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PROKRASTINATION PHENOMENON AND TEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE IN PROFESSIONAL LEVEL

ФЕНОМЕН ПРОКРАСТИНАЦИИ И ВРЕМЕННАЯ ПЕРСПЕКТИВА НА ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОМ УРОВНЕ

Abstract

In professional activities, the skill to efficiently manage your time plays a vital role. Professional activity is a long-term process where time is a critical and nonrenewable resource. Efficient time management ensures life strategies in situations of uncertainty and determines time prioritization in professional fulfillment (K.A. Abul'hanova, A.K. Bolotova). Time remains an important reserve of mental personal organization; however, it is very rarely used. When social development and the rate of activities intensifies the problem of procrastination becomes of practical significance. It becomes necessary to work under difficult time constraints, delay task fulfillment, reallocate time priorities and time limits in situations of interpersonal and professional communication (A.K. Bolotova, 2007). Rational use of lifetime, orientation on future time perspectives (F. Zimbardo, 2010), looming professional horizons and personal growth leads to high career achievements. Today, the study of personal capacity and career opportunities assumes research of time perspectives and activities strategies. However, the amount of these studies in modern psychology is not enough.

Keywords: time perspective, procrastination, structure of procrastination, professional level, activity, professional, psychology, communication

Introduction

Employees of different job titles more and more often face procrastination in their professional activities. Procrastination influences the specific nature of organizing and implementing activities as well as more task oriented time use (A.K. Bolotova, A.A. Chevrenidi, 2017). It should be noted that subjective value of time as a personality resource and duration of time perspective appear to be regulators of organizing activities and personal self-fulfillment.

In 2004, D.A. Leontiev offered a classification of types of personal attitude to timing, where two groups were determined: people living “in the hours” and “outside the hours”. This classification shows how a person feels like in the trinity of time and how the transfer from the past to the future is considered to be a continuous spatial changing process or lifetime. People living “in the hours” perceive their life at the intersection of interconnected time intervals where a person “moves from the past via the present to the future and the world moves from the future via the present to the past” (2004, № 1(4). – p. 113-118). In turn, those living “outside the time” have a tendency to postpone and delay everything, in other words procrastination.

A famous Canadian researcher J.R. Ferrari in 1990 suggested classify demonstration of phenomenon of procrastination depending on personal qualities and personal behavioral strategies. According with his classification there are hesitator or avoiding people and so-called thrill seekers or active procrastinators, which delay major decision-making on purpose.

Despite the relevance of the problem of procrastination in production activities, there is still no common understanding about the contents of professional procrastination and its terminological understanding. Even though most existing research of the procrastination phenomenon are based on the academic sphere, V.V. Barabanshikova and G.I. Marusanova (2016) point out that studies of the procrastination phenomenon are based on particular professions. This makes research about differential phenomenon functioning based on materials of a wide range of professions of particular interest. The authors point out that studying the specifics of delaying things by specialists in the performance of his duties has high theoretical and applicable value. However, there were not enough studies of the procrastination phenomenon at professional level in modern psychology (Ya.I. Varvaricheva (2010), E.P. Il'in(2011). These reasons predetermined the subject matter of our research: Interrelation of time perspectives and procrastination at professional level. P. Ringenbach first introduced the

term procrastination in 1977. At that point, it meant putting off things. A. Ellis, W.J. Knaus (1977) and J. Burka and L. Yuen (2008) conducted research on procrastination in this context. P. Steel conducted a metaanalysis of all research in this sphere and came forth with a single definition: “the fact of procrastination presents not just delay but also protraction and non-performance” (2007, p. 65). P. Steel (2010) determined distinctive features of procrastination. According to him, it is the association with the timing aspect. He mentioned that usually people delay things, which have a certain time of performance.

Theory

In Russian psychology, the problem of procrastination is not adequately investigated. Ya.I. Varvaricheva (2010) distinguishes a separate type of procrastination – conscious procrastination. In her work N.A. Chernisheva(2016) makes an integrational analysis of special aspects of procrastination and emphasizes the following characteristics: awareness, irrationality, internal discomfort and negative feelings (worries, guilt) resulting from the delay of things.

A research of V.V. Barabanshikova (2016) shows that procrastination has both negative and positive consequences for a person’s activities. People often delay not only personal but also professional responsibilities. O.S. Vindekeder and M.V. Ostanina point out that point out that procrastination has a negative influence on people’s success (2014).

According to a number of researches, the contents of procrastination include delaying things for a number of reasons: choosing behavioral strategies (avoidance), low level of motivational and volitional sphere as well as emotional components (fear and dismay). We can find explanations of procrastination in J.R. Ferrari works (1990) who determined the following reasons for delaying: looking for a thrill, hesitation, avoidance of failures, perfectionism and unwillingness to risk.

Usually procrastinators delay things, which have certain deadlines. On that basis, we can assume that demonstration of procrastination is connected with features of formation of the time perspective.

