

Mentoring Older Workers through Vocational Counselling Program - The Newest Dimensions of Mentoring

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Abstract. This study approaches a penetration into the basic or derived processes connected with the wish to analyse the effects of the mentorship' vocational counselling program on Romanian older workers professional activities. There is a real spiral of criticisms regarding active implications of the older workers with a real community awareness. The analyses are focused on revealing the differences that are significant beyond the current information in the process of valorising the older workers potential using specific mentoring programs. In this study, mixed methods of research: Ryff's Well Being Scale", the "Self- esteem questionnaire", directive interviews were used. The acquired mentoring skills during mentorship' vocational counselling program: 1. shaped the attitudes and values that underlie the well-being and determines more efficient uses of the resources involved in labour activities. 2. diminished at older workers the gap between the current demands involved in job' activities and their personal potential. 3. increase the communication between them and other persons coming from the same organizational group. 4. provide to older workers a new sense their professional career and personal life. 5. valorised the experience of the older workers. The conclusions that were found offer: a) A better understanding of the aging in context of valorising the older workers' potential at work place; b) an approach mentoring as an opportunity for older workers to continue their career' path. c) an approach mentoring as copying strategy that can be used by older workers for diminishing the gap between them and younger workers.

Keywords: Human resource management, mentoring, mentoring skills, older workers, professional activities, professional development.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, a phenomenon observed worldwide by the researchers is the aging of the population. There were globally about 841 million people over the age of 60, representing about 12% of the general population, while in the middle of the last century there were only 202 million elderly people of persons over 60 years (United Nations, 2013). At the European level, the most countries with a significant elderly population concentrated were: Italy (24.5%), Germany (24%), Greece (23.9%), Belgium (22.3%), Spain (22.1%), Portugal (21.1%), United Kingdom (20.8%), France (20.5%) (Man, 2017). The phenomenon draw attention to experts coming from

sociology, social work field, economy, medicine and education.

The process of aging population is related to the engagement. In fact, engagement is one of the Bologna Process's directions of action and reflects the relevance of study programs for the labour market, including those for older workers, equipping individuals with the means to deal with the changing conditions of the employment process. *Engagement is not only about vocational skills, but also about the development of personal capacities that help move freely on the labour market and realize their potential through viable employment.* It is in fact an

intersecting relationship (present to all type of workers), between employer skills needs and education (work-based learning), educational and workplace competency, and quality (accreditation of employer-based training, and credit accumulation and transfer systems) and vocational competency (fit for practice, and fit for purpose) (Irwin, 2008).

In this context, one of the first aspects which draw the researchers' attention was the analyses of the effectiveness of job behaviour at older employees and an interesting study was done by Warr (1993). Based on his framework of the effectiveness of job behaviour: physical ability, adaptability, and general work effectiveness, Warr pointed that is necessary to implement "serious of procedures to enhance adaptability among older employees" (Warr, 1993).

Another study done by done by Fortuny *et al.* (2003), highlighted the importance of making older workers more flexible and more employable, by facilitating access to counselling, vocational training and adaptation according to their interests and needs, as well as adequate reform of the education system, focusing on lifelong learning and training for all categories of age.

At older ages, the problem of maintaining people's employability is complex, as a number of specific factors and conditions are involved that derive from the aging process and whose impact affects the ability of these people to stay active. Baltes cited by Fontaine (2008) delimited three major categories of influences or factors of aging such as: Age-graded influences, History-graded influences and Non-normative influences.

Different aspects of work, such as work tasks and organization practices, can have a profound impact on older employees. Also, studying the influences of the professional environment on older workers who want to stay active provides important data to keep their employability in the workplace.

Employee perceptions about their relationship with the organization are largely determined by the treatment received from the organization. Older workers who perceive high levels of employee-organization relationships can expect better treatment from organizations when approaching retirement age. When planning their retirement decision, older workers tend to compare their status during their employment with their expected life after retirement (Wang and Shulz, 2010). A positive engagement-positive relationship can encourage older employees to continue their work within organizations if they meet their expectations of reducing workloads without losing their professional identity. A study conducted by Zappalà *et al.* (2008) pointed that those older employees tend to withdraw late if the management team of the company showed a special focus on maintaining the employability of older staff and if the supervisors took into account their age, health status and capacity in the distribution of tasks and assessment.

