

VOLITION QUALITIES AND SUCCESS OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF MID LEVEL MANAGERS: SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES, PSYCHOLOGICAL DIAGNOSTICS AND PRESENT STATE

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The urgency of the problem stated in the paper is caused by the contradiction between the need to integrate volition qualities' evaluation of middle managers into the practice of organizational management and the insufficient theoretical and empirical justification for the need to take this property into account in the manager's activity. The purpose of the paper is to justify the need to take into account volition qualities of mid-level managers, as a psychological resource that ensures the success of professional activities of managers at this level. The leading method of research of this issue is the method of critical incidents' analyzing in professional activity of successful mid-level managers, as well as the simulation method that allowed to consider the scientific problem from the position of the domestic system-activity approach determining the development trend of volition qualities of mid-level managers as conditions for the success of their professional activity. The paper presents the interrelation of the volition qualities of mid-level managers with the success of professional activity, the rankings of the basic volitional qualities of mid-level managers that determine the success of their professional activity, as well as it proves the necessity in including the assessment of volition qualities of managers in the professional psychological selection of employees for the post of mid-level managers. The essential characteristics of the concepts "the success of professional activity" and "volitional qualities" are specified. The revealed interrelation between volition qualities and success of activity gives the basis to carry out correction of professional competences of future managers which are formed in the course of training, and to include volitional qualities in the structure of professional psychological selection of the employees applying for positions of mid-level managers. The materials of the paper can be useful during the training of managers in the study of theoretical disciplines, and allow considering volitional qualities, as a psychological resource that determines the effectiveness of the activity.

Keywords: will, volition qualities, volition traits, professional activity success, mid-level manager.

INTRODUCTION

Modern approaches in the training of managers are directed on the competencies' mastering by students demanded by the practice of management. The content analysis of competences of federal state educational standards of higher education in the areas of training "Management", "State and municipal management" showed inconsistencies in the requirements of training managers with the need for management practices (Klimova, 2016; Korchemny, 2013, 2016).

Professional competences are mainly aimed at the formation of intellectual abilities (assessment and forecast of the socio-economic state of the organization,

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decision-making), operational skills (organizational skills). However, in the practice of organizational management situations may arise that require the use of strong-willed efforts of the manager, which are not indicated as a necessary quality in the state standard of training.

The weakest link in the work on strong-willed leadership training is the lack of practice of assessing their volitional qualities in the professional psychological selection and subsequent attestations, since the whole emphasis in this work is on the study of professional knowledge. Suffice it to say that more than 65% of the examined service characteristics and attestations drawn up for the nomination of a leader to higher positions do not contain an assessment of volition qualities (Zainetdinova, 2016).

The fact that the subject of managerial work has deep multilateral knowledge about the object of its activity forms such a complex quality as “competence”, which along with skills and experience can also imply the formation of volition qualities that determine the success of fulfilling duties (Bespalov, 2014). Such a kind of compensation of volition competencies in the context of solving managerial tasks, which requires along with creative thinking, the ability to make non-standard decisions, to show perseverance, obstinacy, determination, courage, endurance, may be somewhat limited, since the spontaneous development of volitional qualities does not give the necessary administrative effect (Shul’ga, 2014; Yevenko, 2014, 2015).

Modern studies of psychologists have shown that the ability of the manager to implement production plans, overcome difficulties in solving problems is an important quality that determines the success of the activity. Therefore, it is customary to refer volition character traits to the number of important psychological characteristics that determine the success of the leader’s activity (Bekoyeva, 2014; Svetsitsky, 2014; Sudakov, 2012).

The importance to take into account the will, as a specific personal resource in the activities of military leaders, is emphasized by B.M. Teplov. And the will does not act as an independent unit of the behavioral act, but only in combination with the mental abilities of the subject of military management (Teplov, 1990). As a consequence, the will can be attributed to the resource properties of the individual, as they allow overcoming difficulties and ensuring the success of the implementation of managerial tasks (Karayani, 2007; Syromyatnikov, 2007).

