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THE WOMAN MANAGER AT WORK: BETWEEN PERSONAL GROWTH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Abstract

There is a significant rise in women as managers in various fields, but they are subject of segregation due to the glass-ceiling policy adopted when dealing with human resources management. How do women react and go beyond the glass-ceiling policy, and do they struggle to improve their professional positions? We aim through this research to demonstrate whether women managers consider the work as a means of development and emancipation or just a way to meet their vital needs. In our study, we worked on 23 women executives working in three companies. They hold positions in food industry economic companies. We employed a qualitative method using interviews as instruments. For results, a thematic analysis was used. This study revealed that the personal and professional characteristics of women executives such as the degree, the nature of the training and professional trajectory, determine the conception of the women managers in relation to career towards the obstacles they encounter and their work expectations.

Keywords: Women-manager, career, personal growth, professional development

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1. Introduction

It is now admitted that we cannot address the issue of development without mentioning the woman, her status and her role in society and in the family. She has become a central actress of human development in the various sectors of activity; education, health, media and politics. She is considered as a key pillar of progress, because of the important role she plays in the raising and education of children in the family and in society. During the last decades, the participation of women in economic activity in Algeria outside the family and domestic sphere is a relatively recent fact. Women employment applications are being increasing and massive. The reasons are still tremendously economic in nature: insecurity concerning the work of the various members of the family (father, brother, husband...) acting as an indicator to seek employment, and the motivations of psycho-sociological status: financial and moral independence, an emancipation of the socio-cultural constraints, to conquer a high social status, and a global accomplishment of their personality by the application of a remunerated professional activity.

Women have always worked in their families, in the family business and factories. Battagliola (2000) affirms that the women's work has never been reduced to household chores, even before the rise of massive industrialization and of wage-earning. These latter, by their development, motivated women to decide to change their situation and come out of deletion and hoping for emancipation (Boutiller & Lestrade, 2004, p. 19). The women's presence in the labour market was accentuated only during the two world wars, when they added to their maternal function remunerated activities outside the home (Dumont, 1990, p. 30).

Many authors have dedicated works to the analysis of the work of women, some have focused on their vocational capacity, the will and the skills that women put forward to deal with the social conditions of work they face namely the unfair salary and the glass ceiling. Lunghi (2002) deals with equality in the workplace against women and put forward that women in the position of responsibility, defend and assert their ability to be mothers, and at the same time excellent managers, capable of being recognized professionally. This does not necessarily lowers motivation for those who seek access to positions of responsibility on the basis of their abilities, energy, ingenuity and creativity they possess. Within the same line of thoughts, Maruani (2003) put focus on the women's resistance to the various forms of inequality at work. She believes that the feminization of the wage system and the progression of women's tuition will trigger a process of reduction of these inequalities that still persist.

Despite the positive developments, the work of women in Algeria remains largely marginal compared to that of men, and it is mainly focused on the sectors of health, national

education and administrative sectors. Addi (1999, p. 137) estimates that the remunerated female work is no longer subject to an unfavourable judgment a priori. Now, it is accepted for certain professions, certain social categories and in certain circumstances. Marani (2008) found that in addition to the state of global development, the patriarchy and religion are fundamental factors in the explanation of the state, of evolution and forms of women's work in Algeria. In the same stratum, Mebtoul (2010) pointed out that the whole social structure is designed to hide the economic weight of the women. Women's work in the Algerian context has yet to be hidden. In the best situations we estimate, a man or a father is proud to allow his wife or his daughter to work, this attitude makes him an open man, who allows a woman to flourish, but hide the economic usefulness of her work and its financial contribution in the family budget. Khodja (1991) found that men are still prisoners of the old representation of their relationship with women; female labour is still a hard battle, led by women, alone against a series of blockade, where the sense of masculine honor occupies the central place. On other bases, Bennoune (1999, p. 103) stressed that Algerian women through their combative resistance, and their awareness of their situation, women have invested positively in the field of education to achieve success at all levels and operated social changes to their emancipation. The woman is convinced today that training and the degree are the first and indispensable assets for her emancipation and for a professional social status in the industrial world, by which she will achieve its aspirations and ambitions with great satisfaction and enter different areas and become able to carry out functions with high responsibility in the sphere of work. Hence, she has changed her feminine values, she has noted several challenges and has entered into the world of industrial work, where she marks her presence as a manager with a level of competence equivalent to that of the manager man. The woman manager responds exactly as the man on the motivation from the attributes of a coaching position, however she differs widely in the way she lives this position (Anoushen & Roaun, 2004, p. 147).

