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COMPETENCIES OF PEOPLE HOLDING MANAGERIAL POSITIONS IN THE SECTOR GERIATRIC CARE IN GERMANY

SUMMARY

Aim: The purpose of the research is the diagnosis of competencies of people holding managerial positions in the geriatric care sector in Germany.

Methods: Scheitler's concept of competency was employed in this study. The method of in-depth unstructured interviews was also used. The method of qualitative content analysis according to Mayring was applied to evaluate the obtained data.

Results: As a result of the conducted analyses, professional tasks and competencies of people holding managerial positions in the geriatric care sector in Germany were presented.

Discussion:

The research results showed that the tasks of people performing managerial functions in geriatric care in Germany are complex and exceed medical or caregiving tasks. They are related to personnel management, responding to their needs, as well as the needs and expectations of people managing medical facilities. An extremely important task is cooperation with the relatives of the elderly. The research results also revealed the importance of having a wide variety of competencies. The respondents were of the opinion that professional skills are less important and social and personal skills are gaining in importance.

KEYWORDS: *competencies, geriatric care, manager, Germany*

INTRODUCTION

The demands placed on managers in the geriatric care sector in Germany have increased enormously in recent years. The labour market is undergoing transformations and, in particular, the health care system is characterised by significant processes of change. The demographic processes and their consequences are already visible today. One of them is the imbalance between older and younger people. This situation will worsen in the coming years (Appel, 2020, pp. 29-44). According to Eurostat, the old-age dependency ratio for Germany in 2015 was 32.8%, and in 2050 it will increase to 46.3% (Kanios, Bocheńska-Brandt, 2019, p. 237).

The healthcare sector in Germany accounts for around 12% of the gross domestic product (Overödder, Binnewalt, 2021, p. 42). In addition, more than 5.65 million employees have a high status in the health care system in Germany.

According to the Federal Statistical Office, by 2025 there will be a shortage of about 152,000 registered caregivers of the elderly in Germany (Appel, 2020, pp. 29-44). This unfavorable trend in geriatric care poses some serious challenges to people employed in help professions and people holding managerial positions (Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2021, p. 5).

The responsibility for the proper functioning of the geriatric care sector rests primarily with people holding managerial positions. They are the ones who face complex tasks that require special skills from them. The management staff must act strategically in providing high-quality geriatric care to the population. The involvement in the processes of health policy and undertaking marketing and public relations tasks is a particular challenge for the management staff.

THE SPECIFICITY OF GERIATRIC CARE IN GERMANY

According to international and national guidelines the understanding of health care in Germany includes protection against disease, promotion and optimization of health and measures describing individual support. Health care is based on responsibility, a continuous and selfless process of meeting the needs of the patient (Breinbauer, 2020, pp. 44-78).

The care for the elderly includes assistance in maintaining, adapting or restoring seniors with limited fitness to their social, physical and mental functions and life activities. It aims to defend the dignity, rights and welfare of the elderly and their families (Thielhorn, 1999, pp. 27-49; Schwartz, Walter, Siegrist, et.al., 2012, pp. 232-335).

MANAGEMENT IN GERIATRIC CARE

In source literature there is no uniform definition of the concept of management, yet management has various definitions. This concept is used in various scientific disciplines, both in economics and in pedagogy or psychology (Kraus, Kreitenweis, 2020, pp. 8-25).

Management is most often defined as a set of activities carried out towards an organisation's resources and performed with the intention of achieving goals of the organisation in an effective and efficient manner. It is a set of activities (including planning and decision-making, organising, managing people and controlling) directed at the organisation's resources (people, financial, material and informational) and performed with the intention of achieving the organisation's goals in an efficient and effective manner (Griffin, 2005, p.6)

When talking about management, the term leadership is also used very often. However, in the literature they are defined slightly differently (see Balcerek, 2008, p. 52).

Leadership is a conscious and purposeful influence on people (Rosenstil, Regnet, Domsch, 2020, p. 21). Therefore, it can be said that leadership is a social phenomenon and is understood as giving direction to others, solving problems and agreeing on common goals (Frey, Schmalzried, 2013, p. 26). A leader influences people subordinate to him in order to design processes and give them direction (Höhn, Pinnow, Rosenberger, 2017, p. 6).

Leadership as a process is the use of non-coercive influence to shape the goals of a group or organisation, motivate behavior aimed at achieving those goals, and help in establishing the culture of the group or organisation (Griffin, 2005, p. 554).

