Studia paedagogica
vol. 23, n. 2, 2018
www.studiapaedagogica.cz
https://doi.org/10.5817/SP2018-2-5

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE WORK CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF ADULTS IN A SOCIETY AFTER A MACROSOCIAL TRANSITION

KATARÍNA MILLOVÁ,
MAREK BLATNÝ

Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore how the objective and subjective characteristics of the work domain relate to generativity and stagnation as indicators of successful psychosocial development. We focused on an age cohort whose work trajectory started during the important macrosocial changes that Czech society underwent in the 1980s and 1990s. One hundred and fifty people, of which 87 were women, participated in two ongoing longitudinal studies which commenced in 1956 (Prague) and 1961 (Brno). Work characteristics (job satisfaction, occupational status, and career stability) were surveyed in 2011 (mean age 50.24, SD = 2.96) while generativity (generative concern, generative action) and stagnation were measured in 2016 (mean age 54.82, SD = 2.88). Participants' job satisfaction and the occupational status of their current work functions proved to be the best predictors of generative concern and stagnation. In contrast, long-term career stability did not prove to be a significant predictor of generativity or stagnation. Our findings are discussed in the context of the macrosocial changes that have occurred in Czech society as well as the context of successful development.

Keywords

generativity, longitudinal study, macrosocial transition, successful development, work domain

Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed substantially increasing interest in positive personality characteristics, particularly in relation to positive psychology and its development (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In terms of adult functioning, attention has been paid to *successful functioning* or *successful development* (Pulkkinen & Caspi, 2002). Staudinger and Kunzmann (2005) described two aspects of successful development: the internal dimension, which refers to social adaptation (adaptation to social standards), and the external dimension, which applies to personal growth (development towards the ideal state). Social adaptation is mainly related to the factors of family and work, while professional growth is rather linked to psychological variables (well-being). Both of these components are largely affected by macrosocial changes. Macrosocial factors significantly influence the psychological characteristics (values approved by society) and social characteristics (social norms and requirements) of successful development (Silbereisen, Pinquart, & Tomasik, 2010). Our research is aimed at focusing on work factors as important components of successful development that are significantly transformable by macrosocial changes. We understand successful development as generativity that includes both psychological and social functioning; in other words, adaptation (fulfilment of societal demands, care for others) and growth (development of inner potential, creativity) (Dillon & Wink, 2007; Wink & Staudinger, 2016).

So far, *generativity* has been mostly understood as a pivotal subject of mid-adulthood relating to the creation of new products and their benefit to future generations, the transfer of values, and care for others (Erikson, 2002, 2015). Nevertheless, the current approach to generativity is more complex. Various studies have followed McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) model with seven dimensions: cultural demand, inner desire, generative concern, a belief in the good nature of mankind, a feeling of commitment, generative action, and narration of one's own life story. These dimensions cover the motivational, cognitive, behavioural, and semantic components of generativity (McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan, 1993). The opposite of generativity is *stagnation*, focusing on preoccupation with, or even absorption by, oneself. Stagnation appears at the level of an individual (self-rejection) in relation to others (neglect or rejection of care for others, authoritarianism) and at the level of the entire society (inability to create new things and ideas, inability to disseminate and transfer societal values) (Erikson, 2002, 2015; Slater, 2003). Erikson (2015) considered generativity as a dynamic process in which generative people may also experience temporary states of stagnation, while Van Hiel, Mervielde, and De Fruyt (2006) pointed out that generativity and stagnation may be two independent dimensions, and therefore people can

achieve high or low levels in both areas simultaneously. The *work domain* is not only a key aspect of social functioning over the entire course of adulthood, it is also an important component of the social dimension of successful development. It is connected with some notably important work characteristics such as career stability, socio-economic status, and job satisfaction (Pulkkinen, Nygren, & Kokko, 2002). Moreover, work generativity constitutes an area fully independent from other types of generativity (parental, civic; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). In work settings, this is manifested by work productivity (creation and maintenance of products), mentoring (transference of knowledge and values to younger colleagues), and leadership (cf. Arnold & Clark, 2016; Clark & Arnold, 2008). Nevertheless, the intergenerational shift of values brings more weight to the "crisis of generativity". This also appears in the domain of work because younger generations do not appreciate the values and knowledge offered to them by older generations, instead rather emphasizing information attained through sociotechnical skills (cf. de St. Aubin, McAdams, & Kim, 2003; Sanders & McCready, 2010).