K. Levin (2001) first offered the definition of time perspective similar to a definition of time orientation. He understood it as a projection of his future or past in the present. Introduction of this definition complemented the definition of “vital space” and “psychological field” determining the study of understanding of the past, present and future. When L. Frank introduced the term, “time perspective” in 1939 he characterized time limits as an

interconnection and interconditionality of past, present and future, which was presented in the existential model of human behavior.

B.V. Zeigarnik (1982) points out that past personal experience plays a sufficient role in searching for a project of life and determining time landmarks while forming a skill to put in perspective the arising situation and consider it in an unfolding time perspective. This skill is critical for personal development.

In our study, we mainly rely on the definition of time perspective worked out by F. Zimbardo. According to the author's definition, "time perspective is personal attitude to time which is often unconscious and a long-term process of existence which is united into time categories which helps to regulate, structure and give meaning to life" (2010, p. 58). Time perspective represents directives, beliefs and values connected with time. According to F. Zimbardo, time perspective includes several timelike dimensions and orientations: future, positive and negative past, hedonist and fatalist present (2010, p. 47 – 52).

Our research is dedicated to the procrastination phenomenon within the framework of professional activities. We can assume that time perspective and its time limits (future, positive and negative past, hedonist and fatalist present) are interconnected with procrastination processes allowing to rationally structure personal activities in time – lifetime. The success of professional activities is determined by life-purpose personal orientation (D.A. Leont'ev, 2004) which found reflection in our research.

Methods

Our research covers responders of different job titles (120 people, 58 top-managers, 62 middle managers) and representatives of different Moscow organizations. The online-research was held using Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) adapted by A. Sirtsova, E.T. Sokolova and O.V. Mitina (2008), scales of common procrastination (C.H. Lay) adapted by T.U. Udeeva, N.G. Garanyan, D.N. Shukova (2011) and "Life-purpose orientation" checklist adapted by D.A. Leont'ev (2000). The SPSS Statistics V.22 Software processed attained results.

Results

The article presents results of statistical analysis of diversities in the level of procrastination and types of time orientation of respondents of different job titles. Differentiation between groups by quantitative indicators was carried out using the Mann-Whitney criteria (table 1).

Table 1

Statistical analysis of diversities in the level of procrastination and types of time orientation

| Criteria | Middle management | Top management | Value of the differentiation ratio |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Level of procrastination | 57.2 | 53.45 | 1211** |
| Negative past | 31.26 | 19.43 | 226** |
| Hedonist present | 24.6 | 19.8 | 1023** |
| Positive past | 21.4 | 36.06 | 168.5** |
| Fatalist present | 45.7 | 21.3 | 53** |
| Future | 22 | 59.03 | 0** |

Note: ** - differences are statistically significant for $p \leq .01$

The results of Table 1 show statistically significant differences of the level of procrastination of top-managers and middle managers. It was identified that top-managers have a lower level of procrastination, which may be linked to a higher level of responsibility and their commitment to career achievements. These results allow us to assume that time limits of top-managers and middle managers have their distinctive features (statistically significant level of differences for $p \leq .01$). Comparison studies of time orientation of two groups of respondents show high rates and predominance of Future time perspective only in the top-management group (**59.03** against **22**). Top-management have a low level of hedonist present, which may show the importance of target-setting and looking to the future to draw up long-term strategies of activities and achievement orientation. Low orientation on hedonist present shows ill preparedness to combine active professional activities with enjoying the present “right there and then”. Such people are prepared to sacrifice “the present” for success in the Future, constantly setting new goals and trying to achieve top achievements in their career (F. Zimbardo, 2010).

In accordance with the point of view of D.A. Leont'ev (2000), time perspectives are linked to personal life-purpose orientation, which influence success in professional activities. The results of our research allow us to unfold life-purpose orientation of employees of different job titles which may determine time perspectives of either the Future (target setting) or the present (process) and the past (goals, results) or all three time dimensions. The results of statistical analysis of differences between selections using the Mann-Whitney U test for tests of life-purpose orientation of D.A. Leont'ev are presented in the table 2.

Table 2

Differences of average group values of life-purpose orientation

| Criteria | Middle management | Top management | Value of the differentiation ratio |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Aims in life | 29.9 | 35.28 | 344** |
| Process of life | 27.7 | 34.38 | 175** |
| Performance of life | 24.1 | 28.38 | 715** |
| Locus control – ego | 21.25 | 24.6 | 904.5** |
| Locus control – life | 29.26 | 32.7 | 468.5** |
| Sense of purpose of life | 131.85 | 155.25 | 3** |

Note: ** - differences are statistically significant for $p \leq 0.01$

The results of this statistical analysis allow us to confirm that statistically significant differences between top-management and middle management can be seen by every measure, that is: “Aims in life”, “Process of life”, “Performance of life”, “Locus control – ego”, “Locus control – ego”, “Sense of purpose of life”. The best results can be seen in the following key figures of top-management: aims in life (**35.29** against **29.9**), locus control (**32.7** against **29.26**) and sense of purpose of life (**155.25** against **131.85**). The middle management group shows much lower results. The received data illustrates major differences in leading components of

personal potential while planning and building up one’s career, which become a basis for career achievements (D.A. Leont’ev).

