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Motivations for a managerial career: A study with lawyers from the Attorney General's National Treasury Office

Motivações para a carreira gerencial: um estudo com advogados da Procuradoria-Geral da Fazenda Nacional
Motivaciones para la carrera gerencial: Un estudio con abogados de la Procuraduría General del Tesoro Nacional

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Abstract

Research objective: This study aimed to investigate the motivations for a career transition from a technical position to a managerial role in the Brazilian public administration. More specifically, research with lawyers from the Attorney General's Office of the National Treasury (PGFN) was conducted to identify the relative importance of different motivators in the decision to assume a managerial role in the organization.

Theoretical framework: The theoretical support for the study were self-determination theory and the literature on career transition, with focus on intra-organizational upward mobility.

Methodology: After a qualitative stage, in which a set of seven motivators was identified – possibility to influence the organization's directions and strategies, openness to develop new and challenging projects, telework, clarity of attributions, support staff, management training, and financial rewards –, conjoint and cluster analysis techniques were applied, with the participation of 515 PGFN lawyers.

Results: The conjoint analysis, which shows the relative importance of the factors, revealed that the most important are the possibility to influence the organization's directions and strategies and teleworking. The cluster analysis pointed to three different groups, called protagonists, cautious and pragmatics.

Originality: The study applied conjoint and cluster analysis techniques, which are relatively scarce in the literature on the subject.

Theoretical and practical contributions: This research contributes to the literature on public management and career transition, by addressing the factors that motivate public servants in the transition from a technical role to a managerial position. From an applied perspective, the results can guide the design of policies to increase the attractiveness of management positions within the Brazilian public administration, including encouraging greater participation of women in these positions.

Keywords: Mid-level bureaucrat, Career transition, Managerial career, Motivation, Self-determination theory.

Resumo

Objetivo da pesquisa: Este estudo teve por objetivo investigar as motivações para a transição de carreira de uma posição técnica para uma função gerencial, no contexto da administração pública brasileira. Mais especificamente, foram pesquisados advogados da Procuradoria-Geral da Fazenda Nacional (PGFN) e buscou-se identificar a importância relativa de diferentes fatores na decisão pela assunção de uma função gerencial na organização.

Enquadramento teórico: O trabalho tomou como pressuposto a teoria motivacional da autodeterminação e a literatura sobre transição de carreiras, com foco na mobilidade vertical intraorganizacional.

Metodologia: Após a etapa qualitativa, em que foi identificado um conjunto de sete motivadores – possibilidade de influenciar rumos e estratégias da organização; abertura para o desenvolvimento de projetos novos e desafiadores; teletrabalho; clareza de atribuições; pessoal de apoio; capacitação em gestão e incentivo financeiro –, foram aplicadas técnicas de análise conjunta e de *cluster* em uma amostra de 515 advogados da PGFN.

Resultados: A análise conjunta, que permite identificar a importância relativa dos fatores, revelou que os motivos mais relevantes são a possibilidade de influenciar rumos e estratégias da organização e o teletrabalho. Já a análise de *cluster* apontou três perfis de procuradores, denominados protagonistas, cautelosos e pragmáticos.

Originalidade: O trabalho faz uso das técnicas de análise conjunta e de *cluster*, relativamente pouco utilizadas em pesquisas sobre o tema.

Contribuições teóricas e práticas: Esta pesquisa contribui para a literatura de gestão pública e transição de carreira, ao abordar os fatores que motivam servidores públicos a buscar a transição de uma função técnica para uma posição gerencial. De uma perspectiva aplicada, os resultados podem orientar o desenho de políticas que ampliem a atratividade de cargos de gestão no âmbito da administração pública brasileira, incluindo o estímulo à maior participação de mulheres nessas posições.

Palavras-chave: Burocrata de médio escalão, Transição de carreira, Carreira gerencial, Motivação, Teoria da autodeterminação.

Resumen

Objetivo de la investigación: Este estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar las motivaciones para la transición de carrera de un puesto técnico a un rol gerencial en el contexto de la administración pública brasileña. Más específicamente, se investigó a abogados de la Procuraduría General del Tesoro Nacional (PGFN) y se buscó identificar la importancia relativa de diferentes factores en la decisión de asumir un rol directivo en la organización.

Marco teórico: El trabajo tomó como soporte teórico la teoría motivacional de la autodeterminación y la literatura sobre transición de carrera, con foco en la movilidad vertical intraorganizacional.

Metodología: Después de una etapa cualitativa en la que se identificó un conjunto de siete motivadores – posibilidad de influir en las direcciones y estrategias de la organización, apertura al desarrollo de proyectos nuevos y desafiantes, teletrabajo, claridad de atribuciones, personal de apoyo, capacitación gerencial, y incentivo financiero – se aplicaron técnicas de análisis conjunto y de conglomerados con la participación de 515 abogados de la PGFN.