Research on generativity and employment has dealt with subjective features of work evaluation, such as job satisfaction and subjective career success (Ackerman, Zuroff, & Moskowitz, 2000; Clark & Arnold, 2008; Grossbaum & Bates, 2002), opportunities for decision-making at work, and the feeling of control and support from colleagues (Sanders & McCready, 2010). Studies exploring the objective features of work have mainly dealt with occupational status (Stamov-Rossnagel & Biemann, 2011; Westermeyer, 2004). However, research in this area is rather disorganized and the results are often ambiguous. Research in the field of stagnation is also limited. The only existing empirical study of the correlation between stagnation and work was carried out by Bradley (1992, 1997). Using a semi-structured interview, she found that stagnation was connected with the minimum involvement of the worker and the worker's efforts in the work process and relationships with colleagues. Other features she identified included "busywork" and filling time in the case of unsatisfying work.

Current study

Previous studies have implied a few limitations important for the current research design, research sample, and characteristics observed. Unlike cross-sectional studies that have not covered successful development over the entire span (e.g. Clark & Arnold, 2008), our research is based on longitudinal data. Other studies have focused on only one dimension of generativity, namely generative concern (e.g. Sanders & McCready, 2010), while ours takes another component into account – generative action, which has been explored much

less systematically thus far. There are studies that have considered multiple dimensions of generativity, but they are limited by their samples, with some focused on only university-educated people (e.g. Westermeyer, 2004) and others dealing solely with men (Arnold & Clark, 2016; Clark & Arnold, 2008). These are the limits that our study strives to overcome. In view of the macrosocial changes in our society, we took into consideration a subjective facet of employment (job satisfaction) as well as objective dimensions (occupational status and, in particular, career stability). The latter reflects long-term processes at both the macro level (society) and the micro level (individual) better than the subjective element, which is strongly affected by current experience.

The main objective of this study was to determine whether subjective and objective work characteristics predict generativity and stagnation as indicators of successful psychosocial development. Based on previous research (e.g. Ackerman et al., 2000; Clark & Arnold, 2008), our assumption was that generativity would relate to higher job satisfaction, higher occupational status, and a more stable career. In contrast, we supposed that higher levels of stagnation would relate to people whose job satisfaction, occupational status, and career were rather low and unstable.

Method

Sample

The participants were drawn from two longitudinal studies of human lifespan development carried out in the cities of Brno and Prague. The Brno longitudinal study is a continuation of another longitudinal survey, "Psychological development of school children coming from different social environments," which was carried out by the Institute of Psychology of the Czech Academy of Sciences between 1961 and 1980. It started with 557 children born between 1961 and 1964. As expected, the data set suffered from attrition over the course of the study. Due to the transition from basic to secondary schools, there was a significant decrease in the number of participants at age 16 (331 participants). The Prague longitudinal study of human lifespan development followed "Longitudinal observation of growth and mental development of normal children in a sample monitored from their birth," a study carried out by the National Institute of Public Health from 1956–1980. This research comprised 287 children born during 1956 to 1960. The Prague data set also suffered from attrition, with the number of participants decreasing due to the transition into basic and, subsequently, secondary schools. At the age of 20, 176 people remained from the original data set.