Another impact on employees' aging experience is the organization's motivation and performance management strategy. Warr (2001) has shown that the preferences of

older job-related workers include things like safety (physical, financial, employment) and opportunities to use their abilities rather than large professional demands like a variety of tasks and feedback, as younger employees prefer. An investigation conducted by Claes and Heymans (2008) identified a number of sources of motivation for older workers such as: contact with superiors and opportunities to take responsibility; setting clear, stimulating and time-bound goals, as well as the opportunity to train others / to convey their knowledge, along with the recognition of their efforts.

Other strategies to keep older-workers in the organization are retention and recruitment. It is important to recognize that these practices aimed at older workers can be difficult to implement for organizational, legal and regulatory reasons, since recommendations in this regard are based on the idea of giving the elderly employee the possibility of working part-time reduced responsibility, fewer hours a day, fewer days a week, seasonal employment or creating temporary employment opportunities. It is also important to say that practises for keeping older workers in organization are shaped by intergenerational dynamics and by the social responsibility that employers feel toward different generations (Egdell *et al.*, 2019).

Probably, one of the latest studies related to job quality differences among younger and older workers in Europe was the one published by Arranz *et al.* (2019). This study pointed that in E.U. countries where employment protection for regular workers has a strict regulation, institutions facilitate the job quality of older workers over the younger workers.

The area of concerns related to older workers has widened and there are a lot of studies developed under the dome of European projects. A recent study developed between 2018-2019 in an Erasmus' project in five E.U. countries (Romania, Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Italy) pointed that mentoring "has been identified as a special characteristic of older workers in most national contexts, and a policy recommendation could be towards this direction. According to literature (Farr *et al.*, 1998) and common experience, mentoring has a twofold positive impact on an organizational level. Firstly, it gives extra motivation to the older worker as he/she interacts with younger people and shares his/her knowledge, and secondly the organization saves resources as an internal training takes place and there is no need to address to external trainers. In this vein, Romanian and Spanish reports call for mentoring/tutoring programs, and the Greek' report as well highlights the significance of mentoring as a tool of both personal and organizational development. "(e- book, p. 83).

But what mentoring stands for?

Mentoring, as a form of support for professional development, is a complex process that involves many interpretations and analyses. Healy and Welchert (1990),

approached mentoring as "the interaction between mentor and trainee, aiming to share professional experience" (Healy and Welchert, 1990), while Randall and Thorton (2001) regarded mentoring as a "process through that an older and more experienced person takes the wing of another younger person by deliberately offering advice and encouragement".

However, the modern person-centred approaches to mentoring: a) puts the mentor less in the role of adviser and more in the role of facilitator. Nowadays, the role of the mentor is not to teach but to help mentees to learn for themselves, to discover their own direction, style and destiny, and the learning that they will require; b) see mentoring as "continuing professional development, as continuing education"

Freedman, 2009; Kram and Ragins, 2007) and puts the mentor less in the role of adviser and more in the role of facilitator (Brooks, 2018). In this context, the effects of mentoring upon the mentors are: "career rejuvenation, increased confidence, personal fulfilment, particularly satisfaction from seeing junior staff progress". (Quinn, cited by Hughes and Sheeris, 2016).

In the last 10 years, experts were focus on developing specific methodology for mentoring in: dentistry- Brooks (2018), web-design field, perfume creation industry; for mentoring lawyer, teachers, etc. Based on these studies and on Bozionelos' opinions (2019), today mentoring has become an opportunity for developing careers according with the internal regulations of each organization. During the mentoring process, the mentor to be, develops set of abilities, skills, and competencies.

According to the Romanian standards of mentoring occupation (http://site.anc.edu.ro/lista_so), the mentor to be, have the following competencies: a) social and constructive communication skills; b) management time skills; c) the ability to teach others; d) excellent knowledge of the field of activity of the guided person; e) the ability to offer suggestions and recommendations based on one's own experience and expertise; f) knowledge and observance of procedures, policies and organizational values; g) the ability to offer new perspectives on a situation / problem. These competencies are acquired going through accredited professional training programs (that are regulated by O.G.129 / 2000 with subsequent amendments and completions) offered by training providers accredited in adult education, or by going through mentorship' vocational counselling programs (M.V.C.P).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, mixed methods were used. The option for using mixed methods, in this research, was dictated by the dimensions of the experimental research.

