CAREER TRANSITION OF MIDDLE-AGED PROFESSIONALS

Transição de Carreira de Profissionais da Meia-Idade

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This article analyzes the career transition of middle-aged professionals, according to three factors: identity transition, transition drivers and resources triggered in transition.

Design/methodology/approach – Qualitative research, developed from semi-structured interviews with professionals between 35 and 54 years old. Content analysis was used in the evaluation categories and in the definition of the interview categories.

Findings – It was demonstrated, in part by the interviewees, the construction of expectations that alternated the accomplishment of a dream, with cycles of anguish, especially for the financial aspects involved. The subjective factors of the transition process appeared in the interviews, both due to the conflict between the search for personal satisfaction in the new career and the safety flow of the previous one, as well as the complex balance between personal and professional life during the transition.

Research limitations/implications – The sampling has no mathematical or statistical basis, preventing the generalization of its results. A quantitative study is recommended to understand how the transition occurs in middle-aged professionals, analyzing a large number of respondents.

Practical implications – For middle-aged professionals, this study suggests the need for planning in the career transition phase and the assimilation of the self-management logic as a definitive career dynamic.

Social implications - Companies must recognize the impact of career transitions on retaining professionals.

Originality/value - This article contributes on the elucidation of the main drivers and resources available for the career transition of middle-aged professionals.

Keywords - Career transition; middle-aged professional; professional identity.

RESUMO

Objetivos – Este artigo analisa a transição de carreira de profissionais de meia-idade, segundo três fatores: transição de identidade, condutores de transição e recursos desencadeados em transição.

Desígnio/metodologia/abordagem – Pesquisa qualitativa, desenvolvida à partir de entrevistas semiestruturadas com profissionais entre 35 e 54 anos de idade. A análise de conteúdo foi utilizada nas categorias de avaliação e na definição das categorias de entrevista.

Resultados – Demonstrou-se a construção, em parte dos entrevistados, de expectativas que alternavam a realização de um sonho, com ciclos de angústia, especialmente para os aspectos financeiros envolvidos. Os fatores subjetivos do processo de transição apareceram nas entrevistas, tanto pelo embate entre a busca da satisfação pessoal na nova carreira e o fluxo de segurança da anterior, quanto pelo complexo equilíbrio entre a vida pessoal e profissional durante a transição.

Limitações/implicações de pesquisa – A amostragem não apresenta fundamentação matemática ou estatística, impedindo a generalização dos seus resultados. Recomenda-se um estudo quantitativo para compreender como ocorre a transição em profissionais de meia-idade, analisando um grande número de respondentes.

Implicações práticas – Para profissionais da meia-idade, este estudo sugere a necessidade do planejamento na fase de transição de carreira e a assimilação da lógica da autogestão como dinâmica definitiva de carreira.

Implicações sociais – Empresas devem reconhecer o impacto da transição de carreira na retenção dos profissionais.

Originalidade/valor – Este artigo contribui na elucidação dos principais impulsionadores e recursos disponíveis para a transição de carreira de profissionais de meia-idade.

Palavras-chave - Transição de carreira; profissional de meia-idade; identidade profissional.

1 INTRODUCTION

In a scenario of economic instability, with 12.8 million unemployed workers in the 2nd quarter of 2020, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020), career management is also a significant challenge. For workers, finding a job is first and foremost a need for subsistence. The company, in turn, lives with the intense need to retain talent, especially those who understand the different demands of the organization and are able to meet them efficiently and effectively.

In this framework, the professionals seek to adapt to the organization's demands, and the organization, in turn, tries to create an internal environment that meets the workers' interests. Briscoe and Hall (2013) propose that the ability of workers to adapt to diverse situations and the flexibilization of their attitudes and behaviors can direct the career in order to successfully achieve their most complex and flexible objectives.

The idea of flexibility at work, as advocated by Culié, et al. (2014), measures the relevance of regional clusters[1], as proposed, for example, by companies located in Silicon Valley, characterized essentially by working collaboratively. The amplitude of psychological mobility, translated by the ability to move, is developed in this model, thus becoming the main agent in the career of these individuals.

