UNDERSTANDING SUCCESS IN THE CAREERS OF FEMALE ACADEMICS

Jana Poláchová Vašťatková[1], **Dita Palaščáková**[1]

[1] Katedra sociologie, andragogiky a kulturní antropologie, Filozofická fakulta, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Olomouc

Abstract

Female academics in social sciences have been known to experience different kinds of challenges and commonly discussed barriers. The aim of our research is to analyze how they understand success in their career, often despite working conditions in academia. Success in our understanding is not connected to H-index, number of published articles or grants but we refer to authenticity – the ability to be true to oneself, one of the important factors defined by the new gender based career theory called the Kaleidoscope Career Model.

Keywords: *success, career, authenticity, female academics*

1 INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, public universities have undergone significant changes, which have reshaped academic work and workplaces (Bentley et al. 2013; Teichler et al. 2013). There has been an ongoing debate about the impacts of this global shift on the career development of academics (Bentley et al. 2013).

2 THEORY

The career development systems based on linear male models are no longer relevant to meet the needs of today's society (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Direnzo, 2008). New, gender-based career theory called the Kaleidoscope Career Model is rooted in social cognitive career theory and explains the phenomenon of women's careers. The KCM model has been used in many studies to address the aspect of authenticity in women's careers including understanding success.

KCM's understanding of authenticity suggests the need for a deliberate alignment of organizational values (Sullivan et al., 2009).

3 METHODOLOGY

Given our theoretical framework, we pose this research question: How do the female academics in social sciences understand success in their career? We use a perspective of authenticity defined by the Kaleidoscope Career Model. This research focuses on successful careers, rather than constraints and barriers, which is a feature of much previous research. Narrative interviews have been carried out (still in process). To address our research questions, we have interviewed female university teachers aged 40 plus who reflect more life roles (teacher, mother, wife/partner, daughter).

4 RESULTS

Respondents so far highlighted the importance of authenticity in understanding career success in different ways. Under authenticity, they mention passion for knowing and sharing the knowledge, impacting future evolution of the society through teaching and influencing the organizations in terms of creating appropriate conditions for different career paths and patterns of women who often experience success despite the conditions in Czech academia.

Findings indicate that decision-makers in academia need to be aware of the varied drivers of women's understanding of career success.

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Findings of this research so far indicate that decision-makers in academia should pay attention to understanding the unique ways in which authenticity is understood by their female teachers in social sciences and how it is connected to understanding success in their career. This may from the longterm perspective encourage universities to look more closely and deeply at their organizational cultures to be more supportive to women and their career paths and patterns. This research contributes to an understanding of successful women's careers, rather than focusing on barriers. It also contributes to clarification and further development of the career theory called the Kaleidoscop Career Model.

6 LITERATURE

Cabrera, E. F. (2007). Opting out and opting in: understanding the complexities of women's career transitions. *Career Development International*, *12*(3), 218–237. https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430710745872

Dabbs, S. M., Graham, J. A., & Dixon, M. A. (2020). Extending the Kaleidoscope Career Model: Understanding Career Needs of Midcareer Elite Head Coaches. *Journal of Sport Management*, *34*(6), 554–567.

Knowles, J., & Mainiero, L. (2021). Authentic talent development in women leaders who opted out: Discovering authenticity, balance, and challenge through the kaleidoscope career model. *Administrative Sciences*, *11*(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11020060

Mainiero, L. A., & Gibson, D. E. (2018). The Kaleidoscope Career Model Revisited: How Midcareer Men and Women Diverge on Authenticity, Balance, and Challenge. *Journal of Career Development*, *45*(4), 361–377. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845317698223

Sullivan, S. E., & Mainiero, L. (2008). Using the Kaleidoscope Career Model to Understand the Changing Patterns of Women's Careers: Designing HRD Programs That Attract and Retain Women. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *10*(1), 32–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422307310110

Sullivan, S. E., & Carraher, S. M. (2018). Chapter 14: Using the kaleidoscope career model to create cultures of gender equity. In *Research Handbook of Diversity and Careers*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Retrieved May 22, 2023, from https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785365607.00024