Particular scientific interest is represented by the group of subjects of management activity – mid-level managers. Occupying a significant share in management personnel, this group is studied in the context of “common managers” (Zhuravlev, 2005; Zankovsky, 2002). Some psychological characteristics of mid-level managers are being researched: the motivational and values structure (Azhieva, 2015; Bubnova, 2015; Korgova, 2015; Kulikova, 2015), the structure of the professional image (Gurchiani, 2011), reflective properties (Savina, 2005;

Spivakovsky, 2011), organizational and communicative abilities (Artemieva, 2013; Kozlov, 2013).

Having a specific nature of professional activity, which is conditioned by the intermediate professional and status position of mid-level managers, this managers' category remains poorly studied and deserves a more thorough scientific analysis of their activities and the psychological conditions that determine its success.

Analysis of scientific literature has shown that in the theory and practice of professional activity of mid-level managers, when determining the success of this category managers' work, scientists use the concepts "competence" (Bogacheva, 2012; Zimnaya, 2004), while the volition qualities are considered as fragmentary ones. There is also a certain tradition to view the will as a generalized concept that influences the results of activity, and the detailing of its qualitative characteristics remains beyond the scope of scientific analysis. As before, the ranking places of the basic volitional qualities that influence the success of mid-level managers remain unexplored.

Insufficient theoretical elaboration of the mechanisms of forming of volition qualities among future mid-level managers and underestimation of their importance in professional activity determined the choice of the topic of scientific analysis of the problem.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methods of research

The solution of the scientific problem was carried out using a set of methods: theoretical (classification, analysis, generalization); diagnostic (testing, expert interview, method of critical incidents of professional activity of mid-level managers); experimental (ascertaining experiment); methods of mathematical statistics (frequency analysis of attribute distribution, methods of correlation analysis and graphical representation of results); interpretative methods (psychography, psychological profile).

Experimental research base

The experimental base of the research was mid-level managers of LLC ETRAINING. RF "LLC" Börner East" and mid-level managers, trained on the basis of Autonomous non-commercial organization of additional vocational education "Institute for Advanced Studies" ETRAINING. RF".

Stages of research

The study was conducted in three stages:

- at the first stage, a theoretical analysis of scientific views and theoretical approaches was carried out in the study of problems related to the

interconnection of volition qualities and the success of professional activity of mid-level managers, which allowed to substantiate the problem, the purpose and methods of research, to compile its plan and program.

- the content and structure of psychological concepts “will”, “volitional qualities”, “professional activities’ success” were revealed at the second stage, the results were compared with other studies, which allowed to clarify the essential and substantial characteristics of concepts, to generalize and classify the results of the research.
- at the third stage the theoretical position on the existence of the relationship between volition qualities and the success of the professional activity of mid-level managers was confirmed empirically, the need for the formation of competencies related to the volition qualities of the leader was substantiated, the results of the research by bringing them to the broad scientific community during the work of scientific and practical conferences were approbated, theoretical conclusions were concretized, practical recommendations were argued.

RESULTS

Essence and content of the basic concepts of research

On the basis of the theoretical and methodological analysis, the main scientific categories and concepts of the process under study were refined: a) volitional qualities, b) the success of professional activity, c) mid-level managers.

Summarizing the theoretical analysis, we can conclude that the volitional qualities are stable, interdependent mental formations that provide control by the persons over their behavior in the process of achieving the goals.

The success of professional activity of mid-level managers is an integral characteristic of professional activity, expressed in achieving socially and personally significant results in regulating the professional activity of the managers of the primary level, due to the managerial potential of the manager that determines the tendency to perform managerial functions.

Mid-level managers are a group of managers who perform all the functions assigned to the leaders in the regulation of the activities of the lower-level managers. This category of managers is governed by general laws governing management. At the same time, this category of leaders, due to its status-role position, has its own characteristics, which will be expressed in the manifestation of psychological characteristics that determine the quality of performing professional duties. Among these characteristics are the volition qualities of the mid-level manager. Following the logic of our reasoning, volition qualities are inherent in all categories of managers, however, at each managerial level, a manager may need different volitional efforts to implement professional tasks.

