

SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF WOMEN'S CAREER STRIVING IN PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

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Abstract: This article comprehensively analyzes the socio-psychological characteristics of women's career aspirations in their professional activities. The historical role of women in the labor market, their position in society, the barriers they face, and their personal motivations and aspirations are considered. The article explores the role of gender stereotypes, social norms, family obligations, and discrimination at work in shaping women's career paths. Psychological factors such as confidence in effectiveness, ambition, and mental resilience in women's career aspirations are also analyzed. Based on the available literature, the complex processes of achieving professional success of women are highlighted, and relevant recommendations are given.

Keywords: Women, Professional Activity, Career, Social Factors, Psychological Characteristics, Gender Stereotypes, Discrimination, Labor Market

Introduction

The issue of career aspiration in women's professional activity is one of the most pressing and complex problems of modern society. Historically, women had more limited opportunities in the labor market than men, they were often concentrated in areas traditionally considered to be "women's professions," and were significantly affected by gender segregation. However, during the 20th century and especially in its second half, the involvement of women in labor activity increased significantly. These changes had profound consequences not only economically, but also socially and psychologically, prompting a reassessment of women's role in society and in their personal lives [1, 2].

Women's career aspirations contribute significantly to their personal development, economic independence, and the overall progress of society. However, this process is accompanied by many social and psychological barriers. Traditional societal values, gender stereotypes, the need to coordinate family responsibilities, and discrimination at work can create serious difficulties for women on their career path [3]. Therefore, it is important to deeply analyze the socio-psychological characteristics of women's career aspirations in their professional activities, identify the factors influencing their success, and propose effective solutions in this regard. This article is aimed at a comprehensive study of women's career aspirations and includes its theoretical foundations, social and psychological aspects, as well as practical recommendations [4, 5].

Analysis of Literature on the Topic

Analysis of the socio-psychological features of women's career aspirations is based on theoretical foundations and existing empirical research. A number of theories play an important role in this area, including the theory of social role, the theory of human capital, and feminist theories. Social role theory explains how the traditional roles of women and men in society influence their career choices and career aspirations. Human capital theory emphasizes that an individual's education, experience, and skills play a decisive role in career success, but this theory often fails to fully explain gender-based differences. Feminist theories, however, study the asymmetry of power based on gender and the negative impact of patriarchal structures on women's careers [6].

The influence of society on women's career aspirations is invaluable. Throughout the 20th century, women faced significant social difficulties in pursuing careers, often viewed as immoral or unfeminine

behavior, and they experienced a sense of guilt due to family responsibilities. Women frequently took on lower-status, lower-paid jobs, concentrating in traditional fields such as administrative assistance, nursing, and teaching. These occupational constraints contributed to income inequality, as women received about two-thirds of the income of male colleagues with similar education and experience. Even in fields dominated by men, such as science and engineering, women earned about 20% less. Factors such as social influence, discrimination, and an unfavorable work environment exacerbated these income disparities. Nevertheless, the participation of women in labor activity has been steadily increasing. While in 1890 less than 3% of married women worked outside the home, by 1900 25% of all women were in the labor market. World War II significantly increased their participation, and by 1980, more than 50% of women participated in the labor market, which exceeded 30% in 1950. By the mid-1990s, women constituted approximately 46% of the American workforce, contrary to the stereotypes of traditional housework [7].

Social factors also include gender stereotypes and discrimination. A study in the *American Sociological Review* found that, although managerial roles were previously gender-independent, they quickly became gender stereotypes, affecting the authority of both male and female managers. Laura Doering and Sarah Thébaud, using data from a microfinance bank in Central America, found that clients quickly linked credit manager roles to gender. It was assumed that managers have more authority when the role is associated with men. In particular, clients who had male managers were much more obedient and missed fewer payments than those who had female managers, even after credit history was taken into account. Most importantly, this initial gender association was preserved; the gender of the client's first manager was a stronger predictor of behavior compared to subsequent managers than the actual gender of the new manager. This indicates a deeply rooted cultural prejudice or "counter-response effect" towards female managers. The study also showed that men also do not have immunity to these flaws, since men in feminine roles experienced a significant penalty or "decrease in descent." To combat these biases, the authors recommend that top-level managers openly support individuals in gender-lowered roles and introduce more standardized performance criteria for employers [8].

Personal psychological factors also play an important role in women's career aspirations. These include self-efficacy, ambition, motivation, stress resistance, and personal views on work-life balance. Women with high self-efficacy are more confident in their abilities and strive to achieve their goals despite difficulties. Ambition encourages women to rise to higher positions and develop professionally. However, restrictions and stereotypes imposed by society can suppress ambitions in women or form a negative attitude towards them [9].

