

LEADER INDUCED CAREER SHOCK

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Abstract *Changing labour markets, globalization, technological developments, uncertainty about the future, and changes in working conditions make careers more dynamic, complex and unpredictable, with an increasing number of important and unpredictable disruptive events, such as redundancy, bankruptcy, or challenges in family life, which have an impact on careers. Most people experience several significant events in their lifetime that affect their career. The concept of career shock has been increasingly used in the career literature in recent years to describe these events.*

An analysis of the scientific literature has shown that career shock is an unexpected triggering event induced by a factor beyond a person's control. Researchers studying career shock have identified three contexts for career shock: structural, organizational and personal. It has been found that the leader as a career shock trigger not only manifests itself in the organizational context, in the case of interpersonal career shocks or career shocks related to organizational procedures and policies, but also contributes to career shocks in the employee's personal context.

Empirical research has identified the leader as a factor that induces career shock for employees. For most of the respondents, the leader induced a career shock related to the organizational context, such as unexpected dismissal, conflict, unmet expectations, etc. However, there are cases among the participants in the study where the leader has induced a career shock to an employee experiencing a personal life event such as divorce or pregnancy.

Keywords: *leader, career shock, career.*

Introduction

Most people spend a large part of their lives working. And while time spent working depends on a variety of factors, including individual preferences, the country and its cultural norms, the industry or occupation, the average person spends more than a third of his or her life working (Pryce-Jones, 2011). Work and career therefore have a significant impact on an individual's quality of life and on various aspects of personal well-being, including physical health, mental well-being, financial security and overall life satisfaction, among others. Job and career satisfaction contribute significantly to life satisfaction (Burke, 2001 et al., Lounsbury et al., 2004). As a result, people are constantly concerned about their careers, looking for a career solution that is in line with their values, interests, financial security, opportunities for professional growth and development, etc.

Changing labour markets, globalization, technological developments, uncertainty about the future, and changes in working conditions make careers more dynamic, complex and unpredictable, with an increasing number of important and unpredictable disruptive events, such as redundancy, bankruptcy, or challenges in family life, which have an impact on careers. Most people experience several significant events in their lifetime that affect their career (Hirschi, 2010). Such events that affect people's careers have long been the subject of theoretical debate and empirical research (Hirschi, 2010; Grimland et al., 2011, Bright et al. 2005, Betsworth and Hansen, 1996; etc.). Various terms are used in the scientific debate to define these events, including chance events (Hirschi, 2010; Grimland et al, (Betsworth and Hansen, 1996; etc.), serendipity (Miller, 1983; Guindon, 2002, etc.). However, in the last decade, the concept of career shock has been increasingly used in this context (Seibert et al., 2013; Blokker et al., 2019; Rummel et al., 2019; Akkermans et al., 2021 and others).

An analysis of the scientific literature has shown that career shock is an unexpected, disruptive and extraordinary event that is triggered, at least to some degree, by factors beyond an individual's control and that triggers a deliberate thought process about one's career (Akkerman et al., 2018). The strong interest in the concept of career shock in the scientific debate has been particularly noticeable in recent years (Leong et al., 204; Zhou et al., 2023; Shafique et al., 2022; Visentini et al., 2023; Ahmad, 2022, among others). Career shock can vary in terms of predictability, can be positive or negative, one-off or recurrent (Akkerman et al., 2018). Researchers studying career shock identify three contexts that cause career shock: structural, organizational and personal (Bandeira et al., 2023). It has been revealed that the *leader*, as a career shock trigger, not only manifests itself as a career shock trigger in the organizational context, in the case of interpersonal career shocks or career shocks related to organizational procedures and policies, but also contributes by its behaviour to career shocks in the personal context of the employee (Bandeira et al., 2023). In the context of career shock, the importance of *leader behaviour* is highlighted in the interaction between the individual and the context.

This article aims to shed light on career shock in the career path of employees and to highlight the importance of leader behaviour in inducing career shock in both organizational and personal contexts. The relevance of the chosen topic is determined by several aspects. First, an analysis of the academic literature revealed that although events affecting people's careers have long been the subject of theoretical debate and empirical research (Hirschi, 2010; Grimland et al, 2011; Bright et al. 2005; Betsworth and Hansen, 1996 etc.) and most contemporary career theories acknowledge that they can affect career outcomes (Akkermans et al., 2018), authors emphasize that there is still a significant lack of research in the field of career shock. Second, while there is an unequivocal agreement among career shock researchers that career shock is an event induced by a factor beyond an individual's control, there is a particular lack of research on contextual factors in the context of career shock. Therefore, authors studying career shock suggest that future research should focus on the role of contextual factors (De Vos et al., 2020). Looking at career shock through a contextual lens (Bandeira et al., 2023) highlights the importance of the leader as an organizational contextual factor in inducing career shock. With researchers proposing the leader as an important contextual factor to be considered in future research on career shock (Zhou et al., 2023), this paper aims to shed light on the *importance of the leader in inducing career shock in employees*. Therefore, the problem of this paper is formulated in the form of a problem question: can the leader's behaviour induce career shock to an employee?