The research used: a) "*The Ryff's Well Being Scale*". The "Ryff's Well Being Scale" was adapted in 2015 for Romanian adult (internal consistency index=.782, fidelity

test-retest index=.812); b) *The "Self-esteem questionnaire"*. It was adapted in 2014 for Romanian adult (internal consistency index=.758, fidelity test-retest index=.802); c) Directive, structured interviews with all participants.

Each direct interview was centred on the following aspects:

- a) Effects of M.V.C.P on daily work activities at the trained older workers;
- b) The older worker's position in the hierarchy of the group after he/she became mentor;
- c) The older workers self-perception from mentor's status:

In our investigation, in order to analyse the collected data, we used IBM- SPSS 25.

Participants.

The research was performed on 96 Romanian older workers, coming from the private urban organizations such as: bakery organizations (23% participants), confectioners (20% participants), tourism (39% participants), training services (18% participants), subjects aged 55-64 years, 44 male and 52 females (with mean= 60.7 years and Std =3.1). The participation of each older worker at mentorship' vocational counselling program was with each participant' consent and also based on a protocol with the organisation where he/she was employed. In this protocol, it was stipulated that the human resource manager will put in charge a mentor with one or two mentees that participated at the vocational counselling program.

Procedure of the research

In this research performed between October 2018 - January 2020, the General Data Protection Regulation of U.E- GDPR was respected. Each participant was informed about: 1) the aim of the research; 2) the tasks that he/she has to fulfil during the research; 3) the aim of the M.V.C.P.; 4) the intention to publish an article (by respecting the code of ethics) related the aspects that was investigated; 5) the intention in sharing the collected data with third parties. The researchers asked and got the participants' consent for: 1) collecting the data; 2) processing and analysing the data; 3) publishing the article; 4) processing and using in the article their personal opinions regarding the mentoring experience. The participants did not give their consents for sharing the collected data with third parties.

In the protocol that was signed with each organisation where older workers were employed, it was stipulated very clearly that the data collected from older workers during all stages of this investigation are their property and are part of each Romanian older worker' annual job' assessment.

The researchers have obtained from each organisation a permission related to processing the data and interpretation of it in order to publish an article. The researchers did not obtain their consents for sharing the collected data with third parties.

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, U.I.R. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions e.g. their containing information that could compromise the privacy of research participants.

The methodology of this research was developed on three stages. The first stage was an initial pre-testing procedure on all 96 older workers. The researchers investigated their well-being and self-esteem, and Cronbach Alpha index ($\alpha = .769$) was obtained.

The second stage of the research which was an experimental one, consisted in creating and implementation of the mentorship' vocational counselling program (M.V.C.P) on our participants. On the participants, the M.V.C.P aimed: a) to develop mentoring skills; b) to make an honest analysis of their personal resources in order to plan new activities; c) to develop objective manners to set personal goals for their personal development; d) to practice a constructive communication, playing a number of roles; e) to foster communication and cooperation between persons in order to achieve a common increase of functioning of decision making skills; f) to increase cooperation in intercultural environments.

The M.V.C.P. with older workers have had 20 hours. The total duration of implementation of M.V.C.P took 3 months. The researchers worked with 12 teams; each team had 8 older workers coming from different working field. The activities were done, with each team in a different neutral location.

The structure of M.V.C.P covered the following area: "Constructive communication: (one session for 6 hours), "You in organization" (one session for 4 hours), "Mentoring – valorising the 55+ employee experience" (2 sessions, one each for 4 hours). It also contained a final session for conclusions (2 hours).

The third stage which is the post-experimental stage of research that the participants did not anticipate as upcoming stage of the assessment of the M.V.C.P., and prevented the Hawthorne effect, took place after 9 months from the end of the M.V.C.P.

During this 9 months, starting from the end of the M.V.C.P., the participants have become mentors in their organizations and worked with one or two mentees (as was stipulated in the agreements that was made with their employers).

In this third stage, the researchers wanted to see the effects of the M.V.C.P, so the researchers assessed the well-being and self-esteem of the participants, and directive interviews were conducted with them. The researchers asked and got the participants' consent: for audio recording of the directive interviews, for collecting the data, for processing their personal opinions regarding the mentoring experience, for publishing the article. The participants

did not give their consents for sharing the collected data with third parties.

RESULTS

Quantitative data results

Univariate atypical cases were identified through the calculations of Z scores ($Z > \pm 1.35$ scores were considered atypical). Different statistics were used to evaluate the adjustment of the program, Chi-squared, the Tucker-Lewis Index., the t-test. The values between .90 and .95 or higher for TLI are considered to be acceptable, and 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference was relevant.