Veloso et al. (2020) state that, nowadays, career transitions are very frequent and that studies on this subject seek to reconcile different perspectives. For Agi and Fiddo (2018), career change is one of the choices individuals can experience in middle age, since it is a time characterized by the commitment of workers to reach their highest positions, their most expressive salaries, and

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1 Considered groupings of individuals from different companies geographically close.

the top of their career.

Thus, the research presented in this article has focused its interest on middle-aged professionals, those between 35 and 54 years old. It is in this age group that people are more prone to frustration, characterized, among other factors, by the lack of adherence to the function exercised to the detriment of the ideals and values aimed at the beginning of the career (Morison et al., 2006). The relevance of studying this age group is in the confirmation of the trend of increasing life expectancy in Brazil, which from 2017 to 2018 reached 76.3 years among Brazilians (IBGE, 2020). These data show that since 1940 life expectancy has risen by the equivalent of 30.8 years, which proposes professionals to work longer, thus allowing them to experience some career transitions throughout their lives.

The qualitative research undertaken aimed to analyze the career transition of these professionals, according to three factors: the identity transition; the drivers of the transition; and the resources triggered in the transition. The study is presented in the following sessions, at first, by the theoretical reference, followed by the methodology and the analysis of results, besides the final considerations.

2 THEORETICAL REFERENCE

To understand career transitions, it is important to start with the evolution of careers, from traditional (or organizational) to new careers. This theoretical reference is initiated with this theme.

2.1 Traditional Careers and New Careers

The traditional career model is based on the notion of employment from the industrial society, heritage of the School of Scientific Administration (Bendassoli, 2009), in which the employees make an exchange with the company: they offer loyalty and dedication and receive rewards, stability and security. In this sense, being out of work means, in the traditional career, being without a job, without reward, unstable and insecure. Another important component designed in this model is that the career is managed by the organization and not according to the expectations or desires of employees. Fontes Filho (2010, p. 182) consistently reinforces this premise: "from the traditional perspective of the organizational career, benefits are tacitly considered as insured rights and it is up to organizations to conduct the careers of their employees".

Considering that the career should not necessarily follow the order established by the organizations, a new model has been proposed, called boundaryless career, which is "[...] the opposite of organizational careers" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 5) and "does not characterize a single form of career, but rather different possible forms that oppose the assumptions of traditional employment" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 3).

 Besides a boundaryless career, Veloso (2012) considers Arthur, Inkson and Pringle's (1999) vision of new careers, also reflecting on the protean career, which, in the 1990s, had Hall (2002) as a great precursor, because for him the traditional career contract, with promises of long-term employment, would be replaced by short-term contracts based on current needs and performance. According to this author, it is about a career managed by the person and not by the organization, because it is also characterized by frequent changes, self-invention, autonomy, self-direction, ability to learn and to direct the career and life, thus mediating the construction of relationships (Hall, 2002). Birkett et al. (2017) suggest that neither the events nor the organizations themselves provide defining boundaries in the careers of employees. However, the social, economic, cultural and phys-

ical resources developed by retirees throughout their careers act as important limits that affect the decisions and experiences of individuals.

Briscoe et al. (2012) observe that protean attitudes are related to professionals with proactive personality, open to new experiences and, above all, focused on personal goals (Briscoe, et al., 2012). According to Hall (2002), the protean career presents two aspects: **(1) Career self-management**: occurs when professionals assume their professional trajectory and start to have its control, creating their own development opportunities; **(2) Career oriented by values**: happens when the professionals' values are prioritized and when the success is defined through their own criteria and no longer only by the company's criteria.

2.2 The transition of career and identity

Since the career transition is "the period during which individuals change and redirect their functions," Louis (1980, p. 338) identified nine types of transition. Five of them can happen between different roles or functions: re-entry; intra-company; interprofession; and exit. The other four can happen within the same professional role or function: the intra-function adjustments; the extra-function adjustments; the function transfer; and the transition in the people scenario.

This article highlights the interprofessional transition that, according to Louis (1980), happens when there is a change of function or professional role, for example, when a person leaves the business world and becomes an academic. The author also reinforces that a change of profession exposes individuals to an unknown cultural environment and this process ends up highlighting the differences between professions, such as the type of language employed, the codes of ethics and the rules that conduct the relationship between people.