Object of the paper. The importance of leader behaviour in inducing career shock for employees.

Aim of the paper. To highlight the importance of leader behaviour in inducing career shock for employees.

Tasks of the paper: To discuss the concepts of career shock and leader; Explore the employees' experienced career shock, induced by their leaders.

The method used was qualitative content analysis, which is one of the most common methods of data analysis used in qualitative research. The method is based on a structured and systematic interpretation of the content of the text to explore key themes, symbols and meanings. The qualitative content analysis method was used to systematize and generalize the material and data from an empirical study on leader-induced career shock, to describe the phenomenon of career shock and to reveal the leader's behaviour that induces career shock for employees.

The concept of career shock

An analysis of the career shock literature shows that scholars exploring the concept of career shock agree on a definition of career shock. Although different authors give different definitions, no significant contradictions were found. According to the view of Seibert et al. (2013), a career shock is an event that triggers considerations related to the prospect of a significant change in career-related behaviours. The authors are also supported by researchers Leong et al. (2024), who describe career shock as a relatively rare and unusual career event that is beyond an individual's control and that can be viewed positively or negatively. Pak et al. (2021) also define career shock as an important and unusual event for an individual. Meanwhile, Visentini et al. (2023) elaborate and define career shock as an event that arises from an experience related to one or more unforeseen events that change the career trajectory of an individual, related to a particular perceived context, the time experienced and the sensations that are given to what is being experienced, reflecting transitions that reveal the continuity or interruption of a career. According to Conroy et al. (2022), a shock is an unanticipated change in the existing organizational structure that confuses or interrupts a person's harmonious state, or any adjustment to the status quo in terms of how people perceive their work.

However, one of the most widely cited definitions of career shock in the academic literature is by Akkerman et al. (2018), which combines previous knowledge about chance events and is based on the four main characteristics of career shock: Career shock is a disruptive and extraordinary event that is at least partly induced by factors beyond an individual's control and that triggers deliberate thinking about one's career. Career shock can be differently predictable and can be viewed positively or negatively (Akkerman et al., 2018, p. 4). The authors stress that career shock is *a combination* of an external event and an individual's perception of it, and that both elements are essential to the concept of career shock (Akkerman et al., 2018). Therefore, not every disruptive and extraordinary event can be considered a career shock for an individual if it did not trigger thoughts about his or her career. Just as not every event that triggers thoughts about one's career can be considered a career shock if it was not disruptive in nature. According to Akkermans et al. (2018), the notion that a shock prompts an individual to actively think about his or her career is an essential element of the definition of career shock.

An analysis of the literature revealed that the scholars exploring the concept of career shock in their work also agree on the key conceptual *attributes* of career shock. Although different authors present partly different views, no significant contradictions were found regarding the attributes of career shock. Given the heterogeneity of events affecting careers, to conceptualize, structure and explore their similarities and differences, researchers have

identified the following key conceptual attributes of the construct of career shock: valence, frequency, predictability/controllability, duration and source.

The most widely recognized attribute in the career shock literature is career shock *valence*. While there are views that career shock can be positive, negative or neutral (Holtom et al., 2005), the career shock literature has taken the approach of dividing career shocks into positive and negative shocks (Luhmann and Eid, 2009; Seibert et al., 2013; Akkerman et al., 2018; Feng et al., 2019; Rummel et al. 2019, et al.) On the other hand, it is not always obvious whether to classify them as *positive* or *negative* shocks (Mansur and Felix, 2020) and in this respect there is a notable difference in the way researchers distinguish between these categories. According to Seibert et al. (2013), a positive career shock is an event that has a positive impact on an individual's career, such as a pay rise or promotion earlier than expected. Negative career shocks are events that can have a negative impact on a person's career, such as the departure of a mentor or bankruptcy. Meanwhile, Akkerman et al. (2018) stress that the valence of career shocks needs to be assessed based on the valence of the shock experienced by the individual him/herself, rather than on the degree to which the event has positive or negative consequences for his/her career or the organization in which the individual works (Akkerman et al. 2018). For example, the birth of a child can be a very positive event, but it can be detrimental to the development of an individual's career. Based on Akkerman et al.'s (2018) definition above, the birth of a child should be categorized as a positive career shock, as the experience of the shock is accompanied by positive emotions, even if the final career outcome may be positive or negative. From another perspective, according to Feng et al. (2019), whether a shock is positive or negative should depend on the individual's perception of it. If a negative career shock can be perceived as a motivating factor, it is inappropriate to call it negative.

