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SELECTED ASPECTS OF THE UNFAIR STRUGGLE FOR JOB POSITIONS

Анотація. *Тема недобросовісної конкуренції за посади є важливою, але недостатньо дослідженою проблемою в сферах управлінської та ділової етики. Це дослідження має на меті пролити світло на цю проблему шляхом вивчення трьох основних тем, пов'язаних з неетичною боротьбою за робочі місця. Перша тема стосується бар'єрів, які перешкоджають ефективному запобіганню неетичній поведінці на робочому місці. Дослідження має на меті надійно визначити ці перешкоди та дослідити конкретні причини, які перешкоджають зусиллям по приборканню такої поведінки. Друга тема досліджує складний зв'язок між етичними кодексами та неетичною конкуренцією за посади. Не всі етичні кодекси є ефективними; деякі можуть ненавмисно підтримувати поведінку, яка дозволяє менеджерам зловживати своєю владою, щоб усунути потенційних суперників. Це явище, відоме як «прихований босинг», пов'язане з використанням керівниками обов'язкових, але етично сумнівних моделей поведінки в поєднанні з санкціями як інструментів для збереження контролю та придушення конкуренції. Дослідження підкреслює потребу в етичних кодексах, які чітко вказують на механізми відбору на керівні посади, включаючи застосування санкцій за порушення цих кодексів. Третя тема зосереджена на виявленні особистісних рис осіб, схильних використовувати нечесні засоби для підйому по службових сходах. Досліджуються такі риси, як егоїзм, первинний і вторинний нарцисизм, схильність до маніпулятивної поведінки. Дослідження заглиблюється в психологічне підґрунтя цих рис, підкреслюючи, що егоцентричні особистості та люди з нарцисичним розладом особистості з більшою ймовірністю вступають у неетичну конкуренцію. Результати цього дослідження мають значний вплив на організаційну культуру та практику управління. Виявляючи бар'єри для етичної поведінки та риси особистості, пов'язані з неетичною конкуренцією, дослідження пропонує практичні рекомендації щодо сприяння більш етичному робочому середовищу. Вони включають розробку етичних кодексів, які є інтегрованими в політику організації, а також сприяння культурі підзвітності та етичної відповідальності.*

Ключові слова: *нечесна боротьба за посади, економіка, етика управління, організаційна культура*

JEL Classification: D 90, D 91



Absztrakt. A pozícióért való tisztességtelen verseny témája a vezetés és az üzleti etika egyik fontos, de kevésbé vizsgált problémaköre. Ez a tanulmány erre a kérdésre kíván rávilágítani az etikátlan állásversennyel kapcsolatos három fő téma vizsgálatával. Az első téma az etikátlan munkahelyi magatartás hatékony megelőzésének akadályaira vonatkozik. A kutatás célja, hogy megbízhatóan azonosítsa ezeket az akadályokat, és megvizsgálja azokat a konkrét okokat, amelyek hátráltatják az ilyen magatartás visszaszorítására irányuló erőfeszítéseket. A második téma az etikai kódexek és az etikátlan állásverseny közötti összetett kapcsolatot tárja fel. Nem minden etikai kódex hatékony; egyesek akaratlanul is támogathatnak olyan magatartásokat, amelyek lehetővé teszik a menedzserek számára, hogy visszaéljenek hatalmukkal a potenciális riválisok kiiktatására. Ez a „titkolt főnökségként” ismert jelenség azt jelenti, hogy a vezetők kötelező, de etikailag kétes viselkedési minták és szankciók kombinációját alkalmazzák az ellenőrzés fenntartása és a verseny elfojtása érdekében. A tanulmány hangsúlyozza az olyan etikai kódexek szükségességét, amelyek egyértelműen jelzik a vezetői pozíciók kiválasztásának mechanizmusait, beleértve a szankciók alkalmazását e kódexek megsértése esetén. A harmadik téma azon személyek személyes tulajdonságainak azonosítását célozza, akik tisztességtelen módon igyekeznek felmászni a hivatalos ranglétrán. A cikk olyan jellemzőket vizsgál, mint az önzés, az elsődleges és másodlagos nárcizmus, valamint a manipulatív viselkedésre való hajlam. A tanulmány e tulajdonságok pszichológiai hátterét vizsgálja, rávilágítva arra, hogy az énközpontú egyének és a nárcisztikus személyiségzavarban szenvedők hajlamosabbak az etikátlan versengésre. A kutatás eredményei jelentős hatással vannak a szervezeti kultúrára és a vezetési gyakorlatra. Az etikus viselkedés akadályait és az etikátlan versengéshez kapcsolódó személyiségjegyek azonosításával a tanulmány gyakorlati ajánlásokat kínál az etikusabb munkakörnyezet előmozdításához. Ezek közé tartozik a szervezeti politikákba integrált etikai kódexek kidolgozása, valamint az elszámoltathatóság és az etikai felelősségvállalás kultúrájának előmozdítása.

