

## Influencing Factors of Vocational Delay of Gratification

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**Keywords:** Vocational Delay of Gratification (VDOG), Occupational Development, Influencing Factors, Self-control.

**Abstract.** Vocational Delay of Gratification (VDOG) is a focus of management and business circles, and has very important significance for personal development and organizational objective achievement. Those who can resist current lure or own delay of gratification tendency can gain success in career more easily. However, influencing factors of VDOG are complex. Thus, influencing factors of VDOG were analyzed from individual factors, organizational factors and social factors in this paper. Besides, the defects in the research on influencing factors of VDOG were discussed to provide the reference for the research on VDOG.

### Introduction

VDOG is delay of gratification in the occupational field. It refers to self-regulation ability of individuals who willingly give up immediate gratification opportunities non-beneficial to current work such as rest, entertainment or impulsive action for a series of more valuable long-term results such as better completing the task, gaining more profits and reaching a higher occupational goal [1]. VDOG can explain the reason why those with equal knowledge level, ability and quality gain widely divergent results in the occupational field after career development for many years. In view of important significance of VDOG, VDOG has become a focus of psychology, management and business circle in recent years. Some scholars conducted a series of researches on influencing factors of VDOG. The researches mainly concentrate on individual factors, organizational factors and social factors. Individual factors mainly include personality factor, emotional factor, demographic variables and self-career management. Organizational factors mainly include organizational career management. Social factors mainly include social refusal and intergeneration gap.

### Individual Influencing Factors

#### Personality Factor

Delay of gratification is the core component of self-control, so delay of gratification is also a part of personality. Individual factors are certainly important for VDOG. The research about the influence of personality factor on delay of gratification started early, and there are many overseas researches. Domestic researchers conducted a series of researches. The research results show that, multiple personality factors will influence individual VDOG. These researches provide much beneficial enlightenment on administrators, but some space still deserves our in-depth research.

#### *Conscientiousness and Nervousness*

The research shows that conscientiousness and nervousness have significant correlation with job performance [2]. In the opinion of Baumeister [3], the reason is that the individuals with high conscientiousness usually work hard and have explicit target orientation, while the individuals with low conscientiousness are just on the contrary. They do not consider thoroughly and lack persistence, with low achievement orientation. Reynolds et al. [4] thought responsibility has influence on delay of gratification, and the employees with high responsibility have more explicit goals and work harder. The research of Cheung [5] also supports this research result. In his view, the employees with high

sense of responsibility prefer to delay of gratification. The research of Renn et al. [6] verifies nervousness is negatively correlated to employees' VDOG, mainly because the individuals with high nervousness rarely set goals, and have more negative emotions (anxiety and anger). Thus, it is difficult to form rational decisions and achieve delay of gratification. Cheung [5] also found compared with export-oriented individuals, introversive individuals prefer to delay of gratification rather than immediate gratification.

### ***Self-esteem***

The individuals with high self-esteem have positive belief for self-value and ability, while the individuals with low self-esteem have low delay of gratification, thus resulting in low job expectation [7]. The research of Renn et al. [6] also verifies employees' self-esteem is positively correlated to delay of gratification. The research of Wang [8] also shows self-esteem of college students is related to delay of gratification. These researches tell us that, administrators need to enhance employees' self-esteem level (e.g. helping employees overcome difficulties and complete challenges in work) in routine work so as to improve their delay of gratification.

### ***Self-efficacy***

The research of Renn et al. [6] indicates self-efficacy has positive effect on individual delay of gratification. This result is supported by follow-up researches. Luo et al. [9] found the positive correlativity between self-efficacy and VDOG. There may be two reasons. Firstly, the employees with self-efficacy have higher achievement motivation, and the employees with higher achievement motivation own higher VDOG [10]. Secondly, the employees with self-efficacy have stronger self-confidence and goal orientation. They have confidence to reach higher job goals. Thus, they will prefer to delay of gratification and make more efforts to achieve delay of gratification in the face of choices.