According to Holtom et al. (2005), different career shocks occur at different *frequencies* and have different effects on employees' career-related decisions. Akkerman et al. (2018) argue that career shock is a relatively rare and special event, but also identify frequency as one of the characteristics of the career shock construct. The career shock literature reveals that some events are more likely to occur than others, such as sexual harassment at work or conflicts with colleagues, compared to the loss of a loved one or an environmental disaster.

The third attribute of the career shock construct, *predictability*, reveals that career shock can be both predictable and unpredictable (Holtom et al., 2005). Examples of unpredictable events in the career shock literature often include unexpected promotions or dismissals, unsolicited job offers (Holtom et al., 2005), unexpected influential guest encounters, unexpected job loss (Rummel et al. 2019), etc. Anticipated events include events such as the planned birth of a child, a planned promotion or planned transfer of a spouse (Holtom et al., 2005) or non-renewal of a job contract at the end of its term (Akkermans et al., 2018), etc. Akkerman et al. (2018) argue that predictability is linked to *controllability*. Some events may be predictable but not controllable, for example redundancy. On the other hand, other events may be unpredictable but controllable, such as an accident (leg fracture).

The fourth attribute of the career shock construct, *duration*. Akkerman et al. (2018) highlight the importance of distinguishing between the duration of the career shock event itself and the duration of the proximal and distal consequences of that event. Research analysis has shown that differences can exist both in terms of the duration of the event itself (e.g. if an unexpected illness is a career shock, the event itself (i.e. the illness) will last much longer than, for example, an event that results in an unexpected promotion), and in terms of the duration of the event's proximal consequences (e.g. coping with the consequences of being fired from a job is likely to be more prolonged than coping with the consequences of getting a new job).

By *source*, career shocks can be personal events unrelated to work, or events of a work-related or organizational nature (Holtom et al., 2005, p. 5). In contrast, Akkerman et al. (2018) distinguish in this context between interpersonal events (e.g. sexual harassment or discrimination), family-related (e.g. pregnancy, divorce, death, illness), organisational (e.g. mass dismissals), environmental (e.g. a natural disaster) or geopolitical (e.g. war) events. Bandeira et al. (2023) identify career shocks as induced by structural contextual factors (e.g. government policies, natural disaster or gender discrimination, etc.), organisational contextual factors (e.g. organizational policies and practices, change, interpersonal relationships, etc.), and personal contextual factors (e.g. family and marriage, different personal life experiences, or health situations, etc.).

The concept of the leader and leader behaviour

The term *leader* is one of the most widely used terms in management literature. As a result of its widespread use, the term is defined very differently in the scientific literature. Based on Malik and Azmat (2019), a leader is someone who establishes objectives for their team or colleagues and then guides or motivates them to accomplish these goals. This view echoes Goleman (2002), who argues that a leader is a person who can focus attention on the most important goals, mobilize people and inspire them to achieve those goals. Inspiration as a key goal of a leader is also highlighted by Bass (2019) who states that the primary function and significance of a leader is to inspire others, referred to as followers, to willingly come together and work toward accomplishing a goal. According to Cuban (1988), leaders are individuals who influence the objectives, motivations, and behaviors of others. They often initiate changes to achieve both existing and new goals.

The importance of leader behaviour is emphasized when studying career shock as a phenomenon characterized by individual-personal interactions. It is argued that it is the *leader's behaviour* that plays a more important role in the context of career shock than, for example, the leader's personality characteristics.

To define leader behaviour, the paper follows the hierarchical taxonomy of leader behaviour proposed by Yukl et al. (2012) with four meta-categories, firstly, task-oriented leader behaviour, secondly, relationship-oriented leader behaviour, thirdly, change-oriented leader behaviour and fourthly, external leader behaviour. This taxonomy of leaderial behaviour extends the same author's previous approach of using three categories of leaderial behaviour - task-oriented, behaviour-oriented, relationship-oriented (Yukl et al., 2002; Yukl, 2006; Yukl et al., 2009), which has been used extensively in the work of other researchers (Vaskin et al., 2021; Khuong and Mai, 2022; Vaskinn et al., 2021; Demircioglu and Chowdhury, 2020; Mathias et al., 2018; Gifford et al., 2018; Anzengruber et al., 2017; Moldogaziev and Silvia, 2014; Agnew and Flin, 2014, etc).