Kulcsszavak: tisztességtelen verseny a pozícióért, közgazdaságtan, vezetési etika, szervezeti kultúra.

Abstract. The topic of unfair competition for job positions is a significant yet underexplored issue within the domains of managerial and business ethics. This study aims to shed light on this problem by examining three core themes related to unethical struggles for job positions. The first theme addresses the barriers that inhibit effective prevention of unethical behavior in the workplace. The study aims to identify these barriers reliably and explore specific reasons that obstruct efforts to curb such behavior. The second theme investigates the intricate relationship between ethical codes and unethical competition for positions. Not all ethical codes are effective; some may inadvertently support behaviors that allow managers to abuse their power to eliminate potential rivals. This phenomenon, known as “hidden bossing”, involves managers using mandatory but ethically dubious behavior models, combined with sanctions, as tools for maintaining control and stifling competition. The study underscores the need for ethical codes that explicitly address the selection mechanisms for managerial positions, including the imposition of sanctions for violations of these codes. The third theme focuses on identifying the personality traits of individuals prone to using unfair means to climb the corporate ladder. Traits such as egotism, primary and secondary narcissism, and a tendency toward manipulative behavior are examined. The research delves into the psychological underpinnings of these traits, highlighting how self-centered personalities and individuals with narcissistic personality disorder are more likely to engage in unethical competition. The results of this research have significant implications for organizational culture and management practices. By identifying the barriers to ethical behavior and the personality traits associated with unethical competition, the study offers practical recommendations for fostering a more ethical workplace. These include the development of ethical codes that are integrated with organizational policies and the promotion of a culture of accountability and ethical responsibility.

Keywords: unfair struggle for job positions, economics, ethics of management, organizational culture

Problem description. Our paper examines selected aspects of the unethical struggle for job positions. The first area explores the causes of such behavior in the workplace, aiming to identify several reasons for the inclination towards unethical actions. The second area investigates the potential connections between ethical codes and the unethical filling of job positions. Finally, the study seeks to determine the typical personality traits associated with individuals who pursue higher job positions through indiscriminate and unethical means.

Literature review. When developing the study, various literature sources have been used, f.i. [8], [5], [14] etc. Moreover, there are also other valuable publications that refer to the given issue [1], [2], [7].

Goals of the article. The research is interdisciplinary, primarily focusing on applied ethics with significant contributions from psychology. The systematic procedure involves analyzing various causes of unethical behavior in organizations through deduction and literature review. The goal is to identify these causes, relying on psychological insights. Subsequently, the study aims to explore the relationship between the unethical struggle for higher job positions and ethical codes, with an emphasis on the potential harmful effects of these codes. Additionally, the research seeks to determine the characteristic features of individuals who exhibit such unethical behavior, highlighting the connection between applied ethics and psychology.