The interprofessional transition causes the change of professional identity which, according to Ibarra (2004, 2009), means the form of personal representativeness in the work environment, as well as the translation of the way we act in this context. Hall (2002) mentions that the identity constituted during the construction of the professional career comprises one of the widely significant aspects for professional development. For the author, identity has two elements: one is the knowledge that individuals have of their own values, interests and abilities; the other comprises the congruence between old and new values that are built over time.

In order to reinforce this concept, Ibarra states (2004, p. 02) that "to reinvent ourselves, we need to live a period of transition in which we rethink and restructure multiple possibilities". Still according to the author, the term work identity, proposes two meanings. The first is related to the perception of individuals in relation to their professional role, which in turn is linked to the way they transmit themselves to others; the second meaning refers to the reconstruction of the identity experienced in the process of professional renewal (Ibarra, 2004, 2009).

The social positioning of individuals, as well as the utilization of opportunities, can be associated with career success, as stated by Briscoe and Hall (2013, p. 164): "the ability to adapt and flexibility can also substantially shape the direction, potential and success of the career. These same authors propose that autonomous career management, associated with the search for opportunities, is capable of leading individuals to the recognition of professional identity and the improvement of the process of adaptation to this transition (Briscoe & Hall, 2013).

In another aspect, Ibarra (2004, 2009) proposes that the identity transition process intrinsic to career change is cyclical and that, to achieve successful results, it must be understood that it is made up of three stages: **1 – Exploring possible selves:** who do i want to be? This is an answer that can be obtained through the exploration of possible new identities; **2 – Testing new identities**: pro-

poses how to test new identities in reality; the person still exercises the professional activity of origin, but experiences the new identity; **3 – Consolidating change**: This third stage of identity change occurs when new mental models are internalized, guiding people's behavior and enabling identity change linked to the new career.

Dutra (2017) also identifies the existence of four stages belonging to career transition, which may overlap amongst them: **Rational stage:** the person knows that he/she is going through a period of adaptation; **Emotional stage:** when the person needs to move away from his/her identity to assume a new one; **Limbo stage:** it occurs when professionals have already abandoned the old identity, but have not yet fully assumed the new one; **Stage of consolidation of the new career:** new behaviors need to be incorporated and, until this occurs, the person feels incompetent in front of his/her new position.

2.3 The resources to handle the transition

To understand the transition process, it is important to highlight the work of Anderson et al. (2012), who consider the importance of the resources used in the process of dealing with the transition called System 4 S, which offers a way to identify the potential resources triggered by individuals, considering the following: **Situation** – what is happening; Self – who is living the transition; **Social Support** – assistance available for the transition; **Strategies** – the way people deal with transition.

Veloso et al. (2020) emphasized that the recognition of these resources, besides the analysis of the transition situation, indicated by Ashforth (2001), has the potential to promote a balance between rational decision making and more subjective decisions. The four factors described by Anderson et al. (2012) indicate the differences in terms of how a person deals with change. This indicator suggests an event and non-event because it involves what is happening and the different stressors.

On the other hand, Birkett et al. (2017) highlight the importance of the moment of accumulation of resources and the possible impact of sex on the accumulation of resources and retirement experiences. At the same time, key life events and career decisions throughout life history are important for retirement outcomes, primarily due to the impact that both have on future resource accumulation.

2.4 The impulses for career transition in middle age

From middle age, from 35 to 54 years of age, which is the age group used as the object of this study, people begin to question whether their values adhere to the function they exercise (Morison, et al, 2006). In Brazil, these questions are driven, among other factors, by changes in the rules for retirement that force workers to stay longer in the job market (Silveira & Treff, 2020).

Every choice presupposes change and every change demands time. For Ibarra (2009, p. 214), "changing takes time because, in general, we sometimes have to execute the cycle of identifying and testing possibilities, asking better questions at each round of tests, designing better experiments and building foundations on what we learn".

Agi and Fiddo (2018) state that middle-aged workers often make many sacrifices to reach the top in their careers. This can lead to a feeling of uselessness and dissatisfaction in their previous chosen career and awakening in them the need to explore other possibilities to pursue a new career.