The framework of four meta categories of leader behaviour proposed by Yukl et al. (2012) is useful for interpreting leader behaviour in the context of career shock. According to Yukl et al. (2012), each meta category has a different underlying goal (all of which are related) and includes unique specific behaviours to achieve the goals. It is stressed that the appropriateness of each specific behaviour depends on aspects of the situation, and that the effect of the behaviour itself does not always contribute positively to the achievement of the primary goals (Yukl, 2012). Yukl et al. (2012), who proposed a hierarchical taxonomy of leader behaviour, define *task-oriented* leader behaviour as behaviour that seeks to ensure that people, equipment, and other resources are used efficiently to achieve the group's or organisation's mission (Yukl et al. 2002). Similar to this view, Demircioglu and Chowdhury (2020) argue that task-oriented

leader behaviour focuses on the effectiveness of the task and the performance of the activities needed to achieve the goal. Task-oriented leader behaviour includes short-term planning and scheduling of work activities, identifying resource and staffing needs, assigning tasks, clarifying objectives and priorities, emphasizing the importance of efficiency and reliability, directing and coordinating activities, monitoring operations and solving day-to-day operational problems (Yukl et al., 2008). Researchers (Yukl et al., 2012; Beydilli et al., 2016) define relationship-oriented leader behaviours as those aimed at improving the quality of human resources and relationships (human capital). Relationship-oriented leader behaviours include - providing support and encouragement, nurturing and developing, recognizing and empowering (Yukl, 2012). This view is supported by authors (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2006) who reveal that **relationship-oriented** behaviour includes positive demonstration of support and respect, recognition and acknowledgement of achievements and contributions, coaching and mentoring, consulting people on decisions that affect their situation, delegating and empowering subordinates, promoting cooperation and teamwork, and developing a network of relationships both within and outside the organization. Meanwhile, **change-oriented** leader behaviour is defined as behaviour aimed at enhancing innovation, collective learning and adaptation to the external environment (Yukl et al., 2012). Analogous to this view, Beydilli et al. (2016) argue that the main goal of change-oriented leader behaviour is to increase innovation, collective learning and adaptation to the external environment. According to Yukl (2006), change-oriented behaviour includes observing the environment to identify threats and opportunities, interpreting events and explaining why change is needed, articulating an inspiring vision, taking risks in promoting change, or even creating support teams to endorse major changes or to determine how new initiatives and changes should be implemented.

The importance of the leader behaviour in inducing career shock for employee

An analysis of the career shock literature reveals the leader as a determinant of career shocks in the organisational context, showing his or her active involvement both in inducing career shocks due to organisational changes, such as violation of labour laws and workers' rights in the context of the changes (Van Helden et al., 2023), and in inducing career shocks due to interpersonal relationships, such as showing exclusive attention and recognition towards one employee, or using economic violence (Van Helden et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, Pak et al. (2021) highlight the importance of the leader factor and the personal context in career shocks. According to the authors, when an individual receives support from a leader after a career shock in their personal life, the negative effects of the career shock are reduced and the positive effects on the individual's ability, motivation and ability to continue working are enhanced (Pak et al., 2021). This view is echoed by Van Helden et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of leader behaviour in providing support in the event of an individual's illness. In their research on career shock, Pak et al. (2021) highlight the importance of leader support in demonstrating employees' expectation of leader support in the immediate aftermath of a career shock at work. However, based on their research, the authors argue that not all employees receive support from their leader in response to experiencing career shocks and formulate an important empirically validated insight - that it is the lack of support from the leader that can lead to an event becoming a career shock for an employee. This is due to employees' expectation of leader support and appreciation, which was not fulfilled when the leader did not provide support, which amounted to a loss of resources for the employees and thus compounded the consequences of the devastating event that they experienced, which became a career shock for them (Pak et al., 2021). The authors illustrate this insight through a

case where a shocking event - the employee's violent confrontation with a client - became a career shock for the employee after the employee did not receive any support at work, either immediately after the event or later during a staff meeting. The lack of support, encouragement and appreciation from the leader's perspective made this shocking event a career shock for the employee (Pak et al., 2021).

In summary, a leader's perspective on career shock shows that a leader can be both actively involved in career shock, for example through conflict with an employee, and passively involved, i.e. a leader can induce career shock in an employee without providing support, praise or recognition. A theoretical model of leader-induced career shock is presented in Figure 1.