Resultados: El análisis conjunto, que permite identificar la importancia relativa de los factores, reveló que los más importantes son la posibilidad de influir en las direcciones y estrategias de la organización y el teletrabajo. El análisis de conglomerados apuntó a tres perfiles, denominados protagónicos, cautelosos y pragmáticos.

Originalidad: El trabajo hace uso de técnicas de análisis conjunto y de *cluster*, relativamente poco utilizadas en investigaciones sobre el tema.

Aportes teóricos y prácticos: Esta investigación contribuye a la literatura sobre gestión pública y transición de carrera, al abordar los factores que motivan a los servidores públicos en la transición de un rol técnico a un cargo gerencial. Desde una perspectiva aplicada, los resultados pueden orientar el diseño de políticas que aumenten el atractivo de los puestos directivos en la administración pública brasileña, incluso fomentando una mayor participación de las mujeres en estos puestos.

Palabras clave: Burócrata de escalón intermedio, Transición de carrera, Carrera directiva, Motivación, Teoría de la autodeterminación.

INTRODUCTION

The speed of social and economic change, both globally and nationally, has imposed tremendous challenges on public and private organizations (OECD, 2019a; Rocha, Passador & Shinyashiki, 2017; Stillman, 2017). In the case of public organizations, it has become increasingly pressing to offer services that meet the needs of society, which, in turn, requires trained and motivated professionals (Christensen, Paarlberg & Perry, 2017; OECD, 2019a; 2019b; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In Brazil, the public sector has undertaken efforts to promote managers' performance but still lacks structured policies to encourage professionalization and leadership qualification (OECD, 2019b). This is an important gap, especially considering the vital role played by high- and mid-level leaders. In the latter case, the mid-level bureaucrat (MLB) figure stands out. These professionals occupy managerial, middle management, coordination, or supervision positions, all of which are key components for the public sector to respond to the growing demands of society (Cavalcante & Lotta, 2015; Lotta, Pires & Oliveira, 2014; Novato, Najberg & Lotta, 2020).

Brazilian public organizations do not have a specific cadre of managers because the selection processes for entry into the respective careers are geared toward the target areas, as is the case with the Attorney for the National Treasury; Attorney for Federal Agencies; Attorney for Brazil; judges; labor and federal revenue auditors; financial auditors and analysts, among others. However, since organizations need managers, these professionals, who presumably joined the public service to work in technical careers, eventually take on managerial positions.

This change represents a type of career transition that involves vertical mobility within the same organization, that is, intra-organizational upward mobility (Laud & Johnson, 2012; Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). Conducting this transition involves challenges both for the professionals – associated with the risks and benefits of the new responsibilities – and the organization, which is required to develop policies and practices to attract, qualify, and retain staff in such positions (Carmeli, Shalom, & Weisberg, 2007; Laud & Johnson, 2012).

In the case of the National Treasury Attorney's Office (PGFN), which is the locus of this research, the transition of public attorneys to managerial roles occurs through an internal selection process. The low candidate/vacancy ratio in these selections – identified by the analysis of 145 managerial selection processes that took place between 2017 and 2019 (PGFN, 2019) – highlights the low interest of attorneys in managerial roles and raises the following research question: what would motivate attorneys to take on a managerial position at the PGFN?

Therefore, this study investigates the motivations behind the career transition from a technical to a managerial position. The research was developed in two stages, one qualitative and the other quantitative. The first allowed us to identify seven relevant attributes to such a transition. In the quantitative stage, which is the focus of this article, we sought to evaluate the relative importance of these factors on the decision to assume a managerial role in this specific organization.

Identifying the factors motivating intra-organizational vertical mobility in public administration is a relevant contribution to the literature on public management and career transition. In the first case, this study seeks to fill a gap in research focused on the motivational dynamics of civil servants regarding the assumption of managerial roles (Bresnen, Hodgson, Bailey, Hassard, & Hyde, 2019; Christensen et al., 2017; Perry & Vandenabeele, 2015; Ritz, Brewer, & Neumann, 2016). According to Bresnen et al. (2019), more knowledge needs to be accumulated about professionals (e.g., physicians, attorneys, and educators) who take on managerial positions, especially in public organizations. Additionally, research focusing on these professionals has predominantly addressed aspects concerning identity construction (identity work) in the transition process (Bresnen et al., 2019; Spehar, Frich & Kjekshus, 2015) and the challenges they face working in managerial roles (Park & Faerman, 2019). As a result, the factors that motivate this transition remain under-researched, and this study seeks to fill this gap.

Regarding career transition, this paper explores the factors that promote interest in a managerial position in Brazilian public administration, which is a relatively under-researched locus. A review of the national literature on administration revealed the absence of academic works addressing this topic. Rocha, Martho, Lessa, and Messias (2021) analyzed the Brazilian and international literature on first-time managers, and their results showed that the only national study focused on managers from private organizations. In turn, Novato et al. (2020) pointed out the scarcity of national studies with the participation of MLBs.