Silveira and Treff (2020), when analyzing the career transition of middle-aged executives, identified five drivers for change: individual decision and desire for change; resignation for various

reasons; company bankruptcy or dissolution of society; geographical change of the company; and critical events of a personal or family nature.

Morrison et al. (2006) prescribe the characteristics present in the transition period in middle age when they state that "the middle of a career can be a time of frustration, confusion and alienation – but also of self-discovery, new directions, a new beginning. In the study of career transitions of teachers from other professions to academic career, Veloso et al. (2020) considered the following drivers, raised by Morison et al. (2006), as sources of frustration in the mid-career phase: **Professional bottleneck:** strong competition in the job market; **Tension between work and personal life**: need to balance professional and personal life; **Expanded horizon:** financial need to work for many years; **Obsolete training:** ack of investment in new skills; **Disillusionment with the company:** generated by staff cuts; **Exhaustion**: extreme tiredness; **Disappointment with the career:** incompatibility between reality and career ideals.

After exposing the relevant concepts to the elaboration of the field research, in the following session, the methodological procedures adopted in the study are presented.

3 METHODOLOGY

The type of research chosen was based on a qualitative exploratory study, and the main objective of this method was to understand the phenomenon of career transition experienced by middle-aged professionals and, as stated by Ibarra (2009), little is known about how people change careers when they seek new alternatives. In this study, eight professionals, between 35 and 54 years of age, who worked in the labor market in the 1st or 2nd professional activity and were in a career transition phase on their own initiative, were interviewed. All the interviewees were postgraduates, were working at the time of the research and were preparing themselves to accomplish the transition, according to the characteristics exposed in Chart 1.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted, except for one of the participants, who was outside the country. The approach followed a semi-structured script and lasted about 1h30min per participant. To prepare the script of questions, three categories were formulated, which included twelve analysis units: Identity Transition (Ibarra, 2009); Drivers of Transition (Morison, et al., 2006); and Resources Driven in Transition (Anderson, et al., 2012).

Based on the concepts dealt with in the Theoretical Reference section of this article, registration units that are expressed by phrases extracted from the narratives of the interviewees were created within these categories. For better understanding, the context units, the categorization structures, and the register units were separated into three blocks, according to Charts 2, 3 and 4.

Chart 1: Profile of participants

Participant	Age	Sex	Graduation Area	Post-graduation	Current position/private company	Current position/work
E1 (AS)	44	Female	Business Administration	MBA - People Management	Business Analyst	nothing on record
E2 (EG)	35	Female	Journalism	Master in Communication	Teacher	nothing on record
E3 (FS)	49	Male	Electrical Engineering	Master in Administration in progress	Technical/Commercial Seller	nothing on record
E4 (KK)	42	Female	Business Administration	MBA - People Management	Human Resources Director	nothing on record
E5 (LT)	49	Female	Mathematics	Master's Degree in Governance - in progress	IT and Project Manager	nothing on record
E6 (MV)	50	Male	Electrical Engineering	MBA in Communication	Commercial Director	nothing on record
E7 (RN)	48	Female	Business Administration	Master's Degree in Governance - in progress	Human Resources Manager	nothing on record
E8 (SL)	45	Female	Computer Science	Doctorate - in progress	nothing on record	Service Provider - IT and Projects Area

Sourse: The authors

Chart 2: identity Transition Category.

Context Units	Categorization structure	Registration Units
Exploring possible identities	Who do I want to be?	"I always had this dream"
Testing new identities	Test new identities in practice	"I discovered myself professionally"
Interprofessional transition	Professional activity change	"for two years now I've been thinking a lot about changing areas"
Rational step	Awareness of the adaptation period	"all these years of studying and preparing myself to make this change have served so that I could be sure of what I want.
Career choice	Internal referential to the individual	"my area in music is singing"; "I intend to start on stage, in small places"

Sourse: The authors

Chart 3: Category Transition Drivers

Context Units	Categorization structure	Registration Units
Tension between work and personal life	Balance	"I no longer have the energy of 24, 25 and 30 years old"
Expanded Horizon	Need to work	"I want to be autonomous and I don't want to depend on the company"
Obsolete training	Adaptation to new ways of working	"I entered the master's degree to qualify for the academic area"
Exhaustion	Fatigue, repetitive tasks	" it's not less than 12 hours "