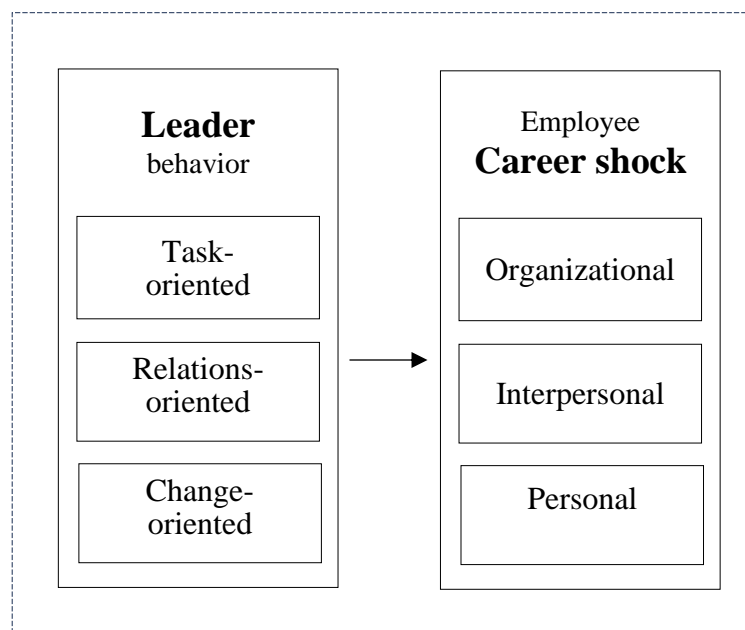


Figure 1. A theoretical model of leader-induced career shock

The significance of leader behavior in inducing career shock for employees cannot be overstated, as the actions and decisions of leaders have profound implications on the career trajectories of their subordinates. A leader can prevent the negative consequences of a career shock (Pak et al., 2021) or reduce the negative nature of the consequences of career shock or enhance the positive consequences of career shocks, not only career shock experienced in the organizational and structural context, but also related to the personal context (Brzykcy et al., 2019; Pak et al., 2021 Van Helden et al. , 2023).

It is important to note that positive leader behaviors, such as supportive mentoring and transparent communication, can help mitigate the adverse effects of such shocks, fostering resilience and opening new opportunities for growth. Conversely, negative behaviors by leaders, such as lack of support, abrupt changes without clear communication, or unfair treatment, can lead to detrimental career shocks, resulting in decreased employee morale, engagement, and productivity. Therefore, understanding the impact of leader behavior on career shocks is crucial.

Study on the leader induced career shock for employees

The aim of the study is to explore the employees' experienced career shock, induced by their leaders. It aims to reveal the importance of the leader behaviour in inducing career shock for employee.

In order to achieve the goal, a qualitative exploratory approach (Gephart, 2004) was used, where data is collected and analyzed, and conclusions are drawn by means of a qualitative research design - semi-structured interviews. According to Kardelis (2005), qualitative research provides an understanding of the phenomena under study and an interpretative explanation, i.e. it is oriented towards interpretation (not measurement) and focuses on the relationship between the situation and behaviour.

Purposive sampling was used to collect the data. The sample was selected according to the objectives of the study, in order to identify and select the most informative respondents with data on the topic of the study. Respondents were selected according to *two criteria*. *First, hierarchical level (subordination)* – since the phenomenon under study is a career shock induced by a leader, those respondents who were subordinate to the leader at the time of the career shock are purposefully selected for the study. *Second, experienced career shock* – taking into account the research phenomenon, based on the disclosed information about the contexts and factors inducing career shock, respondents whose career shock is induced by the leader are strategically selected. The characteristics of the respondents' selection are provided in order to include persons whose special, specific characteristics would allow them to best reflect and provide knowledge about the investigated phenomenon – the career shock induced by the leader.

Individuals were invited to participate in the research by contacting communities of different groups on social networking platforms. The research was carried out between *February and June 2023*. The interviews were conducted with respondents of working age who had experienced a career shock along their career path. The size of the research sample is up to saturation, when the final number of interviews conducted during the research is determined during data collection, i.e. new interviews are conducted until the collected data and information begin to repeat themselves and no longer reveal aspects related to the object of study. Forty-one (41) interviews were conducted during the study. The interviews were carried out under conditions that were convenient for the respondents, according to their choice, either remotely, via an online chat (using GoogleMeet or another application offered by the respondent), or during a live interview. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

The interviews were carried out using a *pre-designed questionnaire*, starting with general questions about the respondents' careers, followed by in-depth questions about the career shock they had experienced along their career path and the importance of leader behavior in inducing career shock. All interviews were recorded (with the consent of the respondents), transcribed, and the results were processed and analyzed with MAXQDA software. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are not provided for reasons of anonymity, only the codes given to them.

Analysis of the interview results

People are always on the lookout for the best career solution that fits their values and interests, provides financial security, and offers opportunities for professional growth and development. Changing labour markets, technological developments and uncertainty about the future mean that people and organizations operate in a context of constant uncertainty. Careers

are becoming dynamic, complex and more unpredictable, with a proliferation of important and unpredictable events, which in recent years have been referred to in the academic literature as career shock. The importance of the leader as an organizational contextual factor is emerging as researchers seek to better understand the contextual factors inducing career shock. Therefore, this study sought to uncover the importance of leader behaviour in inducing career shock to employees. The study attempted to answer the question of whether a leader induces career shock to an employee. It also sought to better understand whether leader behaviour is only manifested in career shocks associated with the organizational context, or whether it also contributes to career shock experiences in the personal context.