The M.V.C.P. effects on Romanian older workers' self-esteem

The data analyses process pointed that the initial distribution was uniform with the skewness index values from 1.248 to 2.504 and with standard error of skewness from .768 of 1.431, and kurtosis index values from .907 to 1.604, and standard error of kurtosis from 1.322 to 2.056, respectively. It also pointed that the distribution on post implementation program was uniform with the skewness index values from 0.948 to 1.604 and with standard error of skewness from .568 of 1.043, and kurtosis index values from .507 to 1.204, and standard error of kurtosis from 0.970 to 1.110, respectively.

The data collected on the effects produced by the mentorship' vocational counselling program on older workers' self-esteem are presented in Table 1.

The M.V.C.P. effects on Romanian older workers' well-being

The data analyses process pointed that the initial distribution was uniform with the skewness index values from 1.078 to 1.804 and with standard error of skewness from .898 of 1.611, and kurtosis index values from .992 to 1.954, and standard error of kurtosis from 1.227 to 2.119, respectively. It also pointed that the distribution on post implementation program was uniform with the skewness index values from 0.808 to 1.704 and with standard error of skewness from .548 of 1.203, and kurtosis index values from .678 to 1.384, and standard error of kurtosis from 0.901 to 1.225, respectively.

The data collected on the effects produced by the mentorship' vocational counselling program on older workers' well-being are presented in Table 2.

Did the M.V.C.P. worked?

Usually, when a researcher wants to point that the program

Table 1. The self-esteem features of older workers (pre and post implementation the mentorship' vocational counselling program)

| | Global assessment | | self-social competence | | Ability to solve problems | | Intellectual abilities | | Self competence | | - Self-esteem in relation with others | | Global level of self-esteem | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|--|-------|------------------------------------|-------|
| | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std |
| Pre-implementation program | 7.8 | 2.88 | 6.1 | 3.144 | 6.4 | 2.689 | 7.1 | 2.771 | 7.7 | 3.337 | 6.7 | 3.204 | 7.4 | 3.022 |
| Post implementation program | 8.4 | 2.667 | 7.1 | 2.905 | 7.2 | 2.445 | 7.4 | 2.607 | 8.2 | 2.993 | 7.8 | 2.881 | 8.1 | 2.831 |

Table 2. The well-being features of older workers (pre and post implementation the mentorship' vocational counselling program)

| | Personal autonomy | | Self-control | | Personal development | | Positive relationships | | Meaning of life | | Self-acceptance | | Global level of well-being | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std | Average | Std |
| Pre-implementation program | 7.5 | 3.227 | 6.4 | 2.986 | 7.1 | 2.806 | 7.4 | 2.799 | 6.9 | 3.105 | 6.6 | 3.048 | 7.5 | 2.988 |
| Post implementation program | 8.3 | 3.021 | 7.5 | 2.558 | 7.9 | 2.644 | 7.8 | 2.599 | 7.7 | 2.995 | 7.8 | 2.701 | 8.2 | 2.777 |

Table 3. Effects of M.V.C.P. upon Romanian older workers' professional activities

| Features | Development index | Stability of new acquired skills index | Efficiency of new acquired skills index | Efficacy of new acquired skills index |
|--|-------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Global self-assessment | 0.889 | 0.511 | 2.258 | 0.656988 |
| Social competence | 3.003 | 3.197 | 3.62 | 1.676532 |
| Ability to solve problems | 1.42 | 1.79 | 2.99 | 0.921985 |
| Intellectual abilities | 1.28 | 1.12 | 2.98 | 0.734648 |
| Self-competence | 2.115 | 1.85 | 3.12 | 0.66508 |
| Self-esteem in relation with others | 1.71 | 2.09 | 4.13 | 0.988632 |
| Global level of self -esteem | 1.15 | 1.77 | 3.07 | 1.244684 |
| Personal autonomy | 1.54 | 2.26 | 2.64 | 0.6875 |
| Self -control | 1.33 | 1.07 | 1.54 | 0.738889 |
| Personal development | 1.39 | 2.06 | 3.03 | 0.588983 |
| Positive relationships | 1.29 | 2.63 | 3.07 | 0.745665 |
| Meaning of life | 1.19 | 0.63 | 1.45 | 0.515152 |
| Self-acceptance | 3.87 | 3.46 | 3.64 | 2.211429 |
| Global level of well-being | 2.64 | 2.07 | 2.39 | 1.776483 |

that she/he has created worked, it is necessary to present a couple of few indexes that support the statements. The researcher compute for the mentorship' vocational counselling program four indicators: developmental index- it reflects the progress of investigated features between the two moments of the research (post-implementation and pre-implementation of the program); stability index; the efficiency of the new acquired skills; the efficacy of the new acquired skills.