Sourse: The authors

Chart 4: Category of Resources Triggerad in the Transition

Context Units	Categorization structure	Registration Units
Support (types of support)	Support from family; friends	"zero financial support, but support from family, wife, children, emotional support, 100%"
Strategies	Information search	"I can explore a lot of my contacts, which can help me a lot".
Person	Personal characteristics	"perseverance... I'm sticking my neck out, the important thing is to make this dream come true".

Sourse: The authors

To conclude this session of the methodology, it is important to emphasize that all interviews were recorded and transcribed in their entirety with the consent of those surveyed. The analyses were supported by the method proposed by Bardin (2011/1977) and were divided into three phases: pre analysis; exploration of the material and definition of categories; and treatment of the results obtained and interpretations.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The presentation of the results in this session follows the sequence of the categories that guided the preparation of the interview script and is finalized with the general analysis of the results.

4.1 The transition of professional identity

An important characteristic of career transition is that it does not occur in a single way, but can be structured through multiple possibilities (Ibarra, 2009). In the context unit exploring the possible identities, all the interviewees presented this characteristic, because when the transition process begins, the professional does not always know exactly what he is going to do. This is exemplified by some phrases from E4: "for me it is still a dilemma [...] many things are in my thoughts [...] I don't know what I could do [...] I will consider consulting as an option [...] another alternative path I would have is the academic area". The interviewee E7 also corroborates such reflection when she says "a couple of years ago I didn't have so much clarity, but I knew I wanted to be in the corporate governance environment, so I researched about it [...]; I also always liked to teach, I have a great affection for it [...]; or become a corporate governance advisor".

In the new identity testing unit, which for Ibarra (2009) means testing new identities in practice, people still need to exercise the professional activity of origin but experiencing the new identity. Of the eight interviewees, only two did not present this category: E1 and E4. The others had this category represented, as the case of E2: "I have a YouTube channel called V.E.M. I share some songs and end up playing [...] my area in music is singing". Or, according to E6, when he says: "I try to associate myself with companies or offices that have a quantity of clients where I can contribute with some, in a more structured way, as it is done in a consultancy [...]; right now I am participating in a structure about startup, which is a delight [...]; I am in the final module in order to be able to render the consultancy service in a professional way".

The change of professional role is time consuming because a career change generates anguish and uncertainty during the change process (Ibarra, 2004). This affirmation is reflected on the fact that all the interviewees are, at least, one year in the transition process, as is the case of E1, and, at most, 4 years ago, as E8, who is in the last semester of his doctorate and has shown interest for the academic area. Ibarra (2004, 2009) says that what the person will actually become changes during the transition period, as follows: "the point of arrival always surprises us [...]; we cannot simply plan and program the path for our reinvention". According to this author, the individual must test new careers in practice, as they acquire new information that may change their initial choices, and this does not occur in a planning process.

Another context unit is the interprofessional transition, which, according to Louis (1980), occurs when there is a change of professional activity - for example, when an administrator becomes an academician. This characteristic was present in all the speeches of the interviewees, but some choices are based on the knowledge that the professional acquired with the first professional choice. This occurs with E5, which experiences a career as a teacher in disciplines in the area of projects and, in parallel, maintains his first professional activity, in the role of project manager. Other interviewees are testing a profession completely different from the activity exercised, as is the case of E2, who currently works as a teacher in the distance learning model and is transitioning from his career to music, showing interest in singing.

Another unit is the rational stage, because, according to Dutra (2017), this is one of the stages of career transition: the person knows that he/she will have to go through a period of adaptation, but will seek results that will compensate. Another situation in which such stage is verified is when the individual realizes that he/she no longer has space to increase his/her responsibilities, and this is represented through the E1's speech: "I'm taking an MBA in Strategic People Management, because I'm fully aware [...] that in the career transition, I'll have to start from below [...]. It will be quite challenging, and I will have many things to learn". In E2's speech, in turn, the following phrases are reflected: "I am an anxious person [...]. I have been working on this through therapy [...] to get a hold of myself and to be able to follow, in order to do what is needed [...]. I understand that my contribution in the teaching field has already reached a level that if I am not careful, I will stagnate. Still according to Dutra (2017, p. 44), "people will never be fully prepared for a movement in their careers that implies a change of identity - this learning occurs throughout the process.