Participants were asked to talk about a career shock in their career path induced by their leader. The questions were formulated based on Akkerman et al.'s (2018) definition of career shock and the view that career shock is a combination of an external event and an individual's perception that both elements are necessary for career shock. Therefore, two subgroups of questions are distinguished: 1) *Questions related to a shocking event in the respondent's career path*. These questions ask the respondent to identify the event that was triggered by the leader and that led to thoughts about the respondent's career. The questions in this first subset seek to assess whether the respondent has actually experienced a career shock along his/her career path (i.e. assessing whether the case fits the definition of a career shock (the first element - event) and the identified characteristics of a career shock), and to characterize the event (i.e. identify it as positive/negative, expected/unexpected, personal/job-related, one-off/recurrent, etc.). 2) *Questions related to the respondent's individual perception of the event*. Respondents are asked to describe their psychological state at the time of the event and to tell what thoughts (career-wise) the event triggered in them. The questions in this second subset aim at assessing whether the respondent has actually experienced a career shock in his/her career path (i.e. assessing whether the case fits the definition of a career shock (the second element - individual perception) or whether the event triggered career thoughts, as, according to Akkerman et al., (2018), not every shock can be considered as a career shock, if the event does not trigger thoughts about the person's career).

All the respondents in the study had experienced career shock induced by their leaders. Career shocks experienced by research participants *can be grouped into three groups*, two of which are related to the organizational context: *first*, career shocks are related to organizational procedures, policies, changes; *second* career shocks are related to interpersonal relationships. The third group is related to the personal context of the employee.

First, career shocks induced by leader behaviour in the context of organizational policies, procedures or practices, or organizational change. The analysis of the results of the study showed that the most frequent career shocks in the organizational group are those *related to the unexpected termination of the employment relationship* (dismissal, non-renewal of employment contract). Six (6) respondents experienced this type of career shock, i.e. one respondent had his contract not renewed (R17), five respondents were unexpectedly dismissed (R02, R04, R23, R25) and one respondent was unexpectedly dismissed with his whole team (R30). It is important to note that in all these cases the event of termination, non-renewal of the employment relationship was a career shock for the respondents.

However, empirical research has revealed cases where the termination of employment was already a consequence of the career shock experienced. For example, in the case of respondent R05, the career shock event was a conflict with colleagues which, due to the lack of support from the manager, induced the respondent to think about his/her career, resulting in termination of the employment relationship, or in the case of respondent R03, the lack of leader empowerment led to termination of the employment relationship. The study revealed that for

two other respondents, the refusal of a leader to give a pay rise, resulting in termination of employment, was a career shock (R14, R08), i.e. "But the general leader came in and categorically said no, I am not going to take you up on the offer anymore, I do not like it anymore" (R08); "He said if that is the case, then it is okay, we do not need your services any more and that you are free from now on and that you are no longer allowed to go on a computer desk or other things" (R14). Other cases that fall into the group of career shocks include: *sudden job rotation* (R41), where in an organization, in the course of a sudden job rotation, the employee's immediate leader was replaced by a new leader from above: "They removed the leader themselves. A very wonderful leader who built it all from scratch. Because they overthrew that leader within an hour"; *forced ejection of a worker from the management team (and subsequently from the job)* (R13), when another person protected by the manager took the worker's place: "At the end of the year, I was assessed as a good worker, I got a raise, I got a bonus, and after the appraisal, and then in May of that year, I was called in to see the management and I was told that I didn't know how to do the job and that they wanted me to leave. But perhaps the most painful thing was that in all this I found out that there was a man in my place and where he was coming to work in my place"; *organized economic violence at work* (R27), with the leader taking over workers' wages, with the knowledge of senior managers, in accordance with the organization's established policy: 'And the algorithm was devised that we, as workers, would be given a half-point pay rise, and that we would give those wages in cash to the head of our sub-department' (R27); *Refusal by a leader to grant leave to which the worker is entitled* (R28), in the context of a persistent breach of the Labour Code and a failure to report (R28): "I found out, basically by accident, that I have been on leave for a month and I am being paid holiday pay instead of salary, and that there is even a request for leave that I did not sign. I work for the company without normal holidays, six days a week, because that is the company's procedure. And if you want a holiday very badly, you must ask the director as a big favor and always be ready to come back to work during the few days off if he needs something" (R28), etc. It is important to note that among the group of organisational career shocks there is one positive career shock - an *unexpected promotion offered by the leader* (R16).

Second, career shocks induced by leader behaviour in the context of *interpersonal* relationships. The analysis of the results of the study showed that the career shocks included in the interpersonal group of career shocks are *mainly conflicts (with leaders and colleagues) and employees' feelings of not being (appreciated) by their leader*. Looking at the group of conflict-related career shocks, for as many as three respondents the career shock was directly induced by their leader during a conflict (R07, R35, R36). Among the inducers of the conflict: differences of opinion on the exercise of responsibilities at work (R35); or differences of opinion on the planning of work (R07), or the requirement not to comply with public procurement rules (R36). Meanwhile, for two respondents, a conflict with a colleague without the support of a leader was a career shock (R05, R06). When examining the group of career shocks related to feeling not (appreciated), two respondents associate the career shock with an event where the leader directly showed that he/she did not appreciate the employee (R15, R20). One of the cases involves the respondent being shown to be unappreciative by failing to follow agreements and delaying payment of the agreed salary (R29). A particularly painful experience for the respondent relates to the experience of a leader failing to appreciate an employee's goodwill efforts and accusing him/her of selfishness (R39).