Both surveys were restarted during the participants' adulthood: the Prague longitudinal study was renewed in 1994 and the Brno longitudinal study in 2000. The methodologies for the two data sets were unified in 2011. Another joint survey wave took place in 2016. In 2011, data were collected from 160 people (76 in the Brno data set and 84 in the Prague data set – 91 women, average age 50.35, *SD* = 2.80). In 2016, data were collected from 153 people (77 in the Brno data set and 76 in the Prague data set – 88 women, average age 54.78, *SD* = 2.90). Regarding the focus of the research, adult analyses were carried out only with individuals who participated in both waves (2011 and 2016) in their adulthood. There were 150 people involved in both waves (75 in the Brno set and 75 in the Prague set – 87 women, average age 50.24 in 2011, *SD* = 2.96; average age 54.82 in 2016; *SD* = 2.88). Of these participants, 45.3% (*n* = 68) had completed secondary education, 45.3% (*n* = 68) had achieved higher education, 75.3% (*n* = 113) were in a partnership or marriage, 15.3% (*n* = 23) were divorced, 2.7% (*n* = 4) were widowed, 6.7% (*n* = 10) were single, 10% (*n* = 15) were childless, and 90% (*n* = 135) had biological children.

Instruments

Generativity

The level of *generative concern* was identified by means of the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) in its Czech version by Millová, Blatný, Poláčková, and Jelínek (2018) with 20 items. The LGS covers the following areas of generative concern: passing on knowledge/skills to other people or younger generations, contributing to the betterment of one's community, leaving an enduring legacy, being creative and productive, and care for others. The items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*very often*). Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.73. The questionnaire was administered in 2016.

Generative action was measured by the Generativity Behavior Checklist (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) in its Czech version by Millová et al. (2018) with 50 items. Statements describing various types of generative behaviour are rated on a 3-point scale. Forty of the items refer to activities performed in the previous 2 months, relating to generativity in three different ways: creativity (material and mental productivity), maintenance (protection, care, and resumption of valuable behaviour), and offering (unselfish provision of existing things or values to other people) (McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998). Ten of the items are related to rather non-generative activities, such as dinner in a restaurant and going to the theatre. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.79. This questionnaire was administered in 2016.

Stagnation

Based on Bradley's (1997) model of generative status, the Bradley-based Stagnation Scale (BSS; Van Hiel et al., 2006) is a 30-item method to measure stagnation. Using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*certainly don't agree*) to 5 (*certainly agree*), the scale explores stagnation of self, stagnation in interpersonal relations, stagnation in employment, and stagnation in society. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.84. This questionnaire was translated into Czech for this research and administered in 2016.

Work characteristics

The identification of *objective work characteristics* was based on *career stability* and *occupational status*.

Data on career stability were obtained from entries in the Life History Calendar (Caspi et al., 1996) as adapted by L. Pulkkinen from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, which is a method to ascertain autobiographical data from objective life events (education, marriage, children, work). The methodology was also translated into Czech for the sake of this research. Using the data ascertained, we created a variable to characterize the respondents from the viewpoint of the lifelong course of their careers. According to the Finnish methodology, the respondents' professional careers were described as *stable, unstable*, or *changeable* (e.g. Pulkkinen, Ohranen, & Tolvanen, 1999). Similarly as Rönka, Kinnunen, and Pulkkinen (2001), we assessed career stability from the age of 27 because of the improved comparison of people with various levels of education. A stable career is characterized by work in a single profession without periods of unemployment. A changeable career occurs with people whose jobs have varied and for the most part did not correspond to a profession, who had started studying or removed themselves from the workforce in order to care for children or parents (other than maternity leave). An unstable career is defined by the highest variability of work and employment beyond the branch of a participant's former studies. With this group, there may have been periods of unemployment longer than a few months during which a new work position was not anticipated. Career stability was measured in 2011. Occupational status was also drawn from information found in the Life History Calendar. Based on an adaptation of the Goldthorp class scheme (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992; Katrňák, 2005), participants' employment was divided into three categories: 1 = low employment status (skilled and unskilled manual and agricultural workers); 2 = middle employment status (employees in services, routine non-manual workers, supervisors, etc.), and 3 = high employment status (professionals with higher or secondary-school educations, white-collar workers, managers, and technicians). Occupational status was also measured in 2011.