In the context unit of career choice, all interviewees presented this characteristic. This phase is characterized by the protean attitudes of professionals in transition, whose personality is proactive, open to new experiences and focused on personal objectives (Briscoe, et al., 2012). The following speeches of those interviewed stand out: E1 - "working self-esteem, working confidence [...], I have more security about what I like and what I want to do"; E2 - "I always had an inclination for music, but due to insecurity, I ended up not risking [...]. I started to analyze the market and

understand what my space is and what I would like to do [...]; I started to take up the music issue, which has always been my first option".

Professionals with a protean career have autonomy in their decisions and demonstrate flexibility (Hall, 2002). By testing or planning their second career, all participants in this survey have made their choices based on their affinities, professional experience in the activity they are still performing, and also as a way of making a dream come true. This is the case of E1, who always had an interest in helping people, associating this inclination with the area of HR, and E2, who did not opt for the field of music in adolescence due to the influence of his parents, who believed that this area would not give financial return. These are examples that characterize protean professionals, who manage their careers making their own choices.

In the analysis of these results, it is emphasized that autonomous career management, associated with the search for opportunities, leads to the recognition of professional identity and the improvement of the process of adaptation to the transition (Briscoe, et al., 2012). This is a process that demands flexibility from professionals.

4.2 Drivers of the transition

The age range of the public researched was between 35 and 54 years old, characterized, in this research, by professionals who seek changes in the work area. The authors Morison, et al. (2006, p. 2) complement the characteristics of this period when they state that "the middle of a career can be a time of frustration, confusion and alienation - but also of self-discovery and new directions, a new beginning". Ibarra (2009) corroborates this idea by suggesting that this crisis may impact both people in their 30s, as they chose their professions when they were very young, and those in their 50s, who are looking for new ways to live in the coming years. This period was the same chosen for this research and the results show that all the participants started their first professional activity before the age of 20. In addition, those between the ages of 42 and 50 correspond to seven interviewees out of a total of eight.

The context unit tension between work and personal life was not demonstrated in five of the interviewees (E1, E2, E3, E7, E8). E1 and E2 are in search of a dream come true, while E3, E7 and E8 are guided towards the goal of building the 2nd career. In these cases, there is no predominance of tension between work and personal life or the search for balance of these two aspects. Still according to Morison et al. (2006), sources of frustration generate a mid-career crisis with greater intensity, mobilizing professionals to make a change in their professional trajectory.

In the speech of interviewee E4, this category is highlighted in the following example: "it's the rhythm, that's it; it's my main motivator of plan B [...], a little more quality of life and balance". This interviewee has been in the company for 21 years and took over the Human Resources Department seven years ago. She has a working day, on average, of 14 hours and considers this one of the greatest impellers for career transition.

In the statements of interviewee E5, the tension between work and personal life is demonstrated when she relates the hours of work with the heavy routine she has to face in her daily life, without time to take care of herself. The interviewee E6, in turn, reinforces the need to get more free time when he says "it's time to lower the pace of work and live life", or when "quality of life [...] fascinates me; you choose what you are going to do".

The extended horizon and obsolete training units are present in the speeches of all interviewees. This suggests that these professionals are determined to continue working in activities different from those they chose at the beginning of their careers and, for this to happen, all seek a training or course in the area of interest. The training is associated to the understanding that the

knowledge they have so far does not provide the necessary conditions, in terms of training, for the beginning of a new career.

In relation to the exhaustion unit, interviewees E1, E2, E3, E7, E8 did not demonstrate this category in their speeches. It corresponds to more than half of the participants. Therefore, this is not one of the sources of frustration that drives the career transition of this five-person group. The interviewee E3 says, in his report: "what bothers me is to be very commercial, we had a commercial performance, but it was a more technical commercial sector [...]. This is something I don't intend to work with for a long time". The interviewee E8 says: "I think that this academic life has a very beautiful purpose and that has always moved me". By inference and discourse analysis, it is concluded that in career transition, this group is driven by the search for professional achievement.