As one can see, leadership is a process that influences the interaction of people trying to achieve a common goal, which is the relationship between the manager and the employee (Enste, Kurten, Suling, Orth, 2020, p.14).

According to Rosenstil, leadership is a conscious and purposeful influence on people. This means the behavior of a person, in this case a manager, towards other people, as well as their reaction to the person in charge. This impact can only be achieved when specific goals are introduced by the company (Rosenstil, Regnet, Domsch, 2020, p. 21). It can therefore be said that leadership is a social phenomenon and is understood as giving other people

direction, solving problems and agreeing on common goals in order to secure the existence of the company (Frey, Schmalzried, 2013, p.26). The leader influences the people subordinate to him in order to design processes and give them direction (Höhn, Pinnow, Rosenberger, 2017, p. 6).

Managers play many different roles. The literature distinguishes interpersonal roles (representative, leader, liaison), information roles (observer, propagator, spokesperson) and decision-making roles (entrepreneur, person counteracting disruptions, resource administrator, negotiator) (Griffin, 2005, p. 17).

The tasks related to geriatric care increasingly pose a number of challenges to people performing managerial functions. They are divided into areas such as clients, staff, organisation and aspects of the health system. An important aspect is this issue of the quality of care and nursing people in need. The managers are responsible for the introduction and preparation of new employees, interns and other supervisors to the proper performance of the tasks entrusted to them (Schrems, Pfabigan, 2019, pp. 2-29).

The role of a manager in geriatric care differs from that of a manager in other industries. People performing managerial functions simultaneously serve as a nurse or a doctor in relation to patients or a supportive and advisory role for the relatives of an elderly person. Each of these roles requires different skills (Schanz, 2016, p. 191).

In German healthcare facilities communication plays an important part in the area of management, as it is essential for effective and efficient communication with people in various situations. According to Rosenstil and Nerdinger (2011) 90% of the daily management process is based on proper communication (Rosenstil, Regnet, Domsch, 2021, pp. 250-252).

Another important leadership competence is the ability to motivate the staff, as well as the ability to deal with conflicts and the ability to make decisions in the event of disagreement. The task of management is to prevent or minimise conflicts.

People in managerial positions should also have the ability to work in a team understood as the ability and willingness to cooperate with other people in order to achieve common goals. It should be noted here that geriatric care managers often perform care and medical tasks themselves, therefore they have difficulty separating their leadership role from that of a team member. Additionally, managers are accountable for the success

of the team. Applying these requirements to the field of geriatric care means that leadership is a group process, not an individual one, and that teamwork is an important manager skill (Blum & Filser, 2021, p.40).

The individual competencies of a manager must be demonstrated by them in a credible and exemplary manner. A manager's skills are the condition for joint success, and their lack can lead to demotivation, frustration and a decrease in employee productivity (Hintz, 2013, pp. 187-201; Nano, 2018, pp. 13-49).

COMPETENCIES

The concept of *competency* is derived from the Latin word *competere*, which in Roman law meant power or jurisdiction. A Competency describes the disposition to self-organisation as a person's ability to act. This ability is closely related to all the possibilities that a person can use to act effectively (Scheitler, 2005, p. 79). There is an agreement among the majority of researchers that competencies are related to knowledge, understanding and skills (North, Reinhardt, Sieber-Suter, 2018, pp. 36-59).

The special role of competencies in the modern world is related to the ongoing cultural and civilisational changes. Increased competition and mobility, the increasingly team-based nature of work, the need to cooperate with people with different qualifications, mentality, values and standards. All this means that the requirements of employers revolve around the competencies of employees, who include them among the most desirable employees' abilities (Martowska, Matczak, 2013, p.43).

Competencies cannot be identified with skills and knowledge, which can be learned or trained, completely involuntarily, but should be associated with experience, attitudes and values (Wunderer, Grunwald, 1980, p. 62).

A person is considered socially competent if he or she is able to appropriately deal with the specific impact of interpersonal interactions. In aid professions, it is the ability to demonstrate empathy and flexibility in dealing with others (Scholz, 2008, pp. 71-90).

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF OWN RESEARCH

The subject of research in this article are the **competencies of people holding managerial positions in the geriatric care sector in Germany**. This article serves to deepen the existing extent of scientific knowledge on the competency requirements of managers in the geriatric care sector (Fröse, Naake, Arnold, 2019, pp. 3-49).

The research purpose is to diagnose the competencies of people holding managerial positions in the geriatric care sector in Germany.

The main research problem is the question:

- What competencies do managers in the geriatric care sector in Germany have?