Stages of implementation of research results

The introduction of the results of the research into practice supposed the following stages of experimental work:

- determination of the initial levels of the formation of volitional competencies and the successfulness of professional activity of mid-level managers with the application of methods: testing, expert interviews, the method of critical incidents of professional activity of mid-level managers, statistical processing of research results;
- development and implementation of scientific and methodical maintenance, contributing to the development of volition qualities of mid-level managers. At this stage, the effectiveness of the experimental impact of the developmental-correctional complex on the formation of volitional competencies among midlevel managers, which determines the success of the manager's activity, was checked.

The ascertaining stage

At the ascertaining stage of the experiment, the levels of volitional qualities and the success of mid-level managers were diagnosed. The study involved 124 mid-level managers, who occupied the posts of department heads, senior specialists. The volume of the sample allows us to apply the methods of mathematical statistics in calculations and to identify trends and patterns of psychological phenomena and processes. By gender, male subjects were 59%, women - 41%. The average age was 38.4 years, in the occupied position - 6.8 years. The percentage ratio according to the sex of the participants in the ascertaining experiment corresponds to the ratio that is indicated in the statistical reports of employment. The average age and duration of service in the position indicates that the sample included employees with fairly good experience in the position held. The estimation of the sample totals allows drawing a conclusion about the representativeness of the sample set.

To study the volitional qualities of mid-level managers, the technique "Self-evaluation of volitional qualities of student athletes", developed by N.B. Stambulova was used; to diagnose the success of professional activity of middle managers, a subject-object expert survey was used. The heads of mid-level managers were interviewed, as well as the self-assessment of middle-level managers was conducted using a questionnaire consisting of 18 characteristics - the functions of the manager, which had to be assessed on a 5-point scale.

An assessment of the volitional qualities of mid-level managers and their subsequent aggregation made it possible to calculate the average indicator of will.

The subsequent division of the working part of the scale into three levels (low, average, high) made it possible to reveal the percentage ratio between them. A

significant number of respondents (75%) have average and high levels of will, which indicates that this category of managers in the process of training and professional activity has acquired the necessary volitional competencies (see Figure 1).

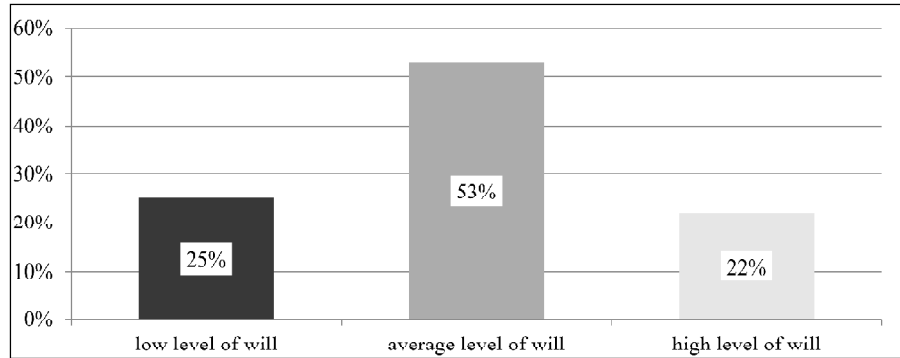


Figure 1: Distribution of levels of the will of mid-level managers (in%).

However, there is a group of leaders whose volitional abilities are not developed enough (25%), i.e. every fourth subject's volitional qualities were not form to the required level, which did not ensured the success in the performance of professional duties.

The resulting distribution shows asymmetry. Calculation of the quantitative measure of "slope" ($A_s = 1.32$) indicates that the indicators of the formation of volitional qualities of mid-level managers have a pronounced bias trend in the area of minimum values. These values confirm the relevance of the problem under study.

Indirect confirmation of these findings is the ratio of levels of success of professional activities of tested mid-level managers. A certain number of respondents (21%) have difficulty in performing professional tasks, despite the fact that the survey involved respondents who had sufficient experience in this area (see Figure 2).

The obtained distributions of two features (the success of professional activity and volitional qualities) allow drawing a conclusion about the existence of problems in the management activity of mid-level managers, where it is necessary to use their own volitional qualities.