As for these analyses, Morison et al. (2006, p. 51) confirm that "many people frustrated in their idealism have different goals: they would accept exchanging part of the current success for more meaning in life and work, even if they had to do something completely different". The result of these authors' research reinforces that the discontent of professionals is related to dissatisfaction with the first professional choice.

4.3 Resources triggered by the transition

According to the result obtained in this category, all context units are present in the speeches of the interviewees. This was demonstrated by the high degree of importance of the elements that emerged during the interviews. In the case of support, the family was highlighted, for example, in the E8 report: "I always had great support from my family. My husband is extremely supportive of this idea. E7 also corroborates this idea: "the husband is acting more than he used to and helping a lot more in family organization activities; the children too". Finally, E2 reinforces "I have financial support from my husband, who ends up helping me to cope with the issue of courses or projects.

The authors Anderson et al. (2012) say that the various types of support that a professional can have, from family members to those coming from a network of friends, closer people and institutions, help to combat the stress arising from the transition phase. These same authors showed that people with psychological resources, such as autonomy, higher level of maturity, ability to overcome challenges, resilience and commitment to self-improvement, should better deal with the transition. In this research, all these personal characteristics are found through the life history of each one.

As for the aspects related to the strategies used to deal with the transition, all the interviewees show greater optimism through objective actions, adopting attitudes to define a new career. A common action to all is the search for knowledge, which is translated in the courses they are taking (five interviewees) in the postgraduate course (*lato sensu or stricto sensu*). Moreover, we have a free organizational consulting course, in which two of them participate. Another interviewee takes a singing class and intends to start a technical music course.

4.4 Discussion of results

From the analysis of the interviews, it was possible to infer that the career transition generates many anguishes and uncertainties, especially regarding the financial aspects. After all, starting a new profession means giving up an income conquered by the first career, besides the benefits offered to those who are linked to the companies through the CLT regime. This is illustrat-

ed by the fact that all interviewees have been planning their new career for a year or more and still maintain the work link with their original career. In addition, all had many fears in the financial return of the 2nd career, so that it would be possible to support their own and their families' expenses.

The first career choice occurred due to more objective factors, such as the need to work or pressure from the family. The reference should be for choices originating from subjective factors, such as affinity, compatibility with values, or interest in the area. This conclusion reinforces the view of the authors researched in this work (Ibarra, 2004, 2009 & Veloso, 2012).

Anderson et al. (2012) state that the various types of support that a professional can have, from family members to those coming from a network of friends, closer people and institutions, help fighting the stress coming from the transition phase. These same authors showed that people with psychological resources, such as autonomy, higher level of maturity, ability to overcome challenges, resilience, and commitment to self-improvement should better deal with the transition. In this research, all these personal characteristics are found through the life history of each one.

It was also possible to notice that, out of the eight professionals interviewed, all explored new work possibilities when seeking training in the area of interest. Only two did not test the new professional identities, as is the case of E1, E4 and, more timidly, E6, which approached a startup to help in the construction of some processes. This has also shown that the desire to change careers arises months or years before the change takes place. Professionals have thus explored other professional identities throughout the transition, a concept addressed by Ibarra (2004, 2009).

Another factor that emerged in the analysis of the interviews is that the transition, in the group researched, was interprofessional. In other words, the change was aimed at a career different from the one originally exercised: for example, from teacher to singer, from project manager to teacher. According to Louis (1980), there is not only one type of transition. It is noticeable that there are several types of transition professionals go through throughout their careers, and in this group of respondents, the skills built along the professional path were, in large part, a facilitating element for the second career choice. For example, the project and I.T. manager who began teaching disciplines that made up the activities he already performed; or the commercial director who wanted to be an organizational consultant and who, by his executive career, had knowledge that could be used in the new activity.