The collected data regarding the few indicators that endorsed the impact of our mentorship' vocational counselling program are presented in Table 3.

Qualitative data results

The qualitative data analyses (coming from the direct interview' answers provided by older workers) suggested:

a) Effects of M.V.C.P on daily work activities of the trained older workers showed:

- an increase in tolerance towards the colleagues' behaviour as pointed by 45% older workers: "Since, I became mentor, I no longer make the boss, when my colleagues make mistakes" (D.M,male, 59 years old); " Since, I became mentor, I am aware that each colleaguesis unique" (L.R, female, 62 years old).

- involvement in new activities, in new tasks as pointed by 48% older workers: "After learning how to be a mentor, I started to get involved in the new projects of my organization" (N.A, male, 61 years old); "Before I learned how to be a mentor at my age, I tthought that I will let down my colleagues. Now, I am no longer be afraid to take part of new challenges" (M.S, female, 60 years old)

b) The older workers'position in the hierarchy of the group after they became mentors showed;

- role model in organisation as pointed by 55% older workers. " Today, I have new responsibilities from being mentor. Younger colleagues are trying to learn from me, to copy my working style

(V.M, female, 60 years old); “ *I was surprised to see that my methods for improving the customers’ satisfaction was embraced by my colleagues. That did not happen till I worked with 2 mentees*“ (S.E, female, 59 years old).

- reconsideration of their work in organisation as pointed by 52% older workers: “*My younger colleagues in their activities, consulted me more often after I became a mentor*” (G.L, female, 59 years old); “ *I was nominated as the best baker. I cannot believe that it happened to me. I improved my baking ’ skills after I was trained as mentor*” (P.G, male, 60 years old).

- an increase of self -estemm and of professional brand- - pointed by 59% older workers : “ I know now, after I worked with 2 mentees, that I am an expert in my line of work” (P.M, male, 60 years old), “ Today, after I learned how to be mentor, when I am ask to do something new, I no longer say: “ No”. I say: “Maybe” (L.M, female, 63 years old).

c) The older workers self-perception from mentor’s status showed:

- power of expressing his/ her opinions as pointed by 46% older workers: “*I started to have the courage to express my opinions, since I learned how to be a mentor*” (F.G., female, 61 years old); “*I can offer, today, to my colleagues, different points of views. But today, I am mentor*” (R.S, female, 58 years old).

- the feeling of professional utility in the organization as pointed by 52% older workers: “*I am not so insignificant in organization, but since I became mentor, my colleagues are speaking more with me at lunch hour*” (P.M, female, 62 years old); “*I never know before I became mentor, that, at my age, I can help my colleagues*” (S. C., male, 61 years old).

DISCUSSIONS

The M.V.C.P effects on Romanian older workers’ self-esteem

From the data presented in Table 1, it is seen that the M.V.C.P. produced changes on all the features of older workers self-esteem. But there are two components where the changes are significant: “*Self -esteem in relation with others*” and “*Social competence*”. These changes revealed that based on the new skills acquired during the program, the older workers became more *aware of the personal value they have within the organization and can better manage their social interactions.*

But what does these things really mean? Do the changes that the program had on the older workers’ self-esteem significant for their future professional activities?

A closer look to the data revealed that, at our older workers, *the mentoring skills that they acquired during the M.V.C.P. diminished the gap between the current demands involved in job’ activities at work place and their*

previous gained experiences personal potential shaped by professional experience.

In fact, the *mentoring skills that older workers acquired during the M.V.C.P* changed: 1) *their perception of their role in the organization;* 2) *the benchmark to which they referred before: from an employee that is old and no longer useful to the anyone at work to an employee that is mature, wiser and can be one of the persons with key organisational roles and model for younger colleagues.*

Using one sample T test, it was found that the analysed data was significant for the subjects. (Table 4).

The M.V.C.P. effects on Romanian older workers’ well-being.