Correlation analysis of the relationship between structural volitional components and the overall indicator of "successful professional activity" showed that there was a directly proportional relationship between them, i.e. it confirms the main position of the scientific work on the existence of a relationship between volitional competences and the quality of professional tasks performed by mid-level managers (see Figure 3).

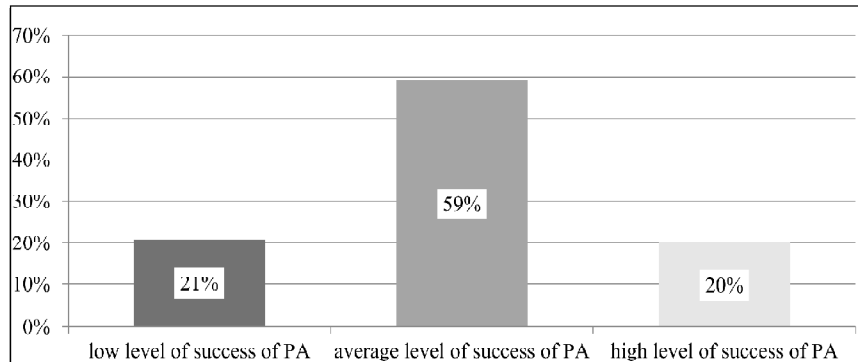


Figure 2: Distribution of levels of success of professional activity (PA) of mid-level managers (in%)

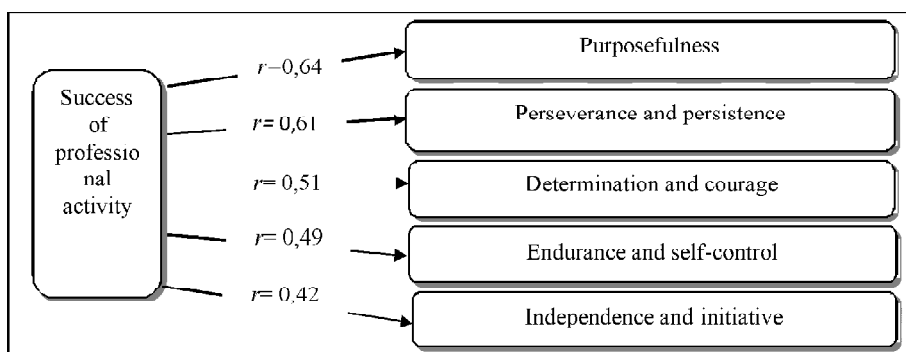


Figure 3: Distribution of correlation values of “success of activity” and “volitional qualities” of the leaders of the organization

To determine the rating places of volitional qualities that ensure the success of management activities, it is necessary to rank them. The first and second place in terms of significance are taken by such qualities as: “purposefulness” ($r = 0,64$) and “perseverance and persistence” ($r = 0,61$). Giving the vital meaning to the performance of professional tasks can act as a willful mobilizing force and give the leader the strength to overcome the obstacles that stand in his or her way. Defining and achieving goals, choosing ways to solve problems, systematic work execution - for managers are important elements of management activity, and perseverance and persistence allows the manager without any doubts to follow the set goals, to achieve which systematic efforts must be made to overcome various obstacles.

Intermediate, third place in the ranking of volitional qualities of the mid-level managers is such a volitional trait as the ability of the leader to make quick decisions in a significant situation, suppress defensive reactions arising at fear, effectively

manage his or her actions and behavior, i.e. “determination and courage” ($r = 0,51$).

The fourth and fifth places in the rating (by numerical value) of volitional qualities that determine the success of mid-level managers are “endurance and self-control” ($r = 0,49$), “independence and initiative” ($r = 0,42$). It can be assumed that the leaders of organizations in their daily activities experience certain difficulties in maintaining clarity of thoughts, controlling emotions, managing their actions. If the mid-level manager has fears and anxiety of independent decision-making, inability to be resistant to attempts to decline to take another decision, the tendency to yield to someone else’s influence then it makes management activity ineffective. This ranking position of volitional qualities once again confirms the results of theoretical analysis of functional, status-role positions of mid-level managers and the possibility of allocating this group of managers to a separate category for psychological analysis.