Specific problems were formulated as follows:

1. What professional tasks do managers in the geriatric care sector in Germany have to fulfill?
2. What types of competencies should a person in a managerial position in the geriatric care sector in Germany have?

METHOD, TECHNIQUE AND RESEARCH TOOLS

The research was carried out in the qualitative research strategy. The research method applied was in-depth free-form interviews. S. Misoch emphasizes that qualitative expert interviews do not focus on people themselves, but on making them act as a special carrier of knowledge (Misoch, 2019, pp. 2-16).

For this reason, the expert interview was chosen as a qualitative research method. This research is based on Philip Mayring's qualitative content analysis. The qualitative analysis of content presents the most important features. The advantage of qualitative social research is that it analyses the material step by step in a strictly methodologically controlled manner (Mayring, 2002, p. 114). An important step in qualitative analysis of content by Philipp Mayring is the division of work stages into the analysis process. The advantage of this qualitative analysis of content is that the material is gradually analysed or divided into units

that can be processed one by one (Mayring, 2010, p.65). In relation to qualitative analysis of content, P. Mayring distinguishes three basic forms of interpretation such as summarisation, exploration and structuring (Mayring, 2008, p.58)

ORGANISATION AND COURSE OF RESEARCH

The research was conducted in January 2023 via telephone. It was conducted by one of the authors of this publication in person. The duration of the interview lasted from 15 to 20 minutes. Consent for recording was obtained from all the experts. Five expert interviews were conducted. A purposive sampling was used. The criterion for the selection of research subjects was having many years of professional experience in geriatric care, employment in a managerial position in the health and geriatric care sector as well as having experience in human resource management. All people selected for the study were people who had been cooperating with FOM Hochschule Hannover in Germany for many years.

The interviews were documented with an audio recording and then transcribed. The transcription was literal, not phonetic.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS

SUBJECT NO. 1

Head of the geriatric facility at the University of Lower Saxony.

Male, age: 45. In 1997, he completed a three-year training course giving the qualifications of a certified geriatric caregiver.

In the course of his professional activity, he was promoted to a specialist in managerial tasks in nursing. He holds 6 years of experience working as a nursing specialist at the Medical School in Lower Saxony. In 2017, he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in medical and therapeutic sciences. For 25 years he has held managerial positions in various care facilities.

SUBJECT NO. 2

Supervisor and an expert in the field of care.

Female, age: 63 . Having graduated from nursing studies abroad, she undergone additional training in ward management, body therapy and as a supervisor. She has 38 years of experience as a lecturer in management training and as a supervisor in nursing homes and care facilities. She also works as a geriatric nurse.

SUBJECT NO. 3

A Physician and healthcare consultant.

Male, age: 55 years. A physician, masseur and paramedic. He held a managerial position at the Orthopedic Clinic in Westphalia, and worked as an advisor to the Paracelsus corporation in Munich. He is the managing director of the clinic in Munich. He has been working in the field of management consulting and coaching as well as training for managers since 2022. He is responsible for organisational development, leadership and coaching at the University of Applied Sciences and the International Vocational College in Osnabrück.

SUBJECT NO. 4

Coach and supervisor.

Male, age: 64. A graduate of pedagogical and legal studies in Saxony, as well as undergraduate and graduate studies in supervision and management consulting in Lower Saxony. He organised courses for managers. He has been working as a freelance coach in the areas of supervision, organisational consulting and coaching for 22 years.

SUBJECT NO. 5

Head of outpatient nursing.

Female, age: 43. She completed nursing studies and training in management tasks in nursing. She has 7 years of experience in a managerial position as a manager of a Nursing Home with approximately 110 beds in Westphalia.

RESULTS OF OWN RESEARCH

The role of the manager in geriatric care has undergone major changes in recent years (see Regnet & Schackmann, 1991, p. 50). These people alternately assume the role of a manager, employee and a mediator. This division of roles between different levels leads to further requirements that managers must meet (Rosenstiel, Regnet, Domsch, 2014, pp. 68-74; Rouleau, Balogun, 2011, p. 972).

The first analysed issue were the professional tasks of people holding managerial positions in the geriatric care sector. Based on the information obtained through the interviews it can be concluded that in addition to standard tasks managers have to perform many additional activities that are specific to a given position and pose numerous challenges to managers.

The respondents' statements are presented below.