2. Problem Statement

We attend nowadays a new ascent of the feminisation of the manager group, propelled by the high instructional level attained by woman and the professional competence approved by her in the labour field. In effect, the woman executive is today a must-be reality in Algerian companies, she shares the same work conditions with her colleague man. Yet, should the woman manager substitute man in taking in charge the managerial needs mainly when observing an important number of men who remain inactive and do not assume their social responsibilities assigned to the man providing home and children with the needs,

although they are spouses and fathers. Or, can she aim at other objectives; like reaching a prosperous place in society, manage a flourishing professional career?

A profound reflection is needed on the state of women's professional activity, the real reasons that encourage women to engage in paid work and the social limits of women's work. To guide this problem, a number of research questions are provided in the coming section.

3. Research Questions

- Do women's socio-demographic characteristics define the nature of her commitment to the work?

-What are the socio-professional factors that determine the end of the professional commitment of women?

- What are the women's conceptions about their own role in the area of remunerated work?

-On what grounds has the inclusion of women in the world of remunerated work been based?

4. Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study lies on the description of how women managers arrive to face the diverse intricacy of life in these two spheres: professional and family. We do also aim at understanding how do such women perceive the remunerated work? In addition, we need to search for the expected ends by the women managers: do they want to affirm their professional competences and impose their presence in the industrial sector? Finally, we need to understand whether women executives work for economic needs eminent, expressed by the family.

5. Research Methods

Our study is based on a case study of women executives working in companies of an economic character. Our interview was mainly based on the theme of the work of women as managers. Given the nature of the subject at hand, the qualitative method seems the most appropriate for us in order to collect data that help us understand the social reality, describe the conception of the woman executive of her work. In order to define the system of values, of representations and norms transmitted by the participants, we opted for the semi-structured interview as a tool for data collection. We have interviewed 23 women managers working in three different economic companies of food industry divided into two hierarchic

levels: superior manager and medium manager, with different age ranges and different matrimonial situations.

6. Findings

In what follows, we shall categorize the findings according to the different themes we could create while analysing data.

6.1. The contribution in household expenditure.

We noticed in the interviewees' answers that the contribution to family expenditure is a form of cohesion of the couple. The high cost of life dictates the law of the contribution of women in the family costs, given that the modern life's demands require financial resources which exceed the income reported by the husband. Couple's life requires at the current time investing time, strength and salary, so the woman traditionally takes in charge the two first but also the last because of the proliferation of charges and the high cost of life.

6.2. The relationship between the possession of children and the sense of work.

The most common reason to explain the women's work outside the home, women with children, is in the desire to raise family living standards, this definition is shared even by women without children, although these latter emphasize the feeling of utility provided by the activity and work in addition to the financial contribution. Motherhood is accompanied with a feeling of comfort, wellbeing and insurance, it is for this fact that women with children are constantly looking to earn money to guarantee and provide their children with the necessary conditions for their physical, (Battagliola, 2000) psychological and social development.

6.3. The relationship between the economic situation of the husband and stopping work after delivery

We found that there is a significant relationship between the purchasing power of the spouse and the cessation of work in case of the birth of a child. The majority of the participants admit wanting to continue working even after having children and this is whatever good is the economic situation of the husband. However, a minority of the interviewees whose husbands have a very good economic situation plan to stop working once the arrival of a child, contrarily to the wives whose husbands' incomes and purchasing power are average. This category intends to continue to work despite the birth of children. The fact

that the woman is dedicated to and devoted her time and energy to her child accompanies the vision of women's work, the meaning they attribute to it and its contribution.

Our participants whose husbands have a low income do not cease to work, mainly for economic reasons, but this decision is not merely limited to the financial side but also women look for the vitality that it conquers through work. This view is shared by women whose husbands have a modest purchasing power. As for women whose spouses have a very good economic situation, they would cease to work because their work and their wages affect either positively or negatively the economic life of the family. They say that they want to focus on their children and return to work after a few years.

Everything is a question of priority, bring to eat and leave her child, have what to eat but away from her child, living with ease but away from her child. It is a matter of sacrifice and neglect. The question we raise here: can the attachment a woman feels in her work be stronger than the attachment to her child?

6.4. The relationship between marital status and the distinction between housewife and active woman

There is a part of our interviewees that distinguished active women housewives through financial autonomy that they benefit from; salary gained from the work outside home is what could particularize active women of women at home. Another part of our informants supported the idea that women are better educated than housewives; the social status the active woman gains from her activity is what differentiates her from the woman at home. Nevertheless, a few interviewees believe that housewives are more reassured of certain responsibilities as well as from the workload that weighs heavy on their shoulders.

We noticed that the distinctions differ according to the marital status of women; singles characterize active women by a characteristic linked to the economic aspect of the work, as it ensures financial autonomy that housewives are not.

Our married participants put focus on the material factor; the wage which is the obvious criterion that differentiates an active woman from a housewife. Others speak of the instruction that active women are in constant relationship with technology and contacts with various people that serve as sources of learning and perfection not only in the professional context but also the “know to be” and the “know to live”.