Subjective work characteristics were surveyed by means of the variability of job satisfaction. The Life Satisfaction Questionnaire (Fragebogen zur Lebenszufriedenheit; Fahrenberg, Myrtek, Schumacher, & Brähler, 2001) in its Czech version translated by Rodný and Rodná is a 70-item self-assessment method measuring life satisfaction in such various life domains as health, work, and friends. Each domain is measured by 7 items on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*high dissatisfaction*) to 7 (*high satisfaction*). For this study, we used a subscale that detected satisfaction with work and employment (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$). The questionnaire was administered in 2011.

Methods for the analysis

The correlations between career stability and occupational status and generative concern, generative action, and stagnation were tested by one-way ANOVA. The correlations between job satisfaction and generative concern, generative action, and stagnation were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Linear regression was used to explain the share of variability in generativity and stagnation attributable to career stability, occupational status, and job satisfaction. Data were processed with SPSS software.

Results

First, we explored the relationship between career stability and generativity/stagnation. The results of the one-way ANOVA are shown in Table 1. For generative concern, generative action, and stagnation, no difference was found among people with stable, changeable, and unstable careers. For objective career characteristics, we focused on occupational status. Our measurement of generativity and stagnation was based on affiliation with high, middle, and low occupational status. The results of this one-way ANOVA are shown in Table 2. Significant differences were detected in the generative concern category. The results of Tukey's post-hoc test showed that people with high occupational status reported significantly higher levels of generative concern than people with low occupational status did. As for stagnation, people with high occupational status reported significantly lower levels than those with low occupational status did.

Table 1
Differences among people with stable (n = 66), changeable (n = 41), and unstable (n = 40) work careers

Career stability – mean (*SD*)							
	stable	changeable	unstable	*F*	df	*p*	η^2
generative concern	31.754 (5.790)	32.775 (7.648)	30.846 (10.197)	0.547	2, 144	0.580	0.008
generative action	23.197 (6.957)	24.050 (9.323)	21.000 (10.496)	1.519	2,14	0.222	0.021
stagnation	70.315 (12.479)	68.158 (15.503)	72.222 (11.801)	1.318	2, 143	0.271	0.018

Note. Data from the BSS questionnaire (stagnation) were missing for 1 participant; data on career stability were missing for 3 participants.

Table 2
Differences among people with high (n = 106), middle (n = 22), and low (n = 21) occupational status

Occupational status – mean (*SD*)							
	high	middle	low	*F*	df	*p*	η^2
generative concern	32.741 (7.565)[a]	30.773 (7.104)[a,b]	25.772 (6.338)[b]	8.008	2, 146	0.002	0.099
generative action	23.305 (8.560)	23.046 (8.671)	19.952 (8.857)	1.329	2, 146	0.268	0.018
stagnation	68.610 (13.006)[a]	70.737 (7.849)[a,b]	78.125 (16.157)[b]	6.417	2, 145	0.001	0.081

Note. Data from the BSS questionnaire (stagnation) were missing for 1 participant; data on occupational status were missing for 1 participant.
a, b: One superscript letter designates groups which do not differ from each other; different letters designate significantly different groups (based on Tukey's post-hoc tests).