Without principles, you cannot lead in the long run. Employees have different personalities, different desires and needs, and nursing managers must try to be fair to everyone, treat everyone equally. I am one of the people responsible for the management of our geriatric facility and I also have to communicate unpopular decisions to my employees, and on the other hand I am also the first advocate for my employees. It's quite a challenge. (Subject no. 1, Male, aged 45)

Management tasks are of high quality. Due to the different tasks, which are partially related to organisational structures and roles, caregivers' managers are often find themselves between the rock and a hard place, which adds to the challenge. Managers often find themselves in a conflict of roles, which makes them being caught in the middle, which I find very demanding. (Subject no. 2, Female, aged 63.)

The tasks of a manager, of course, vary greatly, and when it comes to roles, there are many roles. Management appears to be a complex topic, important on many levels and includes activities such as: management, i.e. team building, selection of personnel, personal development of an individual. To me, the tasks of a caregiving manager are primarily to ensure and control the quality of geriatric care. (Subject No 3, Male, aged 55).

The most important tasks are in any case the whole structure, schedule design, personnel management, economic management and communication. Moreover,

there is the responsibility for the employees, the well-being of the patients and the responsibility to the employer. I have patients, I have to keep an eye on them, I have to keep an eye on my employees, I have to keep an eye on their relatives, I have to keep an eye on myself. The shortage of caregivers is also a big challenge. (Subject no. 4, Male, aged 64).

For me, managerial tasks mean taking care of the staff and then using them correctly and building their strengths. Another task, in addition to the classic tasks of managing employees, in connection to the current situation related to the shortage of qualified employees, is primarily the ability to cope with rapidly changing conditions, uncertainty and complex problems. (Subject no. 5, Female, aged 43).

The statements of the surveyed managers indicate that performing managerial functions is complicated and inhomogeneous. A manager's work does not follow any orderly, systematic pattern. On the contrary, it is a work full of uncertainty, changes, discontinuities and fragmented activities.

The respondents also claim that self-organisation and self-management as well as persistence have great importance in the personnel management process.

Other tasks are also self-management and self-organisation. High self-esteem is also very important. (Subject no. 1, Male, aged 45).

So, of course, self-esteem is also important, not to overestimate yourself and to have the ability to self-reflect. I also think that a high level of self-questioning is extremely important. (Subject no. 2, Female, aged 63).

I personally believe that managers should be resistant to stress. (Subject no. 3, Male, aged 55).

In addition, the respondents paid attention to the task of human resources managing, leading a team of people, as well as the motivation of managers to engage in work. Aspects such as interest in leadership and employees, and visions that a manager should have, were emphasized as well.

A leader must have the will to lead, that is, he must want to lead. (Subject no. 4, Male, aged 64).

In fact, the manager must be a role model. Such a person must have a vision and a willingness to run the facility. That has to be a good vision, not only on paper, but developed and implemented by real employees. (Subject no. 5, Female, aged 43).

Moreover, all the respondents expect managers to act primarily in the interests of employees, in addition to their own clearly defined roles.

It is very important that the employees are treated equally and fairly and that managers take a serious interest in them (their employees). (Subject no. 1, Male, aged 45).

To be successful in caregiving, you need managers who are interested in their employees. A manager should focus on others and pay attention to their individual needs. It is very important to support employees, no matter what level they are at in the hierarchy. (Subject no. 2, Female, aged 63).

In the opinion of the surveyed experts, managers should like what they do, perform their tasks with passion and conviction. Based on all the respondents' statements, it is clear that the manager should win employees over, inspire them for themselves, but also for the success of the company.

The understanding of individuals in organisations is a very important challenge for every manager. Managers who demonstrate attitudes of commitment to work are creative and able to somehow bind employees with the organisation. They can contribute to strengthening the employee's bond with the organisation.

It's all about doing meaningful work in terms of content and convincing a wide range of people to do so. (Subject no. 3, Male, aged 55).

In terms of professional requirements, respondents employed in the residential care area also indicate that they are expected to possess business management skills in addition to specialist nursing knowledge.

The manager must be good at his or her leadership, but at the same time he or she must think economically. Well, I guess it's hard to separate competencies, qualifications and skills. (Subject no. 4, Male, aged 64).

The caregiving skills of the manager should be strong, but they should also have business knowledge. The manager must be professional, down to earth, honest and humane. It's not easy to find people with all these skills. (Subject no. 5, Female, aged 43).

The second analysed issue is the category of key competencies. This category describes the most important competencies that a person in a managerial position should possess (Kröll, 2020, pp. 99-138). These include: specialist, methodological, social and personal competencies (Wagner, 2018, p.21; Zoller, Nussbaumer, 2019, p.314; Moser, 2018, p.32).

Personal competencies which include all personal characteristics of a given individual are also important (Schanz, 2016, p. 191).