Is there any difference between an active woman and a housewife? This difference varies from one woman to another; it is in some cases positive insofar as the active woman has a salary, financial autonomy, a status and many other economic and social benefits see even psychological, but in some other cases such as negative conciliation between the life of

a wife, a mother and a manager; stress that can endure in her everyday life of an active woman, the load of work, etc.

This vision fits in the same way that the conclusions drawn by (Baudelot & Gollac, 2003) who found that one person out of four defines the work as a source of happiness. They have also raised the negative effects of work: fatigue, workload, the pressure due to the obligation to get positive results and fear sparked by the threat of the loss of employment; things that make the person who exercises it a suffering individual.

6.5. The relationship between the hierarchic rank and motives for non-wage work

The following shows the relationship between categorical membership and attractive factors to work:

Most of the respondents admit being attracted to work itself by the wage it provides contrarily to others who would work for their own development, or being attracted to the social climate that characterize the professional environments and links created in the latter, as well as the acquisition of status. The function of the manager needs creativity and responsibility in the work (Ahouari, 2012).

If one were to borrow the concepts used by (Paugam, 2007) during his classification of the meaning of the work, we can say that the majority of our participants lie in the homo-economics which implies a more instrumental attitude to work, i.e. the compensation. The homo-faber that refers to the act of work itself and development that it gives to those who realize it. This might more likely attract them to non-wage work. The homo-sociologicus postulates that all work is exercised in a social setting, relations settled between individuals. Encounters and human experiences are in no case what could arouse the desire to work for women who would be tempted by both human and professional meetings that can be created in the work context.

6.6. The relationship between the hierarchic rank and the term "promotion"

We retain in what follows that the informants are settled between those who define the promotion as a medium that allows the increase in the wage, and those considering it as a way ensuring an elevation in status that represent the majority. Minority of the interviewed women believe that the promotion is a direct condensation factor as it increases the load of work but the career progression, and it consists of recognition towards the efforts and the work done for others.

The majority of our participants belonging to the lower category bend toward the materialistic definition of promotion; against the minority that describes the promotion by

the socio-professional contribution it provides since it assures to the worker who took profit of the promotion a rise in both professional and social status. Accountability is for the majority of the informants the upper hierarchical category; the goal of a promotion is that officials believe that the promoted person is able to assume much greater responsibility.

The definition of promotion differs from one hierarchical category to another. At the level of the materialistic definition of promotion, the gap between the representations of different categories disappears, but it pop up as soon as it comes to the context of the work, status, responsibility, support, etc.

Belonging to one category or a more graduated one has no positive impact on the perception of certain points and the representation we may have on others, as long as there is no difference in the definition of promotion between those who have already benefited and those who did never benefit.

6.7. The relationship between the hierarchic rank and the distinction between the housewife and the active woman

The instructional level is also a criterion that distinguishes the active woman from a housewife. For the majority of the interviewees of the three hierarchical categories, there are those that distinguish the housewife from the active woman by the status acquired by the latter through her professional activity. Others underline this difference by the fatigue that endures the active woman, the responsibilities that she must assume and so the results to be attained.

The economic criteria distinguishing the active woman of the housewife are more widespread and for the majority of our participants in the three distinct categories, which can be explained by the representation of the work related to the financial contribution, the social contribution of the work which is for our informants mainly belonging to the higher category is what characterizes an active woman from a housewife. This can be explained by the overflow of our participants occupying high positions of presages linked to the single economic contribution of labour.

The criterion that distinguishes the active woman of the housewife bound to the materialistic value of labour make many women belonging to the lower category. This can be explained by the general opinion and the standard ideas of our subjects.

6.8. The relationship between the idea of the work and the meaning attributed to it

The majority of the interviewees linked job to the remuneration it reports to those who exercise it and revealed that they were inserted to active life by the logic and evidence

of studies. A number of our participants perceive work as a source of identity and self-realization, and that to be active permits to contribute in the development of society and the acquisition of status. For others, work is connected to the sense of usefulness that it guarantees to those who exercise it as it insures the sense of authority and prestige to them.

The representation that one has on work is not necessarily what he is confronted with in reality, the thing that may explain the inadequacy of the meaning attributed to the work and the appearance of the idea of the work.

6.9. The relationship between the appreciation of the perceived wage and pleasure at work

Findings revealed that the absolute majority of the interviewees find pleasure in the work whatever is the judgment they possess on the perceived wage. We noticed that the overwhelming majority of the women participants judge the perceived remuneration against the efforts they make is under the merit as they are delighted of the work they do. All the women who are satisfied with the salary they perceive feel a pleasure in the work they perform, but there is also a minority of our informants considering the income lower and they do not have any pleasure to work. This displeasure at work is shared by a part of those women saying that the perceived salary is acceptable.