From an applied perspective, the results can guide the design of policies and practices that increase the attractiveness of these managerial roles among the technical staff, which would allow choosing more qualified and motivated professionals to perform these roles, hence contributing to their effectiveness and to the organization's performance (Cavalcante & Lotta, 2015; Currie & Procter, 2005; De Vos, Jacobs & Verbruggen, 2021; Howlett, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is structured in three parts. First, we briefly address the role of the mid-level bureaucrat (MLB) in public administration. Next, we discuss the literature on work motivation, focusing on self-determination theory, which served as the theoretical framework for this research. The last part is dedicated to the literature on career transition, emphasizing vertical mobility and motivations for a managerial career.

The Mid-level Bureaucrat

The mid-level bureaucrat (MLB) represents the civil servant occupying an intermediate-level managerial position and is situated between the top and the bottom of the organizational structure (Lotta et al., 2014). More specifically, MLBs are located between the top of the Executive Branch (secretaries and ministers) and the civil servants who do not hold provisionally appointed positions (Cavalcante & Lotta, 2015; Cavalcante, Camões & Knop, 2015; Silva, 2015). In the context under study, this role is personified by the National Treasury Attorneys (PFNs) who hold managerial positions.

The literature has highlighted the importance of these actors for organizations and the State, given their power to influence the development and implementation of organizational strategies and public policies (Cavalcante & Lotta, 2015; Currie & Procter, 2005; Howlett, 2011; Novato et al., 2020). Because of their position in the organizational hierarchy, MLBs play a dual role: technical-managerial, when they work on the implementation of strategies and public policies coming from the top; and technical-political, when they relate to the agents who work on the execution of the target-activity, and with the top, negotiating means and resources to implement the processes in which they are involved (Lotta et al., 2014).

Studies suggest that the demands on these professionals have become increasingly complex, as they involve the management of scarce resources, dissatisfied employees, bureaucracy, legal apparatus disconnected from current needs, and clientelistic and patrimonialist practices that hinder the development of the institutions in which they work (Cavalcante, Lotta & Yamada, 2018; Marques, 2011). Thus, studies on the motivations to work in such contexts have gained momentum, as discussed below.

Work Motivations

Different theoretical perspectives have addressed work motivations (Kanfer, Frese & Johnson, 2017; Rodrigues, Reis & Gonçalves, 2014). According to Kanfer et al. (2017), the skills individuals develop, the occupations and careers they choose, and how they allocate resources – including time and effort – are all influenced by motivational dynamics.

In this study, we adopted the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017; 2019) as a theoretical framework. According to this theory, people are driven by three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy involves regulating or controlling one's experiences and actions to

reflect one's true interests and values. In turn, competence refers to the need to act effectively and to have mastery and control over what one does. Finally, relatedness refers to social connections, including the need to belong, feel valued, and contribute to a group, organization, or community (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Another central aspect of the self-determination theory is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; 2019). According to the authors, intrinsic motivation relates to the previous three dimensions and is defined as "the spontaneous propensity of people to take an interest in their inner and outer worlds in an attempt to engage, interact, master, and understand" (Ryan & Deci, 2019, p. 117). Therefore, intrinsic motivation concerns the nature of work, including idealistic or ethical purposes, enjoyment and identification with the activity in question, and the pursuit of personal and professional development. In turn, extrinsic motivation is associated with receiving some external reward, and the performance of the activity is based on valuing the outcome more than the activity itself (Breugh, Ritz & Alfes, 2018; Klein & Mascarenhas, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Regarding the public sector, one strand states that intrinsic motivation predominates among public servants (Dixit, 2002; Lee & Wilkins, 2011; Rodrigues et al., 2014; Weibel, Rost & Osterloh, 2010). However, another strand understands that intrinsic and extrinsic factors are equally relevant and considers that both can attract individuals to public service or a particular position in the organization (Bright, 2008; Dal Bó, Finan & Rossi, 2013; Lee & Wilkins, 2011; Perry & Vandenabeele, 2015).

These results point to the need to further research aimed at understanding the motivational dynamics of public servants, including the incentive for entering a public career (Asseburg, Hattke, Hensel, Homberg & Vogel, 2020; Dal Bó et al., 2013) and assuming a managerial role, as discussed below.