Taking into consideration the importance of the above-mentioned types of competencies, the surveyed experts were asked about their importance for effective leadership. As a result of the analysis of the respondents' statements it can be concluded that a set of different types of competencies is important for effective leadership, and not a single specific competency.

In my opinion, not a single competency is crucial, but the sum of all competencies, therefore it is essential for me to develop all key competencies. Communication is a very important skill. Managers must be able to communicate with others. (Subject no. 1, Male, aged 45).

I think that social skills are very important in management, but methodological and professional competencies are equally important. In my daily work, I can't separate them. Also, communication skills play an important role for a good manager. (Subject no. 2, Female, aged 63).

The analysis of the statements showed that numerous sets of competencies, but also personality traits, are important in the leadership process. The literature emphasises that traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness,

extraversion and openness help in performing managerial functions in a professional manner.

The respondents also paid attention to the priority of competencies, and also pointed to communication skills as important from the point of view of employment in the care sector.

I believe that in a managerial position, technical competencies play a subordinate role, because it is the responsibility of specialists who have the appropriate technical skills at a high level. If there are no such experts, you can hire professional staff. Communication, on the other hand, is important in almost every situation. (Subject no. 3, Male, aged 55).

Technical skills, I would say, are put at the back, because we believe that techniques can be learned or experts can be hired. However, social and personal skills must be possessed in caregiving. (Subject no. 4, Male, aged 64).

I consider everything that has to do with employee leadership to be the most important. If the manager is fearful, regressive and low in communication, there is a high probability that leading and directing other people will not be successful. (Subject no. 5, Female, aged 43).

In order to achieve the intended effects an effective manager should be characterised by the ability to work in a team. A manager should be able to inspire people, win them over and motivate them to work.

A manager must have a mission to encourage employees to think independently and creatively, as well as be able to approach employees individually. (Subject no. 5, Female, aged 43).

If I want to achieve my goal as a manager, I need to have the skills to attract people and win them over, otherwise team leadership doesn't work. (Subject no. 2, Female, aged 63).

A good manager must take responsibility for the team's actions and also consider mentoring, which consists of being able to see the potential in others, use it and develop it. (Subject no. 5, Female, aged 43).

The surveyed experts also pointed to the ability of solving problems and managing conflict as an important element of the management process. In the respondents' opinion an honest analysis of the occurring factors, anticipation of the situation and the ability to find optimal solutions play an important role in the position of a manager.

The ability to deal with conflict is an integral part of the manager's job. I need a lot of decision-making ability. Oh well. I need to be able to make decisions in uncertain situations, and that means I take risks. To be able to make decisions, I need to be assertive. (Subject no. 2, Female, aged 63).

Stress is in sameway incorporated in the work of managers in the caregiving sector. Working with people requires direct contact with them, their frustration or aggression, as well as a sense of workload pressure. If managers are not immune to stressful situations, this can lead to some difficulties in fulfilling their role in geriatric care.

As one can see, managers also need self-reflection skills. This competency helps them to free themselves from excessive demands on themselves. Managers must be able to admit that when in doubt, they cannot do everything.

All respondents perceive the requirements for leadership abilities and the skills a manager must have as very broad. In practice, individualised leadership and the ability to adapt to the current situation are required.

CONCLUSIONS

Human resources management is a relevant and current topic that is important in any organisation. Effective and, above all, good leadership requires specific leadership competencies. Only then one can have satisfied and efficient employees and ensure the quality of work.

Research results indicate that the tasks of people holding managerial functions in geriatric care in Germany are complex and exceed medical or caregiving tasks. It is a series of tasks related to personnel management, responding to their needs as well as the needs and expectations of people managing medical facilities. An extremely important task is the cooperation with the relatives of the elderly.

The research results also revealed the importance of having a wide variety of competencies. Somewhat surprising information was that currently, according to experts, professional skills are becoming less important (which does not mean that they should not be taken into account), and social and personal skills are gaining importance.

Research has also shown that employees look for qualities such as honesty and fairness in their managers. The majority of respondents indicated that people holding managerial positions should be characterised by authenticity, honesty and the ability to reflect on various issues and situations, and they should also be able to cope with stress and pressure, because it is difficult to meet expectations from below and above, especially when caught in the middle.

The undertaken research seems to be important due to the current staff situation in the geriatric care sector in Germany. Social services, such as care for the elderly, are basic activities without which the cohesion and functioning of society would be difficult. Their social importance in Germany is high (Kanios, Bocheńska-Brandt, 2020, p. 152).

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