Results and discussions. As one of the barriers to the implementation of ethics in the company, our authors mention the absence of sanctions for behavior that shows unethical features. As a result of this phenomenon, a general mistrust of ethical instruments that do not contain a sanction may arise within the company. Not sanctioning a gross violation of ethics is obviously a gross mistake that can lead to, among other things, an unfair fight for leading job positions. In the end, this too can weaken the possibilities of prophylaxis against unethical competition for leadership positions, that, for the stated reasons, the ethical tools simply will not be there. Another significant reason for sabotage was the fear of change. Change often means new rules, it can break a stereotype that certain comfortable employees can suit. The fear in question does not necessarily mean the fear of being exposed, but those who commit unethical acts will certainly not support change. Sometimes it even happens that an obstacle can be the internal and external non-acceptance of ethical tools already implemented within a certain company by other companies for which this introduction is not advantageous (disruption of established mutually beneficial relationships, control of certain contracts, the possibility of revealing possible clientelism, etc.). It may limit their eventual interests, which may not always be transparent. Although these other companies cannot directly decide on the internal affairs of other companies, they may, for such reasons, try to put the company that has adopted certain ethical tools at a disadvantage on the market. This again leads to possible unethical behavior including unethical competition for leadership positions.

Of course, barriers may already exist within the organization. We have already mentioned the fear of change and not taking action against unethical behavior. Another



reason may be the lack of interest on the part of the owners and shareholders of large companies in ethical activities in the company. "Another barrier to introducing ethics into the company is the mindset of the employees themselves" [13, p. 108]. This may not be consistent with the establishment of ethical institutions. Less educated employees often have no idea what the aforementioned institutions mean and view them with distrust. It is in these cases that ethical education in the form of trainings, seminars, lectures, etc. helps. This will help to obtain information, knowledge and, ultimately, knowledge about the meaning of the tools of organizational, business and managerial ethics in the workplace.

We can also find other barriers. It can also be lethargy, in which the management, employees and various stakeholders do not care at all whether the conditions for the immediate emergence of unethical competition for leadership positions are created in the company, or whether it is already latently emerging. Many employees, and in some cases, unfortunately, also company officials, achieve remarkable indifference to the situation and to the affairs of the organization in general, and as a rule, they know how to mobilize, especially when it comes to their salary, or job classification, or employment relationship. In this context, general indifference can be manifested by a reluctance to apply whistleblowing, to intervene with higher authorities, or to conduct ethical conversations with those who are prone to this type of behavior. Indifference can be seen as a narrowing of interest in the company to one's own work duties and a causal relationship to wages, or to job classification. This factor tends to be quite important in the possibility of unethical competition for leadership positions prevention failure. It is necessary to motivate people, to catch them.

Although ethical codes are mostly viewed positively, the impact of their action is not necessarily always positive. In the best case, the absence of a positive impact can be what Klimeková refers to as axiological illusoryness [5]. In this case, the word ethics "fulfills only the function of decoration and camouflages the creators' ignorance of its content and creates the illusion of depth of knowledge of the problem as the nobility of action" [5, p. 61]. Codes of ethics do not seem to apply to the topic of unethical competition for leadership positions. However, the reality is different from this appearance. The first positive relationship is that, above all, the corporate regulatory code of ethics can contain specific points that could at least partially eliminate selected models of behavior that can be considered unethical competition for leadership positions. Above all, these are various elements of demonstrable influence on intimidation, defamation of candidates for a managerial position, or active attack on a candidate in any sense of the word. In this sense, it would be appropriate for the regulatory code of ethics to comment on the ethical side of the structure of the mechanisms for selecting the person who should occupy the managerial position. The threatened sanction should be exclusion from the competition. In case of a serious violation of the ethical rules of the selection mechanisms for the position, the sanction would simply be applied.