Work-life balance creates specific psychological difficulties for women. Traditionally, women took on the main responsibility for family and household chores, which led to a conflict with their professional aspirations. Some women are forced to sacrifice career growth under this pressure, while others try to bear a double burden, which increases stress and fatigue. This situation can cause internal conflicts in women's professional aspirations and evoke a sense of guilt.

Women face various obstacles in their professional activities. These include "glass ceiling," that is, invisible barriers limiting women's promotion to higher positions, wage gaps, gender-based discrimination, and workplace harassment. Studies of the glass ceiling phenomenon show that women are often concentrated in middle-level management positions and rarely rise to senior management positions. This not only affects the individual career prospects of women, but also limits the innovative potential of organizations, since diversity and inclusiveness often lead to improved performance [10].

However, despite these difficulties, new opportunities are also emerging for women. On a global scale, the level of education of women is increasing, which increases their access to qualified jobs. The implementation of gender equality policies, workplace diversity support programs, and mentoring projects will help women achieve career success. The development of the Internet and technology creates opportunities for remote work, providing women with flexibility in coordinating work and family responsibilities. Women are also becoming more active in the field of entrepreneurship, starting their own businesses, which provides them with autonomy and economic independence [11].

Materials and Method

This article is a study based on theoretical and literary analysis and was created to highlight the socio-

psychological features of career aspiration in women's professional activities. The study examined and synthesized scientific literature on the topic, the results of empirical research, monographs, and reports of international organizations. The main focus was on summarizing existing data in the field of gender studies, social psychology, theories of professional development, and labor economics. The conclusions and recommendations presented in the article are based on existing scientific knowledge and include not the collection of new empirical data, but a critical analysis of the existing knowledge base.

Result and Discussion.

The results of the study reveal that women's career striving in professional activity is shaped by a complex interaction of socio-cultural, institutional, and psychological factors. The analysis confirms that gender stereotypes, occupational segregation, and workplace discrimination remain persistent barriers that limit women's access to leadership positions and equitable remuneration, despite increasing participation in the labor market [12]. At the same time, psychological characteristics such as self-efficacy, ambition, and resilience play a decisive role in overcoming these constraints, highlighting the dual influence of external structures and internal capacities. The findings also demonstrate that work-life balance remains a critical challenge, often creating role conflict and emotional strain, which can hinder long-term career progression. From a theoretical perspective, the study supports the integration of social role theory, human capital theory, and feminist approaches, indicating that no single framework sufficiently explains women's career development, thus necessitating a multidimensional analytical model [13].

The discussion identifies a significant knowledge gap in the limited integration of socio-psychological and institutional perspectives within existing research, particularly in transitional and developing contexts. While prior studies have examined either structural inequalities or individual psychological traits, there is insufficient attention to their interaction and cumulative impact. Moreover, empirical evidence remains fragmented, with a lack of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies that could better capture dynamic changes in women's career trajectories. Practically, the findings emphasize the need for organizational reforms, including transparent promotion systems, standardized performance evaluation, and active support from leadership to counteract implicit bias. Policy implications include strengthening gender equality legislation, expanding flexible work arrangements, and promoting equal distribution of family responsibilities [14, 15].

Further research should focus on empirical validation of integrated models that combine psychological, social, and institutional variables, as well as the exploration of digital transformation and remote work as emerging factors influencing women's careers. Longitudinal studies examining career progression over time and comparative analyses across different socio-economic contexts are particularly necessary to deepen understanding and inform evidence-based interventions.

Conclusion

The pursuit of a career in women's professional activity is a complex and multifaceted process, which is formed under the influence of the socio-cultural context, psychological factors, and the interaction of institutional structures. Although women have historically faced serious barriers such as gender-based stereotypes, occupational restrictions, and income inequality, their participation in the labor market is steadily increasing. Some studies show that gender stereotypes in managerial roles can undermine the authority of female leaders and even lead to men being penalized in women's roles. This situation shows how deeply rooted gender-based prejudices are.

Psychological characteristics such as self-efficacy, ambition, and management of work-life balance play an important role in women's career aspirations. However, these aspirations often clash with external barriers such as the "glass ceiling," discrimination, and the need to coordinate family responsibilities. Nevertheless, the expansion of educational opportunities, the introduction of gender equality policies, and technological progress open new career paths for women and increase their chances of achieving professional success.

In conclusion, to fully support the pursuit of a career in women's professional activities, it is important not only to focus on individual psychological development, but also to develop policies at the societal level that eliminate gender stereotypes, combat discrimination, and promote equal distribution of work and

family responsibilities. Practical recommendations, such as high-level managers' open support for individuals in gender-lowered roles and employers' implementation of standardized performance criteria, will help effectively combat gender-based prejudice. Only through such a comprehensive approach can women fully realize their career potential and make a full contribution to the development of society.

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