Career Transition and the Motivation for Managerial Careers

Career transition, or mobility, refers to a change of position or role (De Vos et al., 2021; Forrier, Sels & Stynen, 2009; Ng, Sorensen, Eby & Feldman, 2007). According to the categorization proposed by Feldman and Ng (2007), career mobility can take three distinct forms: job change, when one's responsibilities or hierarchical level change; organizational change; or occupational change, which is associated with new routines, new skills, and a new work environment. Mobility can also be described as internal or external. In the former case, the tasks and responsibilities change, but the individual continues to work for the same employer, whereas external mobility involves a change of organization (Bidwell & Mollick, 2015). Internal mobility can be horizontal or lateral, when the activities performed change but not the hierarchical level occupied, or vertical (upward mobility), when the employee receives a promotion and rises to a higher hierarchical level (De Vos et al., 2021; Laud & Johnson, 2012; Rigotti, Korek & Otto, 2014).

This study addresses the career transition from a technical to a managerial position within the same organization, thus characterizing it as vertical internal mobility. When workers move to a managerial position, they change the hierarchical level and take on new responsibilities, which involve different challenges and require new skills (Bresnen et al., 2019; Park & Faerman, 2019; Spehar et al., 2015). In the case of the PGFN, there may also be a change of workplace when, for example, the professional in question must leave the sectional unit located in their state to assume a coordination position in the central agency.

Studies point out that the decision to make a career change depends not only on the ease with which the individual can carry out the transition and on their willingness to change, but also on the attractiveness of the new position (Ashforth, 2001; Asseburg et al., 2020; Forrier et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2007). According to Feldman and Ng (2007), an organization's incentive and compensation policies influence career mobility to the extent that they make managerial positions more attractive and positively impact the decision-making of those considering making the transition. According to the literature, many factors may motivate workers to seek career transition, including accepting managerial positions, as discussed below.

Financial incentives are a relevant aspect that can stimulate the decision for a career transition. For example, the experiment conducted by Dal Bó et al. (2013) showed that monetary incentives could attract more qualified workers to an organization. Furthermore, the literature review conducted by Ng et al.

(2007) points out that one of the primary appeals for vertical internal mobility is precisely the financial gain associated with the new position.

The possibility of performing a job with higher status and responsibilities is also relevant for this type of career transition (Ng et al., 2007; Rigotti et al., 2014). In the case of civil servants, factors related to the nature of the activity, such as the perceived relevance of the function and a sense of purpose, have been shown to be very important (Frank & Lewis, 2004). According to Weibel et al. (2010), civil servants often report interesting and challenging activities as stimulating to perform their duties. Ramos and Joia (2000) support this line of thinking as they identified that the desire for change is closely linked to the search for interesting and different activities and challenging experiences.

Training and development initiatives aim to provide employees with knowledge and skills to perform the tasks inherent to the position they will occupy (Magalhães, Oliveira, Cunha, Lima & Campos, 2010; Tasca, Ensslin & Ensslin, 2012). Generally, such initiatives bring positive impacts for the organization and the workers, including higher performance, satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Esteban-Lloret, Aragón-Sánchez & Carrasco-Hernández, 2018; Ocen, Francis & Angundaru, 2017; Silva & Mourão, 2011). Jakobsen, Jakobsen, and Serritzlew (2019) showed that training positively influences productivity, organizational loyalty, and motivation to the extent that employees perceive it as an investment by the organization in themselves, as well as broadening their perception of competence, in line with self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017; 2019). The study by Finkel, Grøn & Hughes (2021) pointed out that leadership training plays a vital role in the upward trajectory of public managers, and this effect tends to be more significant among women. Therefore, training and management development initiatives can contribute to the employee's motivation to assume managerial functions.

Perceived organizational support involves the workers' assessment of the treatment they receive from the organization in return for their efforts (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). When favorable, this perception strengthens the employee's involvement with the organization and may be reflected in greater motivation and effort to achieve organizational goals (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to Oliveira-Castro, Pilati, and Borges-Andrade (1999), perceived organizational support includes dimensions related to organizational practices, such as work processes, encouragement to participate, availability of guidance and material support to work, and promotion and reward practices.

In a study on the organizational aspects affecting the work of public managers of an institution of the Federal Judiciary, Marques (2011) concluded that the provision of adequate resources and qualified personnel facilitated their work. In turn, Novato et al. (2020) also identified the importance of institutional support for the work of MLBs at a public university. Similarly, Sullivan and Al Ariss (2022) propose that the decision for a career transition is positively influenced by access to resources. Considering these elements, having a support staff may encourage the assumption of managerial positions.

The relationship between personal and work life seems increasingly intertwined, thus challenging the worker to balance these two dimensions (Oltramari & Grisci, 2014). The possibility of conflict is reciprocal; that is, work responsibilities can affect family life, and family obligations can conversely interfere with work (Oliveira, Cavazotte & Paciello, 2013). Work-family conflicts tend to be exacerbated among executives and managers (Lima, Carvalho Neto & Tanure, 2012), even more so in the case of women, who are typically responsible for performing most household chores (Hirata, 2018; Kalysh, Kulik & Perera, 2016).