We get an even more prominent picture if we combine the draft of the presented code of ethics with the draft of the work order. According to this proposal, acting contrary to the principles of the code of ethics is considered a serious violation of work



discipline. The draft also contains a point according to which disrespecting the employer's authority, even solving the employer's internal problems outside of the processes presented by the internal regulation, is a serious violation of work discipline. The draft of the work regulations also prohibits derogatory or even disrespectful comments to the address of another employee. As a sanction for violating the proposed work regulations, which are organically connected with the proposed code of ethics, in the mildest case, the reduction or withdrawal of the personal allowance for at least a quarter of a year. More serious sanctions are shortening of vacation, termination of employment, including immediate termination of employment. "Avoidance of punishment explains the origin of ethics or self-regulation in most trades and professions" [8, p. 6]. Avoiding sanctions is a natural behavior of employees. The ideal state is not to be affected by any of the sanctions during the work process, preferably during the entire productive period.

We consider the proposed combination of ethical and work regulations to be extremely problematic in the sense of the proposal in question. This is because it can be exploited primarily for bossing, and it gives a sufficiently refined personality in a leading managerial position enough maneuvering space for unethical competition for leadership positions. A derogatory, disrespectful statement directed at an employee essentially means a ban on criticism not only of the rank-and-file employee, but also of the manager. While a manager can wrap specific criticism towards an employee in managerial competences, which primarily include management and control, criticism directed vice versa can, on the contrary, be accepted as a violation of the work order and, if it happens with the participation of persons outside the workplace, also as an act in contrary to the ethical code of the organization. Thus, the work order can essentially become an instrument of sanction. If the mildest sanction is a reduction of the personal allowance for three months, the draft corporate regulatory code of ethics together with the draft work order serves as a possible pretext for imposing sanctions on an employee who, within the organization or outside it, criticizes a senior employee. In this case, the legitimacy of criticism would not change the possibility of imposing even very severe sanctions, including immediate dismissal from the workplace. Naturally, the manager, who can prepare for years to try again to defend the managerial position, thereby receives a tool to level the criticism directed at him with sanctioned behavior. "The threat of sanctions for non-compliance can give employees strong reasons to follow the code" [15, p. 199]. In this way, it can eliminate, by applying the harshest sanctions, potential competition.

Naturally, such an effort on the part of the manager is transparent, since even the sanctioned employee has the right to participate as a candidate in the selection process for a managerial position. Such a code should come into force only after approval by the organization's employees. In the specific case that we mentioned, neither the code of ethics nor the work order was approved, considering the points presented. So both documents remained only in draft status. "A code that is isolated is essentially misleading to all who come into contact with the company that purports to own it" [16, p. 192]. In many cases, the isolation can only be broken by its approval by the employees. This did not happen in our case. In the end, even the manager who tried to



get them into force, not only did not push for their legalization, but he was not successful in trying to defend his position again. A competing candidate for the position of director won. This failure, as well as the opposition to the aforementioned proposals, depressed him to the extent that he left to work at another workplace at his own request.

A code of ethics, especially a corporate one, can also serve other than ethical interests. Sometimes these are just the fixed ideas of those who try to implement them into ethical codes. In some cases, it can be abuse, leading to bossing. Exercising one's own ideas regardless of the opinion of employees can, if successful, also mean, as we have demonstrated in the example, the official establishment of mechanisms that support cheering. According to Ryżinski, "there are many situations where a company's code of ethics either does not make sense or can even be harmful" [14, p. 155]. Remišová, a well-known expert on business and managerial ethics, cites their excessive generality and vagueness, weak effectiveness, declared standards without sanctions, or that they are too directive as possible disadvantages" [13, p. 223]. However, she did not mention its possible harmfulness. We believe that the presented probe into one real proposal for a corporate regulatory code of ethics and work order, which was ultimately not implemented in practice, is sufficient evidence that even the code of ethics can have a harmful effect. In our case, it can become a fairly effective unethical competition for leadership positions tool.