The data synthesized in Table 2, allow us to see that the M.V.C.P. made changes to all the features of older workers’ well-being. Still, there are two components of the older workers well-being where the changes are significant: self- acceptance and self-control. It means that *the mentoring skills they have acquired throughout the program provide them with the opportunity to relate to daily tasks from a different perspective. The referential to which they appeal in the accomplishment of professional tasks, in the projection of their own person on short and medium term, is changed.*

The situation presented above raised the following questions: do the changes that the program had on the older workers’ well-being relevant for their future professional activities? If so, what does it mean?

A closer look on the data analysed above, allow the researchers to say that the M.V.C.P. *shaped older worker’ vision in approaching on different levels of his/her well-being in work’ environment.* In this context, *self-acceptance, self-control, positive relationships, personal development and meanings of life had become criteria for assessing his/her mental state but also criteria for creating strategies focused on planning beneficial / profitable activities for his/her organization.*

Analysing the data from Table 5 (using one sample T test), it is observed that the differences are relevant for the investigated subjects.

So, the *mentoring skills acquired by older workers during the M.V.C.P. shaped the attitudes and values that underlie their well-being as index of professional satisfaction and determine more efficient use of the personal resources and copying mechanism in professional activities.*

Do the M.V.C.P worked?

From data pointed in Table 3, it is observed that all indicators increased between the pre and post implementation of the program. But the significant

Table 4. The t test on - self- esteem features at older workers (from pre-implementation to post-implementation the M.V.C.P)

| Stages | | Test Value = 0 | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------|----|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------|--|
| | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | |
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Pre- implementati on the program | Global self- assessment | 9.842 | 96 | .000 | 3.800 | 4.082 | 9.518 | |
| | Social competence | 8.981 | 96 | .000 | 3.600 | 5.087 | 9.013 | |
| | Ability to solve problems | 10.362 | 96 | .000 | 3.200 | 5.19 | 8.410 | |
| | Intellectual abilities | 8.268 | 96 | .000 | 3.700 | 5.750 | 9.6.91 | |
| | Self -competence | 11.442 | 96 | .000 | 4.800 | 5.515 | 10.375 | |
| | Self -esteem in relation with others | 10.422 | 96 | .000 | 5.225 | 4.224 | 9.75 | |
| | Global level of self- esteem | 12.071 | 96 | .000 | 5.745 | 5.1 | 10.88 | |
| Post - implementa tion the program | Global self- assessment | 11.225 | 96 | .000 | 3.600 | 5.520 | 11.229 | |
| | Social competence | 16.174 | 96 | .000 | 3.400 | 5.79 | 9.21 | |
| | Ability to solve problems | 11.356 | 96 | .000 | 3.100 | 5.95 | 9.103 | |
| | Intellectual abilities | 10.111 | 96 | .000 | 3.400 | 5.96 | 9.98 | |
| | Self -competence | 11.207 | 96 | .000 | 4.600 | 6.04 | 10.692 | |
| | Self -esteem in relation with others | 12.448 | 96 | .000 | 5.078 | 5.31 | 10.54 | |
| | Global level of self- esteem | 14.576 | 96 | .000 | 5.480 | 5.9 | 11.425 | |

Table 5. The t test on – well-being features at older workers (from pre-implementation to post-implementation the M.V.C.P)

| Stages | | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Pre implementation on the program | Personal autonomy | 6.678 | 96 | .000 | 4.700 | 5.38 | 10.13 |
| | Self-control | 15.917 | 96 | .000 | 2.700 | 5.20 | 7.96 |
| | Personal development | 9.000 | 96 | .000 | 3.700 | 5.62 | 9.383 |
| | Positive relationships | 8.711 | 96 | .000 | 4.350 | 5.16 | 9.449 |
| | Meaning of life | 6.225 | 96 | .000 | 2.900 | 5.53 | 8.45 |
| | Self-acceptance | 5.228 | 96 | .000 | 4.171 | 4.72 | 8.95 |
| | Global level of well-being | 7.442 | 96 | .000 | 3.440 | 5.78 | 9.3 |
| Post implementation on the program | Personal autonomy | 13.615 | 96 | .000 | 4.400 | 6.15 | 10.56 |
| | Self-control | 16.102 | 96 | .000 | 2.600 | 6.15 | 8.802 |
| | Personal development | 9.951 | 96 | .000 | 3.498 | 6.24 | 9.75 |
| | Positive relationships | 7.528 | 96 | .000 | 3.350 | 6.21 | 9.57 |
| | Meaning of life | 6.228 | 96 | .000 | 2.700 | 6.35 | 9.06 |
| | Self-acceptance | 14.033 | 96 | .000 | 3.150 | 6.25 | 9.41 |
| | Global level of well-being | 9.824 | 96 | .001 | 3.200 | 6.60 | 9.81 |