Other cases of career shock that fall into the interpersonal category include a change in the behaviour of the leader, where the employee feels thrown out of the team and experiences an unexpected change in the relationship with the leader. The reasons for the change in the leader's behaviour differ: for one respondent, the reason was too frequent sick leave (R01);

while for the other, it was sexual harassment that was not welcomed and disciplined (R26). The study revealed that for two respondents (R38, R31), the career shock was the criticism of a leader in a public meeting, either because of an employee's mistake in customer service (R31) or because of a failure to deliver results (R38).

It is important to note that the interpersonal group of career shocks includes the highest number of positive career shocks, including: an employee expressing/defending his/her opinion against a leader's criticism (in a meeting), which became a career shock due to the leader's subsequent reaction to the event (R34); unexpected strong support from the leader (R21), etc. i.e. positive leader behaviour related to strong support and encouragement in integrating into work, delegating tasks (R21); feeling appreciated by the leader, feeling the leader's reluctance to let the employee go to another new job, when the leader offers a salary increase or promotion (R37, R40, R24).

The analysis of the results of the study revealed a number of career shocks that were induced to the participants by their leader's behaviour, which contributed to events that occurred in their personal contexts. The analysis of the results revealed that the leader contributed to five (5) career shocks, which fall under the personal career shock category.

The study revealed two cases of *threatened loss of employment during pregnancy* (R10, R11), where the leader's behaviour demonstrates disapproval and a willingness to terminate the employment relationship: "The moment I told him that I was expecting, I already knew from him that it was very wrong of him, because he knew very well that he would not be able to fire me then, and that I would have to work for him for the whole period up to the end of the decree. As the work progressed, I was being asked to do much more than my colleagues, who were doing exactly the same thing as me" (R10).

For two respondents, the leader's refusal to meet their personal expectations was a career shock (R19, R09), in one case when the *leader refused to finance the employee's development decision (studies) at company expense*: "And it just came to a time when I saw that I was lacking in knowledge, I wanted to improve myself, and I just asked the leader to finance my studies, and he didn't agree to do it" (R09), and the other case when *the leader refused to grant a month's leave*: "Of course I had the expectation that I would be given leave, but because my expectations were not met I first felt anger, frustration that I was not valued, that I was being exploited, and what was I even doing here for two and a half years when I had put the whole HR system on its feet" (R19). It is important to note that among the personal career shocks, there is also one *positive career shock*: the strong support of a leader during a personal divorce (R18), which became a career shock due to the unexpected and strong support and encouragement of the leader during the divorce: "This job was my salvation. Realistically, at that time I only felt supported at work...especially by my leader. That someone was on my side.." (R18).

All cases of career shock experienced by respondents, which were induced by their leader's behavior, are summarized in the 1 table.

In order to shed light on the role of leader behaviour in inducing career shock, the participants in the study were asked questions related to leader behaviour, i.e. questions related to the career shock situation and the leader's behaviour in it. The respondent is asked to elaborate on the event that triggered the thoughts about his/her career and the leader's behaviour in this situation (situation); to disclose what the respondent's task was and the difficulties the respondent faced (task); to tell what was done from the respondent's and the leader's perspective (action) and to identify how the situation was resolved (result). The questions in this first subset aim to identify how the leader's behaviour induces career shock to the employee.

Table 1. Summary of career shocks experienced by study respondents

Career shock group	Career shock	Number of cases
Organizational career shocks	Unexpected termination of employment (dismissal, non-renewal of contract, pressure to leave)	6
	Sudden job rotation	1
	Unexpected promotion offered by leader	1
	Refusal of a leader to give a pay rise resulting in termination of employment	2
	Failure to empower leader to act, resulting in termination of employment	1
	Forced ejection from the team and later from the job (retaliation)	1
	Economic organized violence at work	1
	Negligent organization of work	1
	Failure to allow leave, breach of the labor code, dismissal	1
Interpersonal career shocks	Violence at work by a leader (psychological)	1
	Public criticism of leader(s)	2
	Conflict (with leader or colleagues)	5
	Change in leader's behaviour (feeling kicked out of the team)	2
	Feeling not (appreciated) by leader	4
	Leader did not give recognition of individual's contribution, did not give pay rise, created unfavorable conditions (examination)	1
	Expressing/defending one's own opinion against criticism from the leader	1
	Feeling unexpectedly strongly supported by leader, support	1
	Feeling (appreciated) (leader's reluctance to release to another new job, offered a salary increase, etc.).	2
	Unexpected promotion offered by leader	1
Poor performance appraisal by leader, sudden demotion	1	
Personal career shocks	A worker's pregnancy is threatened with termination of employment by her leader	2
	Leader's refusal to meet employees' expectations (for leave, for education)	2
	Strong support from the leader during the divorce	1

The results showed that all three categories of leader behaviour - relationship-oriented, task-oriented and change-oriented - were present in the context of career shock. The analysis of the results showed that relationship-oriented leader behaviour was the most strongly manifested and that it had a strong correlation with task-oriented leader behaviour. From a valence perspective, only negative task-oriented leader behaviours were manifested in the context of career shock, whereas both negative and positive leader behaviours were identified in relation to relationship-oriented and change-oriented behaviours.