In this scenario, flexible work arrangements such as flexible work hours and workplace flexibility can benefit workers, thus favoring both work-family balance (Kalysh et al., 2016; Possenriede, Hassink & Plantenga, 2016; Wheatley, 2017) and a sense of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Some studies have associated the adoption of flexible work arrangements with a high degree of job satisfaction, higher organizational commitment, and lower turnover intention (Braun, Vierheller, & Oliveira, 2016; Ceribeli & Mignacca, 2019), although disadvantages associated with teleworking have also been identified, such as decreased interaction with coworkers and lack of visibility (Rafalski & Andrade, 2015). In the case of PGFN, a geographically dispersed organization, access to telework may motivate professionals to assume managerial positions.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the PGFN, a senior management body of the Attorney General's Office (AGU), which has, among other assignments, the duty of representing the Federal Government in tax cases and the judicial and administrative collection of tax and non-tax credits, as well as performing advisory and consulting activities with the Ministry of Economy (Brazil, 1993). These activities are performed by National Treasury Attorneys (PFNs), who are admitted after a competitive public examination requiring a law degree and corresponding practice.

The PGFN does not have a specific managerial staff, so attorneys specialized in a technical area (legal and fiscal) are required to work as managers, albeit temporarily, sometimes with little or no training or experience in the area. There are more than 20 different managerial positions in the organization, including provisional positions in the Senior Management and Advisory Group (DAS) and positions of trust called Executive Branch Provisional Functions (FCPE).

Data for 145 manager selection processes conducted between 2017 and 2019 show that the applicant-to-vacancy ratio was 1.46, and in some cases, there were no candidates at all (PGFN, 2019), indicating the organization's difficulty in attracting those interested in taking on managerial positions – a scenario that inspired this research. To identify the valued aspects, we chose to conduct a qualitative and exploratory study, which, in turn, served as the basis for the quantitative research, the focus of this article.

Qualitative Stage

In the qualitative stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 National Treasury attorneys, chosen by the criteria of convenience and accessibility. In the selection process, we sought a degree of variety that would allow us to capture the perceptions of the universe of PGFN attorneys. Attorneys of both genders were interviewed (seven women and seven men), of varying ages and tenure, from different states, and with various levels and lengths of working experience in managerial positions. The interviews were transcribed and submitted to content analysis (Bardin, 2016) with Atlas.ti software support.

At the end of the analysis process, the aspects identified that served as the basis for the quantitative stage were: 1) offer of training for the new function; 2) financial incentive, represented by the increase in the bonus payout for the managerial position; 3) possibility to influence the organization's directions and strategies; 4) openness to develop new and challenging projects; 5) teleworking; 6) role clarity; and 7) support from the organization, in the form of support staff in sufficient numbers and with the necessary qualifications.

Quantitative Stage

In conjoint analysis, respondents evaluate hypothetical groups that combine multiple attributes, which allows for estimating the relative influence of each in the choice process (Orme, 2010; Raghavarao, Wiley & Chitturi, 2010). This methodology is widely used in marketing to identify consumer preferences (Rao & Pilli, 2014), and has also been applied in other fields, including leadership (Tavares, Sobral, Goldszmidt & Araújo, 2018) and human resources management (Guillot-Soulez & Soulez, 2014).

In building the sets of attributes, the seven attributes identified in the qualitative stage were considered, six with two levels and one with three, as shown in Figure 1. Regarding the bonus payout, 15% or 30% percentages were chosen to represent real possibilities since a percentage higher than 30% would not be feasible, given the current scenario of austerity in public spending, and a percentage lower than 15% would be unattractive.

Figure 1: Attributes and their levels.

N	Attributes	Description	Levels	
1	Training	Offer of specific management training	2	With and without
2	Bonus	Percent increase in bonus payout	2	15% and 30%
3	Influence	Possibility to influence the organization's directions and strategies	2	With and without
4	Openness	Openness to develop new and challenging projects	2	With and without
5	Teleworking	Possibility of performing the managerial position remotely	2	With and without
6	Explicitness	Role clarity	2	With and without
7	Support	Support staff (sufficient quantity and adequate qualification)	3	Quantity, quality, and both

Considering the number of attributes and their levels, the factorial design developed with the help of R software resulted in a minimum number of combinations of nine and a maximum of 14. Thus, we opted for the smallest number of combinations to avoid fatiguing and discouraging respondents (Orme, 2010; Raghavarao et al., 2010).

In an additive model, the utility of an alternative for the decision maker is the sum of the utilities at each level of the attributes of an alternative. The utilities and the weight of each attribute level (partworths) were obtained by estimating the betas of a multiple linear regression, where the dependent variable is the score from 0 to 10 assigned by respondents for the specific combination of attributes, and the independent variables are dummy variables identifying which attribute levels were evaluated. This model served as the basis for measuring the relative importance of each attribute (Tables 1 and 2).