Based on the results of the correlation analysis, we can say that the subjective aspect of work career (job satisfaction) was significantly related to all characteristics under observation except for generative action. The relationship was positive for generative concern and negative for stagnation. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Relationship between job satisfaction and generativity/stagnation

	generative concern	generative action	stagnation	mean (SD)
mean (SD)	31.444 (7.662)	22.762 (8.644)	70.137 (13.150)	
job satisfaction	0.286**	0.142	−0.431**	27.930 (7.80)

** $p < 0.01$

The main goal of our research was to detect the overall correlation between objective and subjective aspects of work and generativity/stagnation and, at the same time, to determine the extent of their ability to explain the variability in generative concern, generative action, and stagnation (Table 4). Due to the nature of the data on occupational status and career stability, the data had to be modified to be suitable for a regression analysis (recoded as dummy variables). Work characteristics proved to be significant predictors only for generative concern and stagnation. As a specific feature, statistically significant positive regression coefficients were found for job satisfaction and generative concern and also for high occupational status and generative concern. In contrast, career stability did not prove to be a significant predictor. As for stagnation, a statistically significant negative regression coefficient was found for job satisfaction and high occupational status. As was the case for generative concern, career stability did not prove to be a significant predictor. As for generative action, no characteristics of the work domain (neither objective nor subjective) seemed to be significant predictors.

Table 4
Generativity and stagnation as predicted by objective and subjective work characteristics

	generative concern		generative action		stagnation	
	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	β
job satisfaction	0.291 (0.096)	0.239**	0.157 (0.114)	0.116	−0.113 (0.022)	−0.389**
middle occupational status	5.111 (2.310)	0.228*	3.184 (2.749)	0.127	−1.021 (0.529)	−0.189+
high occupational status	6.501 (1.807)	0.375**	3.193 (2.151)	0.165	−1.251 (0.414)	−0.301**
changeable career	0.388 (1.650)	0.022	2.496 (1.964)	0.129	−0.249 (0.378)	−0.060
stable career	−0.194 (1.472)	−0.012	2.075 (1.752)	0.119	−0.002 (0.337)	−0.001
R^2	0.165		0.053		0.243	
F (5, 138)	5.455**		1.151		8.847**	

Note. Data from the BSS questionnaire (stagnation) and data on occupational status were missing for 1 participant; data on job satisfaction and career stability were missing for 3 participants.
** $p < 0.01$
* $p < 0.05$
+ $p < 0.055$

Discussion

Our research was focused on careers as a component of successful development for people whose career trajectory was significantly influenced by macrosocial changes in Czech society in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Attitudes towards successful functioning have changed a great deal. As in other post-communist countries, employment—as one of the most important domains of adult functioning—underwent a significant transformation (diversification of career paths and unemployment; Mickiewicz, 2010). The career path of people who entered the job market during this transformation differs from that of their peers in more stable societies; it is more changeable, although such changeability may be perceived as positive (Blatný, Millová, Jelínek, & Osecká, 2015). On the other hand, certain characteristics such as socio-economic status show much greater intergenerational continuity in this country than in other societies in transition (e.g. post-Soviet countries; Millová, Blatný, & Jelínek, 2015; Titma & Tuma, 2005).

To stipulate a comprehensive indicator of successful development, we opted for generativity or stagnation, as the case may be. Unlike well-being, which is frequently used, generativity reflects the inner/subjective dimension of successful development, which is linked to personal growth, as well as the

outer/social dimension, which is linked to the demands of society (Wink & Staudinger, 2016). We found that (1) the objective and subjective components of the domain of work were significant predictors of generative concern and stagnation but not of the behavioural component of generativity (generative action), and (2) those work characteristics were significant predictors that related to more current functioning: occupational status and job satisfaction.