Comparing the results of the one-dimensional distribution of the studied features of the correlation analysis, one can conclude that a certain part of modern mid-level managers does not possess the necessary volitional qualities necessary for successful managerial activity. A low level of initiative and independence in decision making reduces the success of managers and makes their professional activity ineffective one. Manifestation of a reasonable initiative will reduce the percentage of unsuccessful managers and improve the quality of professional activity of the leaders of the organization.

The results of the ascertaining experiment confirmed the interconnection of volitional qualities and the success of mid-level managers’ professional activity. The correlation analysis made it possible to identify the rating places of volitional qualities that determine the success of mid-level managers in the following order: a) purposefulness; B) persistence, perseverance; C) determination and courage; D) endurance and self-control; E) independence and initiative.

Formative stage

Realization of psychological conditions in the process of conducting the forming experiment on the formation of volitional qualities among future specialists in the field of organizational management was carried out taking into account the main provisions of the concept of training specialists in management activities. On the basis of the results of the ascertaining experiment, all the volitional qualities of the subjects were exposed to the experimental effect.

To determine the effectiveness of the experimental impact, the control and experimental groups were formed, the number of which was (Neg = 22 people, Ncg = 23 people). The mean of development of volitional qualities of mid-level managers in the experiment was the developmental-correctional complex, which included a group of modified psychological trainings aimed at developing volitional

qualities: the “Sic-volo” technique (development of skills to achieve goals), training “Social courage” (oriented on the development of personal responsibility for their activities), “I develop willpower” (the development of the ability to overcome external and internal obstacles). An independent variable was the volitional qualities of mid-level managers; the dependent variable was the success of the activity. Psychologists of organizations carried out training work to develop volitional qualities and recorded the effectiveness of mid-level managers. In order to adjust the experimental impact, a post-pilot interview was carried out.

Control phase

At this stage of the experiment, the results of experimental work in the experimental and control groups were compared, the levels of volitional qualities change and the success of activities of mid-level managers were determined.

Statistically significant differences were obtained in the experimental group (EG), where a set of experimental procedures aimed at developing volitional qualities of mid-level managers was applied (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF VALUES OF VARIABLES IN THE EXPERIMENTAL (EG) AND CONTROL (CG) GROUPS BEFORE AND AFTER THE FORMATIVE EXPERIMENT (T-TEST OF STUDENT)

Variable kind	Variable	EG			CG		
		\bar{X}_{before}	\bar{X}_{after}	Significance of differences P_{exp}	\bar{X}_{before}	\bar{X}_{after}	Significance of differences P_{exp}
independent	Purpose fulness	12,4	14,2	3,14*	12,1	12,4	1,89
	Perseverance and persistence	11,8	13,9	3,97*	12	12,3	1,92
	Determination and Courage	11,7	13,6	3,25*	11,4	11,7	1,89
	Endurance and self-control	12,2	14,3	3,97*	11,9	12,1	1,79
	Independence and Initiative	11,9	13,7	3,14*	11,7	12,15	1,99
dependent	Success of Activities	2,9	4,4	3,18*	3,1	3,5	1,96

*Note: significant differences in Student's t-test for $P_{0,05} = 2,021$; $P_{0,01} = 2,704$

In the control group, no significant changes in the development of volitional qualities and the success of professional activity have been identified.

The results of experimental work have shown that the developmental-correctional complex has a significant influence on the development of volitional qualities of mid-level managers and contributes to the increase in the success of managers' activities.

Changes in the volitional characteristics of mid-level managers are facilitated by the following conditions that were created in the process of experimental work: the variability of simulating professional situations, the choice of adequate positions in relation to subordinates, the activity of trainees; inclusion of reflexive procedures of a procedural and productive nature in the process of group discussion.

The results of the forming experiment confirmed the theoretical position that volitional qualities largely determine the success of mid-level managers.

DISCUSSION

The study of psychological literature allows us to state the absence of special studies devoted to the study of the problem of the interconnection of volitional qualities with the success of the activity of a special category of heads - mid-level managers.