In addition, cluster analysis was applied to evaluate possible participant differences concerning the aspects valued. This technique allows the segmentation of data into homogeneous groups so that members of the same group are similar to one another and different from members of other groups. This study adopted the K-means clustering algorithm (Majhi & Biswal, 2018; Raghavarao et al., 2010).

Data Collection

The data were collected using a questionnaire prepared on the Qualtrics platform. The first part contained the set with nine combinations of the seven attributes. In each combination, the participant was asked to assign a score from 0 (no interest) to 10 (total interest), according to how much the set of presented attributes would influence their interest in assuming a managerial position at PGFN. In the second part, participants' sociodemographic data were collected. It is worth noting that the set of attributes was presented randomly to avoid the order of presentation influencing the results. In addition, the questionnaire was pre-tested with five career members, which resulted in the improvement of the instrument in terms of clarity and presentation.

Invitations to participate in the study containing the link to the questionnaire were sent to the PFNs base through the organization's institutional e-mail, on the PGFN Conecta website, which is the organization's institutional communication channel, as well as through the instant messaging service WhatsApp, in several groups consisting solely of PFNs.

The target population comprises 2,126 PFNs (PGFN, 2020). Eight hundred fifty-four (854) attorneys accessed the questionnaire, but 297 incomplete responses and 42 improperly filled-out responses were excluded. Thus, the final sample totaled 515 participants (24% response rate). Of the participants, 42.5% are female, aged 41 years on average, with 12.3 years of average tenure in the PGFN, and 51% have never held a managerial position. There were participants from all the states of Brazil, especially São Paulo (17.5%) and Goiás, which includes the Federal District (15.7%).

RESULTS

Conjoint Analysis

The results of the conjoint analysis are presented in Table 1. For the entire sample, the most valued attribute was the “possibility to influence the organization’s directions and strategies” (20.9%), followed by “teleworking” (15.6%) and “openness to develop new and challenging projects” (15.4%). Of these three attributes, it should be noted that two of them refer to the content of the work, hence highlighting the importance of intrinsic motivation for taking on managerial roles (Ryan & Deci, 2017; 2019). Along these lines, it should be noted that financial incentive was the least valued attribute, with 7.9% (Bright, 2008; Dal Bó et al., 2013; Lee & Wilkins, 2011; Perry & Vandenberg, 2015).

Table 1: Relative importance of incentives

Incentive	Total	Gender		Tenure			Managerial position	
		Male	Fem.	< 10 years	10 to 15 years	> 15 years	Yes	No
Possibility to influence directions and strategies	20.9%	20.7%	21.3%	17.9%	22.5%	22.6%	21.8%	19.6%
Teleworking	15.6%	14.6%	16.8%	15.8%	16.6%	13.3%	14.8%	16.8%
Openness to develop new/challenging projects	15.4%	16.2%	14.4%	15.8%	14.8%	15.7%	16.3%	13.9%
Role clarity	14.9%	15.6%	14.1%	16.1%	15.1%	12.4%	14.7%	15.1%
Training	13.7%	14.2%	13.1%	14.5%	12.1%	15.5%	13.2%	14.5%
Sufficient qualified support	11.6%	10.0%	13.8%	12.0%	12.1%	10.3%	11.4%	12.1%
Bonus (30%)	7.9%	8.9%	6.6%	7.8%	6.8%	10.1%	7.9%	7.9%

Note the age and tenure of the respondents showed a high correlation, so we opted to represent only the second attribute.

The data on gender differences show that teleworking is more valued by women than by men, possibly because, as they accumulate more responsibilities in caring for the family, they understand that the possibility of working at home would favor meeting this dual demand (Hirata, 2018; Kalysh et al., 2016). Compared to men, women also place more value on organizational support in the form of support staff in adequate quantity and quality, which can also be interpreted as a concern about the accumulation of work and family duties. These results suggest that these two incentives must be considered in the case of organizations seeking greater gender diversity in managerial roles.

Regarding the possibility to influence the organization’s directions and strategies, we could observe a significant difference between attorneys with less than 10 years of tenure and those with tenure of over 10 years. The attorneys with longer tenure tend to place more value in this aspect, which suggest that they may have experienced frustrating situations due to the lack of autonomy to make strategic decisions – thus explaining this result. Therefore, one way to attract more experienced attorneys to managerial roles is to give them greater autonomy to influence the organization’s directions, in line with the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017; 2019).

Cluster Analysis

Applying the cluster analysis technique resulted in classifying respondents into three groups. First, the choice of the number of clusters was guided by the following rules: the elbow rule (suggests the use of three or four clusters), the average silhouette rule (suggests a maximum of two clusters), and the gap statistics rule (suggests three or four clusters). Moreover, as the most suitable options seemed to be three or four clusters, we performed a test with two, three, four, and five clusters, which ended up reinforcing the idea that the ideal number of clusters is three because the solutions with four and five clusters pointed to greater overlap.