Following you can see the results of correlation analysis of interconnections between quantitative measures and the “Level of procrastination” criteria inside each selection. The analysis was carried out using Spearman’s pair rho. Table 3 presents correlation ratio between quantitative measures and “Level of procrastination” for top-managers and middle managers selections.

Table 3

Correlation ratio between quantitative measures and “Level of procrastination”

| Criteria | Level of procrastination | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| | Middle | Top |
| Negative past | 0.78** | 0.08 |
| Hedonist present | 0.23 | -0.11 |
| Positive past | 0.02 | -0.40** |
| Fatalist present | 0.76** | 0.23 |
| Future | -0.46** | -0.77** |
| Aims in life | -0.26** | -0.57** |
| Process of life | -0.23 | -0.80** |
| Performance of life | -0.08 | -0.75** |
| Locus control – ego | -0.28* | -0.79** |
| Locus control – life | -0.43** | -0.70** |
| Sense of purpose of life | -0.19 | -0.52** |

Note: «*» - Correlation ratio, statistically significant at the level of 0.05, «**» - statistically significant at the level of 0.01.

The results of middle management show that statistically significant positive interconnections with the “Level of procrastination” can be seen at the “Negative past” (**0.78**), “Fatalist present” (**0.76**) criterion, and statistically significant negative interconnections with the “Level of procrastination” criteria can be seen at the “Future” (**-0.46**), “Aims in life” (**-0.26**), “Locus control – ego” (**-0.28**), “Locus control – life” (**-0.43**). We could see similar results in

T.A. Pychyl (2000), C.H. Lay (1986) et. al. research which were based on the assumption of preference of momentary pleasure from honors and rewards distant in the Future. J. Ferrari and M. Specter research (2000) showed high negative correlation of procrastination with a focus on Future and positive correlation with a focus on negative past.

Top-management results did not show any statistically significant positive interconnections with the «Level of procrastination». Statistically significant negative interconnections with the «Level of procrastination» could be seen at «Positive past», «Future», «Aims in life», «Process of life», «Performance of life», «Locus control – ego», «Locus control – life», «Sense of purpose of life» criterion, which means the lowering of the level of procrastination.

The obtained results show that the high level of procrastination of middle managers may bme explained by the influence of their attitude to the past (**31.26**): they are full of memories of the past and do not pay enough attention to their Future orientation. High level of procrastination can also be connected with fatalist perception of the present (**45.7**) and low Future achievements orientation (**22**).

We assume that the low level of procrastination of top-managers can be explained by their positive past orientation, which is an illustrative of knowledge and experience of the past implemented in practical activities. We can also see high Future orientation, which reflects the ability of top-managers to self-regulate and set targets when building their careers. The definition of “personal meaning” (A.N. Leontiev, 2004) correlates with these empirical observations, which often can be estimated as an influence of results on career achievements.

Results and discussion

Our research shows that procrastination and orientation of time perspective are interconnected. Success in professional activities depends on the level of procrastination, life-purpose orientations and personal time relations.

These results are in line with the results of a research by V.V. Barabanshikova and S.A. Ivanova (2016) which reflect the fact that test persons subject to procrastination are able to control the situation to a lesser extent and deter the decision-making process. Available research data proves the results of our research. They show that procrastination is interconnected with personal time perspective and may become a means of time management with a positive effect. The ability to manage time determines success in professional activities, which we found out by comparing the criterion of time perspective with procrastination in top-management and

middle management groups whose success was determined by their focus on the future and low level of procrastination.

It is important to note that in our research among top-managers with high professional status and work experience we could see a significant rise of the level of procrastination comparing to the middle management group. We assume that this may be connected with management experience when most important production tasks required immediate attention while all the others were delegated and procrastinated. This type of management goes in line with rational time management and Pareto 20/8 - principle. Our works (2017) can also prove the research of Chu A.H.C., Choi J.N. (2005) and E.P. Il'ina (2011). The authors consider constructive procrastination as an original coping strategy and a predictor of successful activities. From their point of view, procrastination serves as a deliberately chosen strategy leading to positive operating results instead of negative and allows to concentrate on more important things. Our research allows to assume that personal time perspective and orientation is interconnected with the process of procrastination and can be considered in either way, positive or negative, which corresponds to the results of the latest research of procrastination in professional activities by V.V. Barabanshikova (2015). The obtained results allow us to plan some future perspectives for research of contents and consequences of procrastination in different types of activities.

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