increase occurred on features of Romanian older worker' **social-competence and on their self-acceptance** and mean: *first, it diminishes older workers' feeling of personal uselessness; second, changes on older workers' perception criteria of personal performance (by comparison with the performance of colleagues); third, reconsideration of interpersonal relationships at work, depending on the levels of task execution. Interpersonal relationships are dynamically restructured based on the needs of each older worker in the form of a pyramid (similar to Maslow's) especially at the personal and formal level; in fact, each interpersonal relationship of the older worker contributes decisively to meeting his/her personalized professional needs.*

Limitations and future directions

One limitation of the current study is determined by

the type of subjects who participated in the program. The study has not included in M.V.C.P. participants/older workers that come from the technical field (construction, car industry, etc.), financial-banking field, and legal field. The effects of the program on them will probably be different. As such, cannot generalize our conclusions. Future researches will be able to highlight the effects of the program on other categories of older workers.

The second limitation of this program is that older subjects participating in the program are relatively healthy; without suffering from multiple chronic diseases. This limitation was revealed also by Scheibe in his recently study: " It is therefore possible that the current findings do not generalize to employees with chronic health conditions, a group that comprises about one quart of the European workforce and is expected to grow further" (Harbers and Achterberg, 2012, cited by

Scheibe, 2021). Future studies will also have to focus on pointing the implications of the mentorship' vocational counselling program to every day job activities at older workers with chronic health conditions or deficiencies.

The third limitation of this research is that the study selected participants/older workers from urban environment. Future studies will be also focused on revealing the possible differences between the effects of the M.V.C.P on older workers that live in urban and rural environment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research had the goal to reveal the effects of the M.V.C.P. on Romanian older workers' professional activities. The study found that:

- a) acquired mentoring skills during *M.V.C.P.*:
- 1) *shaped the attitudes and values that underlie the well-being and determines more efficient use of the resources involved in labour activities*
 - 2) *diminished at older workers, the gap between the current demands involved in current job' activities and their personal potential.*
 - 3) *increase the communication between them and other persons coming from the same organizational group.*
 - 4) *provide to older workers, a new sense of their professional and personal life.*
 - 5) *valorised the experience of the older workers.*
- b) through the *M.V.C.P.*:
- 1) *older workers' feeling of uselessness in the organization was diminished*
 - 2) *the conflicts between older workers and younger workers were diminished.*
 - 3) *cohesion in the organization is facilitated.*
 - 4) *efficient professional strategies for older workers can develop in each organisation.*

The findings (implications of the research) had the following practical implications and therefore can be useful for managers in order to:

- a. Increase the involvement of older workers in making decision process;
- b. Improve the working style between the management team and older workers;
- c. Create new challenges for older workers based on their potential and professional experience;
- d. Diminish the bullying phenomenon between older workers and younger workers, and facilitate the cooperation between them.

The conclusions have the following theoretical and social implications:

1. A better understanding of the aging in context of valorising the older workers' potential at work place;
2. Approach mentoring as an opportunity and strategy for older workers to continue their professional activity at their work place.
3. Approach mentoring as copying strategy that can be used by older workers for diminishing the gap between them and younger workers.
4. Approach mentoring as a mediation tool for older workers transition to retirement.

Besides the elaborated conclusions, the study cannot fail to find the elements with added value of the research:

- starts from the premise that older workers are an invaluable human resource for any organization in terms of their potential and experience.
- approaches the *M.V.C.P.* as a learning opportunity for older workers, as a way to resize their career within the

organization,

- approaches the trained mentor as a link between the decisional level of an organization and its executory level;
- approaches older worker from the mentor position as a link between the decisional level of an organization and its executory level.

- **Ethical Approval and Consent to participate:** The procedure of obtained consent from the participants was described in detail, when the procedure and stages of the research was mentioned:
- **Consent for publication:** The consent from the participants for publishing the results coming from the statistical data analysis was obtained (not from collected data base).

Availability of supporting data

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, U.I.R. The data are not publicly available due to [restrictions e.g. their containing information that could compromise the privacy of research participants].

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