Such a comprehensive approach to generativity and work was applied deliberately. Most of the previous quantitative research on generativity dealt with only one of its components – generative concern, which is a rather hypothetically manifested interest in creation, maintenance, or assistance (cf. Millová & Blatný, 2016). The use of the multi-dimensional generativity model by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) was another reason for us to involve the aspect of realistic behaviour (generative action) and the component of stagnation, which had previously been taken into consideration in only a few studies. Furthermore, according to Van Hiel et al. (2006), stagnation is not only the opposite of generativity but rather a separate and independent dimension. Such an all-embracing approach was also adopted for the work domain: apart from the subjectively evaluated job satisfaction, on which a number of studies have been based (e.g. Ackerman et al., 2000; Clark & Arnold, 2008), we also observed more objective characteristics such as occupational status and career stability. Studies dealing with careers, in the context of successful development, regard them as very important elements in the exploration of the domain of work (Pulkkinen et al., 2002). In particular, career stability reflects functioning in the domain of work in a continuous way; it is evaluated as lifelong, from the age at which most people (including graduates of higher education) enter the labour market and start their first "serious" job (which was 27 in this research). Moreover, the domain of work and employment reflects the social, economic, and cultural transformation of a society, very precisely (cf. Silbereisen & Chen, 2010).

The aim of our research was to explore the relationship between generativity/stagnation and the domain of work for an age cohort largely affected by the macrosocial changes in Czech society in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Similarly as some other studies investigating generativity in the context of employment (e.g. Ackerman et al., 2000; Grossbaum & Bates, 2002), we looked at the subjective facet of work, job satisfaction. In terms of age, job satisfaction is represented by a U curve, being the highest in young adulthood (when people start working) and older adulthood (when careers reaches their peaks and people can see the fruits of their work as beneficial to themselves, future generations, and the whole of society). The older adulthood category includes the participants in our research. Similarly as some previous studies (Bradley, 1992; Clark & Arnold, 2008; Templer, Armstrong-Stassen, & Cattaneo, 2010), our study found a significant

correlation between generative concern and stagnation. Stagnation and other dimensions of generativity, such as commitment, belief in the species, and generative action, have rarely been explored in connection with the work domain. The insignificant correlation we detected between job satisfaction and generative action also appears in those few studies investigating other dimensions of generativity (Ackermann et al., 2000; Clark & Arnold, 2008; Grossbaum & Bates, 2002).

In contrast to previous research—which was rather aimed at the subjective aspects of work (job satisfaction, subjective career success)—we focused on generativity and stagnation in connection with objective facets of employment, such as occupational status and career stability. Our results show that generativity (i.e. generative concern) was related to *occupational status*: higher generativity was reported by people with high occupational status, which makes them significantly different from those with low occupational status. Similar results can be found in a longitudinal study carried out by Westermeyer (2004), but his sample consisted exclusively of university-educated men. Another study of generative concern and occupational status did not find any differences among people with various education levels at all but its authors used a different classification of occupational status (only educated people vs. workers) and followed generative motives for work rather than generative concern or other dimensions of generativity (Stamov-Rossnagel & Biemann, 2011). Our results are similar, albeit in the opposite direction – in the correlation between stagnation and occupational status. These two areas were significantly related to each other, with people of low occupational status recording higher stagnation than those with high occupational status did. Following Bradley's findings (1992, 1997), we can say that people who possess high occupational status (educated specialists according to the Goldthorp class scheme) usually perform more varied work tasks and have better remuneration. Work brings them more satisfaction and less of the feeling of busywork that is usually connected with stagnation. The correlation between generative action and occupational status was not significant.

Finally, in the context of generativity and stagnation, we focused on *career stability*. Similarly to occupational status, it is an objective indicator of careers but reflects better long-standing functioning in the domain of work. Our expectations were not met in this respect: not only was the dimension of a stable career lacking in relation to generativity or stagnation, but other dimensions (changeable career, unstable career) also did not prove to be related. Careers, in the sense of objectively evaluated stability, had not previously been researched in the context of generativity and stagnation. Employing a rather subjective perspective (as forward career momentum

and career maintenance), Arnold and Clark (2016) examined career typology. The results of their study indicate that despite a significant relationship between subjectively evaluated types of careers and generativity, personal characteristics contributed much more to generativity: what the career of people aged 50 and older looks like is a function of their individual personality rather than the stage at which their career is. Moreover, although a stable career is associated with successful development (Pulkkinen et al., 2002), its characteristics in our data set were different. In particular, changeable careers were more frequent in our study than they are with people from societies that have not gone through a macrosocial transition in the last generation and, at the same time, such careers were perceived more positively (Blatný et al., 2015; Kokko & Pulkkinen, 1998).