A basic feature of the personality, which usually fulfills the characteristics of behavioral models typical for unethical competition for leadership positions, is egoism. This personality trait is usually very prominent in this group of people. We can call it the dominant feature of the subject group of personalities. Such a personality perceives itself as the center of all events and activities. Their own selves regard its benefit as a value to which they subordinate other circumstances that can be modified by them and their activity. From an axiological point of view, these are self-centered personalities. Any orientation in life cannot be described as egoism at the first level. "Having children, being educated and employed is pleasant, fulfilling for most of us and, in a certain sense, perhaps selfish. Secondarily, however, others "benefit" from these indicators" [10]. Philosopher Klimeková distinguishes between three types of egoism: "1) o individual (subject) egoism 2) o group egoism (the strictness of the separation of the group is also manifested in the moral sphere, especially in the determination of obligations and the hierarchy of values and in general in the entire sphere of moral axiology) and 3) about national egoism (exposing the ethical value of egoism in cooperation with other nations)" [5, p. 61]. In our case, it is the first type, i.e. j. about individual egoism. In some cases, "the subject uses the fact of its own usefulness and convenience as an evaluation criterion" [6, p. 28]. Then it will be rational egoism, and such a personality, according to Kondrla, is either a consistent egoist or an extreme hedonist. However, it is obvious that a person does not only make decisions rationally, but is also influenced by affects and will. According to B. Spinoza, these are only affects that are simply responsible for ethical decision-making. "Spinoza here distinguished three basic affects, namely joy, sadness and desire" [11, p. 22]. Affects have different effects on different people, according to Spinoza, the joy of a drunkard looks different and the joy of a

philosopher looks different. Therefore, human decision-making is not only about rational calculation.

Egoism partly results from a person's self-centeredness, simply such a person has himself and his good as one of the highest values, often it is directly the highest value and subordinates others to it. If he regards other values as secondary and subordinates them to his own benefit, he thus adapts other circumstances to himself. In Kant's words, he regards man (other) as a means, but not as an end. He considers his own satisfaction as the goal. In the context of a connection with a managerial function, this characteristic can be considered undesirable, because it can come into value conflict with the interests of the company and its employees. Such kind of people, due to greed for profit, can commit fraud, often in a sensitive area, for example pharmaceuticals [3].

Another possible characteristic of such an individual can be morbid, excessive ambition. This quality in itself is not negative, but it must have limits. Timocracy, which was never considered the ideal form of the state, is connected with this. It is a search for honor by state officials, which can turn into a morbid ambition or a morbid desire for property. Solon also mentions it. Plato considers it a worse form of government than the government of the philosophers, which he prefers. Aristotle is also devoted to it. None of the philosophers considered it a form of government worth following, because it leads to the preference of persons with excessive ambition. Even in the Constitution, Plato makes it clear that the philosopher, although he has knowledge of ideas (and in the *Epinomis* he has knowledge of number), does not desire to participate in government and, unless it is necessary, tries to avoid it. Participation in the government takes over only in case of necessity, participation in power is not the goal of the philosopher. Thus, a true philosopher does not have the characteristic of morbid ambition, which also determines his relationship to functions. The proverbial nocturnal gatherings in *Epinomis*, which also appeared in the sci-fi film *Judge Dredd* (1995), are not where a true philosopher would want to attend. The opposite of this relationship is typical for a person who has predispositions to show signs of behavior characterized as unethical competition for leadership positions. Such a personality yearns for functions and is associated with ambition to a degree that is higher than the usual desire to do the job as well as possible. It differs from her in the way of being better at any price, or to have the highest possible position at basically any cost. It is this quality that largely becomes the trigger of behavior leading to unethical competition for leadership positions in tense situations.

A typical individual who becomes the initiator of unethical competition for leadership positions often also suffers from a narcissistic personality disorder. As Kaščáková states, a typical example is Dostoevsky's literary hero Raskolnikov and his narcissistic defenses. The author draws attention to the difference between healthy and pathological narcissism. Instead of the term healthy narcissism, psychologist A. Miller recommends using the term inner freedom and vitality. "If in childhood there is admiration instead of love from the parent(s), the child serves the narcissistic parent as an object of narcissistic satisfaction" [4, p. 41]. The mentioned author mentions some symptoms of the said personality disorder. It is the so-called grandiose self, like addiction to praise, admiration. The collapse of this image often means a devastating



condition for such an individual. Envy and evasive behavior towards others is very common. Tendencies to exploit others can be observed. A deficit value system is typical, such an individual feels ashamed rather than guilty, is unable to grieve, rather experiences hopelessness and helplessness instead of grief [4, p. 42]. They also suffer from a state of boredom, emptiness, feelings of loneliness and meaninglessness of life.