A multiple linear regression model with dummies was used to estimate the utilities and relative weight of the attributes in each cluster (Majhi & Biswal, 2018), as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Relative importance of incentives per cluster

Attributes	Total	Cluster #1 n = 230	Cluster #2 n = 98	Cluster #3 n = 187
Possibility to influence directions and strategies	20.9%	22.0%	22.1%	18.4%
Teleworking	15.6%	15.3%	9.9%	19.1%
Openness to develop new/challenging projects	15.4%	16.6%	17.6%	12.0%
Role clarity	14.9%	14.2%	22.3%	12.0%
Training	13.7%	12.8%	17.9%	12.9%
Sufficient qualified support	11.6%	11.0%	8.8%	14.4%
Bonus (30%)	7.9%	8.0%	1.5%	11.2%

Each cluster was given a name and a defining phrase to characterize its most remarkable aspects. For example, cluster #1 corresponds to the group of protagonists because the two most valued attributes are the “possibility to influence the organization’s directions and strategies” and the “openness to develop new and challenging projects.” The group is mostly comprised by men with management experience (see Table 3). Therefore, within this group, it is important to play a leading role, to deal with challenges, and to have the opportunity to steer the direction of the organization, that is, to leave one’s mark during one’s performance as a manager.

Table 3: Cluster #1 features

Protagonists: “I want to leave my mark.”				
Attributes	Relevance of attributes			Group profile
	Cluster #1	Total	Difference	
Possibility to influence directions and strategies	22.0%	20.9%	+ 1.1 p.p.	57% are men 57% hold or have held a managerial position
Openness to develop new/challenging projects	16.6%	15.4%	+ 1.2 p.p.	
Teleworking	15.3%	15.6%	- 0.3 p.p.	

Cluster #2, the group with the cautious managers, values the attributes “role clarity” and “possibility to influence the organization’s directions and strategies,” indicating that they also want to play a leading role provided they know what is expected of them. The group is formed by 57% of women, suggesting they may be more cautious when assuming managerial roles. In addition, 52% have never held a managerial position, which would also contribute to explaining their greater caution (see Table 4). It should also be noted that members of this group are the least likely to value the additional financial rewards of a managerial position.

Table 4: Cluster #2 features

Cautious: "I want to leave my mark as long as I know where I stand."				
Attributes	Relevance of attributes			Group profile
	Cluster #2	Total	Difference	
Role clarity	22.3%	14.9%	+ 7.4 p.p.	57% are women 52% have never held a managerial position
Possibility to influence directions and strategies	22.1%	20.9%	+ 1.2 p.p.	
Training	17.9%	13.7%	+ 4.2 p.p.	
Bonus (30%)	1.5%	7.9%	- 6.4 p.p.	

Finally, cluster #3 is composed of pragmatists since they value "teleworking," "sufficient qualified support," and "bonus" more than the total sample. These results, presented in Table 5, suggest that pragmatists would be willing to assume a managerial role as long as this does not compromise their quality of life and they receive a financial reward consistent with the position's responsibilities.

Table 5: Cluster #3 features

Pragmatists: "Leading with Flexibility and Support."				
Attributes	Relevance of attributes			Group profile
	Cluster #3	Total	Difference	
Teleworking	19.1%	15.6%	+ 3.5 p.p.	65% are men 69% hold or have held a managerial position
Possibility to influence directions and strategies	18.4%	20.9%	- 2.5 p.p.	
Sufficient qualified support	14.4%	11.6%	+ 2.8 p.p.	
Bonus (30%)	11.2%	7.9%	+ 3.3 p.p.	

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify the relative importance of different attributes in the motivation behind public attorneys' career transition to managerial positions. A qualitative survey identified a set of seven factors that were later subjected to conjoint and cluster analyses. The results of the conjoint analysis revealed that respondents valued the following attributes, in order of importance: possibility to influence the organization's directions and strategies; teleworking; openness to develop new and challenging projects; role clarity; management training; sufficient qualified staff; and 30% increase in bonus payouts.

The greater importance attributed to the possibility to influence the organization's directions and strategies is supported by the self-determination theory, which states that autonomy and competence are two of the three basic needs that motivate people (Ryan & Deci, 2017; 2019). Furthermore, the needs for autonomy and competence also appear in the attribute openness to develop new and challenging projects, which is the third most important. Therefore, the motivation for taking on a managerial position appears strongly associated with the desire for decision-making autonomy and the possibility of contributing and achieving positive results (competence).

From an applied perspective, these results point to paths for designing human resources management policies and practices within public administration. In general, the factors that stood out were precisely those related to the nature of the activity, which includes the possibility to influence the organization's directions and strategies and the openness to develop new and challenging projects. At the same time, the possibility of working remotely was also highlighted, pointing to a search for flexibility.