The results of the study showed that when analyzing career shock cases induced by leader behaviour, only negative, *task-oriented* leader behaviour was observed in career shock cases such as: not being recognized by the leader (subordination, pay, etc.) (R22, R14, R08, R03), conflict with the leader (R07, R35, R36) or others. The analysis of the study results revealed that the most pronounced negative leader behaviours in the study of respondents' experiences of career shock were task-oriented, which included: inadequate organization of work by the leader, excessive monitoring of the employee's performance, lack of clarification, ineffective or incorrect problem solving, and ineffective implementation of decisions (slow, delayed, or delayed).

The results of the study showed that both negative and positive *relationship-oriented* leader behaviours were manifested in the analysis of career shock cases induced by leader behaviours. However, the expression of negative relationship-oriented leader behaviour in career shock was significantly higher. The analysis of the results of the study revealed that, in terms of the respondents' experiences of career shock, the most strongly manifested negative

relationship-oriented leader behaviours were: Lack of support, lack of attention to the worker's feelings and needs, lack of recognition, pressure, humiliation, psychological violence or abusive communication, lack of feedback or incorrect provision of feedback, lack of empowerment and lack of consideration of the worker's opinion, double standards in dealing with employees or lack of employee development.

Meanwhile, in the study of the respondents' experiences of career shock, the most strongly positive relationship-oriented leader behaviours were: providing support, paying attention to the employee's feelings and needs, giving recognition, showing public attention, emphasizing and recognizing the employee's importance, subordination, competence, etc., creating a safe emotional climate, correct communication by the leader, developing employees, etc.

The results of the study showed that both negative and positive *change-oriented* leader behaviours were present in the analysis of career shock cases induced by the leader's behaviour. The analysis of the empirical research results showed that the negative change-oriented leader behaviours were the most strongly manifested in the respondents' experiences of career shock: failure to create psychological safety, lack of mutual trust, lack of vision and clarification of the change, lack of communication from the leader in support of change, lack of encouragement of commitment to change, and lack of a supportive organizational culture. In contrast, positive change-oriented leader behaviour was most strongly manifested by: providing opportunities and resources for change, creating psychological security, mutual trust in the context of change, supportive leader communication, and encouragement of engagement.

Summarizing the study results, it can be concluded that leader behavior induces career shocks for employees – both in the organizational and personal context. The research results revealed that in the context of career shock, all three categories of leader's behavior appeared - relationship-oriented, task-oriented, change-oriented leader's behavior. The analysis of the results shows that the relationship-oriented behavior of the leader was the strongest. The results of the study revealed that the leader behavior induce a career shock to the employees (for example, not keeping the promise to the employee regarding a salary increase), also, the leader's behavior affects disruptive events in the employee's personal life, inducing a career shock (for example, not providing support during the employee's pregnancy). The study results showed that the majority of career shock cases induced by leaders were negative, associated with the organizational context (such as organizational procedures, policies, interpersonal relationships within organizations, etc.).

Conclusions

The study conducted on leader-induced career shock aimed to uncover the important roles that leaders play in shaping their employees' career trajectories, by inducing positive and negative career shock. By exploring the experiences of employees who have undergone career shocks induced by their leaders, this research has shed light on the profound impact of leadership behavior on employee career paths.

The study revealed that career shock is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that includes various aspects and factors. Our findings confirm that leader behavior significantly influences the occurrence and nature of career shocks. It was found that the leader's task-oriented, relationship-oriented and change-oriented behavior induced employees career shock in the organizational context, both related to organizational changes (for example, a new leader, reorganization, etc.) and aspects of organizational policies and practices (for example, unexpected dismissal, unexpected promotion, promotion, etc.), as well as with interpersonal relationships (for example, conflicts with the leader, colleagues, customers, etc.).

However, it was also revealed that the leader's behavior contributes to the employees' personal context experiences, inducing career shock. The experiences of the research participants, such as an event that became a career shock, when the leader threatened the employee during pregnancy or the leader's refusal to meet the employee's expectations regarding leave and education, showed that the leader's behavior is manifested not only by inducing career shock in the organizational context, but also in a personal one.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the critical role of leadership in the dynamics of career shocks.

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