Our results indicate that both the subjective characteristics (which have been researched more often) and the objective characteristics of a career influenced generative concern and stagnation. Nonetheless, subjective job satisfaction as well as objective occupational status refer, rather, to current psychosocial functioning. Career stability, which best reflects more long-standing functioning, did not show significant correlations with the variables observed. In the dimensions of generativity and stagnation explored, significant correlations were detected only for generative concern and stagnation. These dimensions are related, at least partly (fully for generative concern), to processes and states that are not necessarily connected with real actions. We did not find any significant correlation with the behavioural component of generativity (generative action). However, this result is not so surprising as a variety of other studies have shown that generative action is conditioned by a number of factors, especially personal traits and other characteristic adaptations (Cheng, 2009; de St. Aubin & McAdams, 1995).

Since generativity reflects intrapersonal and social aspects of successful development (cultural demands), the cultural aspect of research is essential and the society in which generativity is researched largely affects its concrete manifestations. Generativity had not previously been systematically explored in post-communist countries – especially in comparison to American research. Studies that have dealt with generativity in these countries were carried out through qualitative approaches and personal narration. In any case, even their results indicate that the macrosocial changes the post-communist countries went through, along with rather unclear national identities, have affected the overall level of generativity (Kruse & Schmitt, 2012; Schmitt, Hinner, & Kruse, 2011). Therefore, the macrosocial aspects of a society can be important factors for the manifestation of the variables we observed in our research.

Limitations

One of our main goals was to explore work characteristics in the context of generativity and stagnation. Although the elements that capture current functioning (job satisfaction, occupational status) were enhanced by career stability—which better reflects the long-term perspective—it would certainly be helpful to broaden this part of the research, for instance by observing the subjectively evaluated stage of a career (e.g. advancing, re-cycling, maintaining, or disenganging; Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). Despite the assumption that people reach the climax of their careers in mid adulthood, age does not necessarily correspond with particular stages of a career, especially for changeable and unstable careers (cf. Arnold & Clark, 2016).

Another limitation of the study stems from the measurement of generativity and stagnation by means of self-report methods. The results of some intercultural studies and research done outside of the US indicate that the current operationalization of generativity may be culture-dependent, an issue to which self-report methods are less sensitive than qualitative approaches (cf. Millová et al., 2018). The limits of self-reporting are also connected to the Generativity Behavior Checklist, which explores generative action in the previous two months. Some situations, such as blood donation and election voting, are not likely to be encountered in such a relatively short time. Although this system (two-month duration) is usually applied for the Generativity Behavior Checklist in research, a longer time span could generate different results.

Conclusion

In our study, we explored how the objective (occupational status, career line) and subjective (job satisfaction) characteristics of the work domain relate to generativity and stagnation as indicators of successful psychosocial development. People with a high level of generative concern and a low level of stagnation were above all satisfied with their work and had a high occupational status. Longitudinal data leads us to the conclusion that job positions associated with responsibility, the opportunity to independently organize the worker's own activities, and the use of creativity lead to higher later interest in being a benefit to society, preserving the legacy of the self, and engaging in intergenerational caring. Further research should clarify which specific aspects of work lead to generativity, as even high occupational status may have such negative consequences as perceived stress.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by RVO, the Czech Republic's support for the long-term strategic development of research organizations (RVO 68081740 and RVO 00216224).

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Corresponding authors
Katarína Millová
Institute of Psychology, Czech Academy of Sciences & Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
E-mail: katarina@psu.cas.cz

Marek Blatný
Institute of Psychology, Czech Academy of Sciences & Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
E-mail: blatny@phil.muni.cz