It should be noted that in the psychological science there are studies aimed at analyzing the conditionality of performance and volitional qualities. However, the initial stage of the study of this phenomenon was associated with a complete understanding of the will as: a higher mental function that allows one to master one's own behavior (Bazhovich, 2008; Vygotsky, 2005; Frankl, 2002); a special mental property that allows a person to act contrary to their desires and thoughts (Kalin, 2011; Sechenov, 2015); the ability to discourage, suppress the instinctive unconscious manifestations of activity (Wundt, 2007; Lossky, 1993); a protective barrier against negativism (Rubinstein, 2013); the person's ability to carry out self-control of his activities aimed at achieving the goals (Zheleznyak, 1979; Lukov, 1964; Palaima, 1973; Pugni, 1997); mental process, due to the efforts of the individual and manifested in his actions aimed at the implementation of established goals. (Zaporozhets, 2000; Teplov, 1990).

The second stage in the study of the relationship between volitional qualities and the success of activity is conditioned by the emergence of scientific papers in which the will is detailed and broken down into various components and qualities. Agreeing with the conclusions of scientists that the will is a relatively stable and regulating activity of a person, the representatives of this stage view it as a mental entity that includes the various, often independent qualities of the processes of regulation of activity (Bykov, 1999; Ilyin, 2009; Shul'ga, 1999).

Summarizing the results of theoretical analysis, we can distinguish not only the basic volitional qualities of the individual, but the qualities of the so-called second order, which determine the success of the activity. In these studies, the tradition was laid to interpret the will as a mechanism that aggregates various volitional qualities of the individual, allowing a person to achieve the set goal.

Research and classification of scientific approaches aimed at studying the success of managers' professional activity made it possible to identify the fact that there were no significant differences in determining the essence of this phenomenon. Most authors agree with the idea that the success of management is conditioned by

a number of psychological characteristics of the leader: the ability to lead, the motivation for success, the ability to think logically, the organization of control and the flexibility of leadership styles.

Despite some similarities in approaches to the analysis of the content components of the success of managers' professional activities, there are differences in the evaluation aspects of the quality of the work performed by the manager.

Western scholars emphasize the focus of their research on the objective parameters of the results of the manager's work (increase in labor productivity, reduction of work cycles, economy of forces and means, career growth, etc.).

Domestic scientists choose psychological qualities (satisfaction with work, self-actualization, professionalism, socialization) and social and psychological characteristics (group cohesion, psychological compatibility, moral and psychological climate in the team) as an imperative direction of evaluating the performance of managers.

A certain imperative in assessing the effectiveness of mid-level managers leads to a lack of scientific knowledge about the process being studied and will reduce the objectivity of its practical evaluation.

The identification of a group of mid-level managers in psychological research was carried out mainly on the basis of status and role position, which was occupied by the manager in the structure of management personnel at the enterprise. However, this approach seems ineffective one, since it does not take into account the basic functions of management activities that managers perform. The emphasis on the functions performed by managers is a more objective basis for allocating a significant group of managers to a rather independent group of participants in the managerial process in the organization - mid-level managers.

Analysis of scientific approaches in the study of the relationship between volitional qualities and the success of middle managers' activities makes it possible to note that:

- at present, the problem of the need for the formation of volitional competencies for the successful professional activity of mid-level managers remains poorly understood;
- the absence of special studies that make it possible to single out midlevel managers in a separate category of subjects of managerial work reduces not only the quality of their work, but also significantly reduces the theoretical possibilities of the psychology of labor considering the category of "management success" through the prism of its conditioning by volitional qualities.

CONCLUSION

It has been established that the independent relationship between the volitional qualities of mid-level managers and the success of activities allows the formation

of volitional competencies in future organizational management specialists, as well as the assessment of managers' volitional qualities in the professional psychological selection of employees for senior management positions.

The materials of the paper can be useful in practical terms for HR specialists and top managers when selecting managers for the position of mid-level managers; for psychologists of organizations monitoring the activities of mid-level managers; for centers of advanced training and retraining of managers taking into account the development of their volitional qualities.

In the process of research, new questions and problems arose that require further study. It is necessary to expand and continue research in this field on: the study of other mental processes, including emotional, associated with the formation of volitional qualities of mid-level managers; development of technique for developing volitional competencies of managers, taking into account the specific functions, depending on the level occupied in the management structure.

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