The cluster analysis indicated three distinct groups: protagonists, cautious, and pragmatists. The protagonists' group is the closest to the overall average, and its members are the most strongly guided by

intrinsic motivation factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000), corroborating the literature that highlights the importance of intrinsic factors for civil servants (Klein & Mascarenhas, 2016; Weibel et al., 2010). In this sense, the nature of the activity represents an important stimulus to vertical mobility among individuals who see in managerial positions an opportunity to face challenges, perform encouraging and interesting activities, and better contribute to the purposes of public service.

On the other hand, the cautious group shows different preferences than the general sample, with a higher value on the attribute role clarity and a lower value on financial rewards. The group also attributed greater importance to management training, which makes sense considering that the majority of this group has never held a managerial position. These results suggest that the lack of clarity about duties and responsibilities and of management training generate insecurity in the transition from a technical to a managerial role. Therefore, to encourage interest in managerial positions, public organizations can create communication programs with the characteristics of each position and promote training and development activities (Magalhães et al., 2010; Tasca et al., 2012). Training the staff is a win-win game since it meets an organizational need while allowing the formation of more qualified management personnel.

Finally, the pragmatists are the group that most wants to perform their management role remotely, with adequate support, and to be well compensated. Regarding financial reward, the group ranked this attribute in fourth place, unlike the general sample, which ranked it last in importance. For pragmatists, interest in managerial positions seems to be associated with working conditions that do not interfere with their quality of life, which would occur if, for example, they had to move to a new city or work more intensively if they could not count on support staff.

Thus, pragmatists seem to value extrinsic aspects – including compensation and the convenience of remote work – more highly than the other participants. In the literature on public service motivation, there seems to be no consensus on the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Bright, 2008; Dal Bó et al., 2013; Perry & Vandenabeele, 2015; Weibel et al., 2010) and the results of the present study suggest that both may be relevant, depending on the servant's profile.

Teleworking, or remote work (Ceribeli & Mignacca, 2019; Wheatley, 2017), was one of the prominent attributes for both the pragmatists (who rated it as the most important attribute) and the general sample (who ranked it as the second most relevant one). The qualitative stage of the research revealed that some respondents resent the impossibility of taking on managerial positions because of the requirement to relocate, making it difficult or impossible to reconcile work and family demands (Olttramari & Grisci, 2014). For these respondents, remote work would be the only alternative.

According to the literature, work-family conflicts are more intense for women managers than for their male counterparts, since at the same time that the position demands more from its occupant, women are also more demanded at home (Hirata, 2018; Kalysh et al., 2016). Furthermore, the conjoint analysis revealed that women tend to value teleworking and organizational support more than men, which is consistent with this reality. Therefore, if the surveyed organization – and possibly other public organizations – aim for greater gender equity at higher hierarchical levels, offering more flexibility and increased support may be important, as these practices make it possible to reconcile work and family responsibilities.

FINAL REMARKS

This study contributes to the literature on public sector people management and career transition by identifying the factors that influence the decision to assume managerial positions in the context of a Brazilian public organization. We did not find previous studies focusing on this subject, a gap that we have sought to address. The conjoint analysis allowed us to identify the relative importance of these attributes, while the cluster analysis pointed to the existence of three different groups of workers, showing that the relative relevance of the factors varies according to the professional's profile.

As highlighted above, mid-level bureaucrats, represented in this study by PFNs in managerial positions, play a variety of roles and are extremely important to the public administration, hence the relevance of

better understanding their motivations and the aspects that can help them perform their functions better, which, in turn, can increase the reliability and responsiveness of public organizations to society.

As a practical implication of our results – for the organization studied and others that may have difficulties in attracting technical personnel for managerial roles – it seems crucial to improve participation mechanisms, allowing the managers to have autonomy to effectively influence the directions of the organization and to develop projects they consider relevant.

We also suggest actions to make teleworking possible, freeing civil servants from relocating in order to occupy managerial positions. Furthermore, the implementation of teleworking can also be a tool to boost the participation of women in managerial positions, given their greater appreciation of this attribute. Furthermore, we suggest more clarity in the definition of responsibilities and expectations concerning managerial roles and the development of management training programs to increase the attractiveness of managerial positions.

Despite the academic and practical contributions, this study has some limitations. The number of attributes and combinations effectively tested in the conjoint analysis is one of them. Moreover, there may be differences between the choices made in real versus hypothetical situations. Another limitation refers to the scope of the study, which was limited to a single public organization, thus calling for caution in the generalization of these results. As a suggestion for future studies, we recommend replicating this research in other public sector organizations and conducting similar investigations in the private sector to compare the particularities of these two contexts.

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Notes

[1] The search was conducted in October 2022 in the Spell® (Scientific Periodicals Electronic Library) database and considered the following terms and expressions: career transition, career mobility, and career advancement; managerial career; vertical mobility; mid-level bureaucrat; and public manager.