In the mentioned description, it can be seen that the relative success of the individual is in a state of exclusion with full signs of this disorder. This means that an individual who should have at least a little real chance to succeed in unethical competition for leadership positions, or to make it sophisticated and stay in a leading position for a long time, can hardly suffer from a developed narcissistic personality disorder. Such a disorder is characterized by tendencies toward addiction, learning disabilities, seeking dangerous sports and adventures, suffering from feelings of meaninglessness, and exhibiting sexually seductive behavior [4, p. 42]. If we want to discuss a personality whose behavior showing signs of unethical competition for leadership positions is one of the sources of narcissistic personality disorder, it will probably not be about the entire range of symptoms, but only the fulfillment of some of them. According to us, a personality can show selected signs of pathological narcissistic disorder, but is not affected by it in its entirety. It would make it impossible for her to function elementary in her personal and professional life to a degree that could at least conditionally be described as a successful working career. It cannot be pathological or malignant narcissism. "A pathological narcissist usually has an overdeveloped sense of self-worth and generally believes that he is better than anyone else. This usually leads the narcissist to treat others rudely, impolitely, be incredibly demanding, focus only on himself and lack the ability to empathize with other people" [9, p. 13]. For example, rage is typical for this serious form of narcissism.

Another characteristic that tends to be associated with unethical competition for leadership positions actors is a tendency to manipulative behavior. What does it mean? It means behavior that manipulates another person, that is, based on communication, he tries to control him in such a way that he imposes his attitude, opinion, influences the person in such a way that he becomes a tool of the manipulator. The key is that the manipulated person is not aware of these circumstances. If he became aware of them, he would naturally try to defend them. Such behavior in the workplace will make it possible to use another person for the hidden intentions of the manipulator. There is a significant difference between the mechanisms of persuasion and influence and between manipulation. Manipulation is a hidden action that tries to indirectly control others, with the fact that the manipulator uses clever tricks to take away their natural right to opinion and choice. It is essentially "persuasion using dishonest techniques" [12, p. 21]. In the case of a personality who develops unethical competition for leadership positions activities, the manipulation is mostly connected with the primary goal of obtaining, consolidating, or maintaining the position of a leading managerial position. If not, it is often a direct or indirect enforcement of a decision, attitude, opinion that leads to the personal benefit of the unethical competition for leadership positions actor. We believe that with personalities who have a behavior inclined to unethical competition for leadership positions, it is a conscious and not an unconscious manipulation.

Conclusion and prospects for further research. This paper deals with several aspects of unfair promotion to higher job positions. In the first part of the paper, we discussed the prevention barriers against the described undesirable behavior model. They are the absence of sanctions for behavior, fear of change, lack of interest of the owners, the mindset of the employees themselves, lethargy. They are also the disinterest of the managers, as well as the unpopularity of the manager in the collective. Sometimes the reason may be the immaturity of the employees. We have therefore summarized the possible obstacles that may work against the prevention of behavior that contains the characteristics of chairing. From our point of view, they may lie in the immaturity of employees (legal, managerial, ethical...), the influence of a popular manager on employees and people related to the organization, lethargy of employees, fear of change, as well as mistrust of ethical tools. This list does not claim to be complete. Secondly, we also follow the connections between ethical codes and the unethical struggle for positions. A code of ethics can sometimes have a harmful effect and itself becomes an instrument of such an unethical struggle. The third investigated side of the problem is the search for common features of people who have such behavioral models. A typical characteristic of society is egoism. Another characteristic could be morbid ambition. Sometimes it can also be a narcissistic personality disorder. This can be primary and secondary narcissism.

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