These differences can be explained by the interest some of our informants have towards the materialistic value of work on the one hand, particularly those that find the salary inadequate with the made effort. On the other hand, , this lack of pleasure in the exercise of their work, can be explained by the lack of gratitude for the made efforts, pressure and stress due to the workload, monotony and routine, etc. A woman can like her work and experience pleasure in her exercise without however being satisfied with the salary, where she does not work for wages, as she can bear interest at work apart from its economic rewards and dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the latter, but being delighted in her work because she exercises it in an agreeable, social environment when she is involved in her job and its tasks.

The following is an illustration of the report that may exist between the pleasure experienced in the practice of work and judgment that we have occupied a position through competences:

We see that the largest majority of the interviewees feel pleasure in the exercise of their work, and whatever is the carried judgment about the adequacy between the requirements of the occupied position and the competences acquired by the manager. However, there are some interviewees who feel no pleasure in the performance of their work. The majority of our informants felt the existence of equivalence between the job and

competences, find pleasure in their work, at the time where all women executives who estimate they occupy a superior position to their competences feel pleasure in their accomplishment of work.

The occupied position and its evaluation against the competences affect the pleasure that may experience employees at work. On the one hand, to the extent that the employee is in tune with his achievements and his knowledge, because the person can feel frustration in case he feels a superiority or inferiority in the position and the responsibilities that are delegated to abilities and skills. On the other hand, maladjustment position occupied-competences can stimulate a pleasure in the sense where some people is contented to perform work not to occupy a position of responsibility that encourage them to give of their time and their efforts to achieve results and take his responsibilities; something which is in some cases terrifying which induces the melancholy at work.

6.10. The relationship between the reasons to work out of the salary and the pleasure felt at work

Results revealed that the majority of the participants experiencing a pleasure in their work are attracted by the mere salary, but some of them specially among those who feel the displeasure at work, work also to flourish; the thing that work provides them with. Enjoy the social climate and permanent contact between co-workers, superiors and clients allow them to learn to create links of friendship, and to enrich their knowledge in terms of cultures, languages, etc. Other interviewees among those who are happy in their work would be attracted to labour and searching for the social status that work can guarantee to them.

The attraction to work is absolutely non-existent in the majority of our surveyed women, apart from its monetary contribution; such is the opinion of women executives who feel pleasure in the exercise of their work, and those that have no pleasure. This can be explained by the importance of the physical aspect of working in the latter.

Despite the absence of pleasure in some of our interviewees, they would work to achieve vitality which is only realizable through work and which is among other factors a brand of personal satisfaction, and a means of integration. This, in fact, allows them to belong to a socio-professional group that shares certain values and certain specificities that distinguish them from others and who reserves a place to them and values them in society. All these privileges may be at the origin of the commitment of women executives, essentially those not experiencing fun in their work, but the asset cited major by our informants.

6.11. The relationship between age and the distinction between active woman and housewife

The following illustrates the effect of age on the representation of women executives of the housewife and the active woman: We noticed that some women executives from our participants distinguish a housewife of an active woman by her wallet independence. Others differentiate them by the salary perceived by the active woman, and others by the criterion related to reputation and social status the active women benefit from. Workload and responsibilities the active woman has when following her professional duties is what could differentiate her from the housewife for others. At the point where some other women executives would give the characteristic linked to the level of instruction that characterized the active women compared to the housewife, the informants evoke the development as a criterion distinguishing themselves through their work, engagement in other horizons and opening onto other worlds apart from that of the home.

The existing difference between generations has a considerable impact on the active women and housewives. The category of young women at the beginning of the career aged between the twenties and thirties put focus on financial independence; which is at this age the means that permit the women get freed from the family's envelop. The category of women executives in the middle of career distinguish a housewife from an active woman by promoting self-esteem and social status whereas the forties and sixties at the end of career say that they do not find a criterion distinguishing the active woman from a housewife.

The active women feel through her work, utility and social contribution, as opposed to the feeling of uselessness of her existence felt by non-working women. She has a salary that values her work the thing that positively influences her psycho-affective evolution.

7. Conclusions

The empirical study permitted us to resort certain aspects of the work of the women executives in the Algerian context. This has led us to support the idea that these latter are increasingly in favour of work, career progression and the professional development in order to guarantee a social status, to attain a level of emancipation. The contribution of the woman manager of the household expenditure is an omnipresent factor for all the socio- professional categories; only the degree of participation as well as the importance of the contribution differ according to the socio-economic belonging and the matrimonial situation. As far as the financial objective-so far looked for from the remunerated job- is assured, the woman executive is motivated by the research of new horizons via the remunerated job such as the need of accomplishment, research for personal blossoming and the envy to go out of the traditional division of the work. However, our study arouse new research problems that can

be subjects of future studies mainly the conciliation between the professional life and the personal life of the woman manager.

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