects the success of the company. This development occurs in parallel, and companies should direct their activities towards human resource management planning, from the recruitment process to creating a positive experience to be communicated to the public, as well as developing a career path that allows employees the opportunity and desire to stay and grow within the company. Globalization, unemployment, employee diversity, business liberalization, restructuring, and market saturation, coupled with technological advancements, have resulted in a global scenario with a large number of employers seeking talented candidates. Both companies and workers have significant opportunities for choice but also face intense competition.

Future research should delve deeper into the topic of employer branding's impact on individual career development and what sets apart talented employees and excellent employers. Developing employer brands, enhancing brand attractiveness, and defining the employee value proposition are crucial in the competitive landscape of attracting and retaining talent.

Specifically, further exploration should encompass the values that make an employer the best choice, including non-material benefits that candidates consider when selecting an employer and assess how creatively employers foster a positive work environment. Given that young people will soon comprise the majority of the working-age population, their attitudes are of paramount importance.

This research makes a modest contribution to understanding that talented employees seek quality employers, and satisfied employees lead to satisfied clients, fostering employer success. The exchange of value in the employment process contributes to the progress of all participants and enhances the overall quality of human life.

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