It was also verified that during the transition stages, cited by Dutra (2017), the rational stage prevailed. This concept describes that people know they will go through a period of adaptation. However, they will seek results that will pay off, once they realize that they no longer have space to increase their responsibilities. As all interviewees were still in a career transition phase, they sought better results in this process, exploring and testing new professional identities. But they had not yet given up their identity built up in their original careers.

In the participants' choice of career, the protean attitude, described by Hall (2002), prevailed. This attitude occurs when professionals assume their professional trajectory, creating their own development opportunities. In this career model, the values of the professionals are prioritized, and the criteria of choice are based on their own interests, and no longer on the organization. Protean professionals adjust to the demands of the work environment, demonstrating flexibility, continuous adaptation, and resilience (Hall, 2002).

Autonomous career management, associated with the search for opportunities, is also capable of leading individuals to the recognition of professional identity and the improvement of the process of adaptation to this transition, as seen in Briscoe and Hall (2013).

During the interview process, the participants' need to continue working was observed.

None of them prepared themselves, in an autonomous way, to decrease the financial dependence in relation to the function performed. The search for training is the way they found to increase the chances of success in the second career (Morison, et al., 2006). Still for these same authors, the discomfort and anguish, experienced in the middle of their careers, change according to the generations. These crises are sources of frustration, and one of them is the need to continue working after the end of the first career.

The emotional support of family and friends was cited by all interviewees as a fundamental resource for making the transition and adapting to a new career, leading them to greater flexibility in face of new situations (Anderson, et al., 2012). These same authors demonstrated in their studies that one of the strategies of confrontation for the solution of a problem is demonstrated in the public researched by the search of formation in courses that can favor the entrance and permanence in the new career. People, in this case, have committed themselves to self-improvement and have shown optimism in the process of formation and training; optimism enables people to overcome adversities.

In general, it is noted that in the transition process, middle-aged professionals assumed the self-management of their careers, seeking, through training and specific courses in the area of interest, opportunities that would make it possible to maintain employability, but also bring satisfaction and professional achievement. It is worth mentioning the fact that, for two of the interviewees, moving to a second career was a dream. For three respondents, it was the possibility of balancing personal and professional life, dedicating more to themselves and to family and friends. For the remaining three, it meant ending the first career cycle, in the age group between 45 and 49 years old and starting another one that would bring personal satisfaction.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With the research presented in this article, we hope to contribute with professionals from organizations and the academic area by understanding the possibilities of middle-aged professionals to align their personal interests, as well as their profile, with chances of assuming new activities in the job market.

This study suggests, for middle-aged professionals, the need for planning in the career transition phase and the assimilation of the self-management logic as a definitive career dynamic, and one of the social implications concerns the impact of retention of professionals in organizations, given that the transition occurs earlier and earlier, from the age of 35.

Despite the inherent limitations of the qualitative research process, which prevent the generalization of the results, it was possible to highlight some observations that were inherent to all the interviews. The first of these is that in the career transition process, people seek emotional support from family and friends to minimize the effects of professional change, such as the uncertainties and anxieties generated in this process. The second was the search for an academic education, which also contributed to reduce these insecurities, because they believed that training in the area of interest could increase opportunities in the second career.

This aspect is related to the strategies used to deal with the transition and which were represented by the demonstration of optimism through objective actions and attitudes adopted to define a new career. A common action to all interviewees was the search for knowledge, which translated into the courses they were taking (five of the interviewees) in postgraduate school (*lato sensu* or *stricto sensu*). In addition, they took a free organizational consulting course, (two of them participated). Another interviewee was taking a singing class and intended to start a Music Technical

Course.

The demonstration of a flexible and open attitude in the transition process is something that deserves to be highlighted in the interviews, because this predisposition favored the adaptation to new professional activities. Something that is important because it can be a contribution to professionals who want to make a transition is that persistence in making the change, without interrupting the career transition in the middle of the process, predominates in research. The interviewees, despite the need to continue working, pursued the search for personal satisfaction in choosing a new profession.

As future studies, the expansion of interviews and the follow-up of new career cycles, after the transition, may be important for the continuity of the understanding of the future of the career, and in the current context, the value attributed to this article contributes to elucidating the main drivers and resources available for the career transition of middle-aged professionals.

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3. Development of theoretical propositions (theoretical work)	√	√	√	
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