### **Emotional Factor**

Mischel [11] proposed "cold/hot execution system" to explain physiological mechanism of VDOG. The influence of emotion variable on VDOG starts to be concerned by researchers. Funder et al. [12] found VDOG is negatively correlated to negative emotions and behaviors such as irritability, dysphoria and attack. The research of Hesketh et al. [13] shows, anxiety presents significant negative correlation with VDOG in work. In other words, the employees with high anxiety level have low VDOG. The researches of Muraven and Baumeister [14] also indicate that, negative emotions (such as anger and shame) will make people reduce and even lose self-control ability so that they prefer to pursue current benefit and ignore future development. In one word, although overseas researchers believe negative emotions will generate negative effects on VDOG, domestic researches just start and the research in this field is still in the initial stage. Moreover, domestic and overseas researchers still lack systematical researches on the influence of positive emotions on VDOG.

### **Self-career Management**

Kang [15] investigated enterprise employees and found self-career management and VDOG have significant positive correlation, and self-career management influences job satisfaction through the intermediary function of VDOG. This research result is supported by other researchers. For example, Hu [16] and Chen [17] explored the influence of self-career management on VDOG and found the positive correlation between the two. In one word, the researches of researchers consistently show self-career management will generate positive effect on employees' VDOG. This also reminds us that, employees should actively conduct career exploration, establish career goal and strategy, and pay attention to self-presentation and interpersonal relationship. This can effectively improve VDOG level and promote their long-term career development goal.

## **Demographic Variable**

In current researches on influencing factors of VDOG, demographic variable mostly studied among individual factors. Current researchers have conducted researches from multiple aspects such as gender, age, marital status, degree of education, position and occupational background, but the research results are inconsistent and even opposite. This may be because the research samples selected are different.

### ***Gender***

With regard to the influence of VDOG, there are two different opinions. The first view believes that gender has no influence on VDOG. In other words, VDOG of female and male employees have no significant differences. The researches of Chinese scholars Liu [1], Chen [17], Yan [18], Kang [15] and Hu [16] support his view. The other opinion is that gender has influence on VDOG. VDOG of male employees is significantly higher than that of female employees. For example, the research result of Zhang Jin supports this opinion, that is, men's VDOG is significantly higher than women's VDOG.

### ***Age***

About the influence of age on VDOG, there are mainly two views. The representatives of this view include Liu [1] and Yan [18]. They consider age is not the factor leading to employees' VDOG difference. The representatives of other view include Liang [19] and Hu [16]. Their research conclusions are just opposite. The research result of Hu [16] shows the employees in different age grades have significant differences in VDOG. The employees below 25 have the highest VDOG, followed by the employees between 26 and 30 and the employees above 31. Zhang [20] found VDOG score of employees below 30 is higher than the score of employees between 30 and 50, and employees above 50. This research is similar to the research result of Wang [21].

### ***Years of Working***

There are also different views about the influence of years of working on VDOG. Pogson studied the employees in three occupational stages: experience period, maintenance period and stable period, and found that the employees with longer years of working are more unwilling to choose VDOG. The research of Hu [16] supports this view. Wang [21] and Miller et al. [22] discovered the negative correlation between years of working and VDOG. The other research results are just opposite. Liu [1] found years of working have no significant prediction effect on VDOG. This conclusion is supported by other researchers. For example, Chen [17] discovered years of working have no significant influence on VDOG. In one word, for the differences of employees with different years of working in VDOG, the research conclusions are not consistent or not completely consistent. More in-depth researches are still needed [22].

### ***Marital Status***

Researchers basically consistently believe the single employees show higher VDOG than the married employees. Yan [18] found VDOG presents significant differences in marital status, and single employees display stronger VDOG tendency. Zhang [20] also considered that, employee's VDOG ability has significant differences in marital status. The research of Wan [21] indicates single nurses have higher VDOG level than married nurses.

### ***Degree of Education***

Most people believe the employees with higher degree of education have higher VDOG level. Yu [23] and Wan [21] show that the nurses with higher degree of education have higher VDOG level. Liu [24] got the opposite conclusion. He found the nurses with lower degree of education have higher scores of VDOG and job delay of gratification than the nurses with bachelor's degree and above ( $P < 0.05$ ). Li [25] chose civil servants as samples to study and found the degree of education has no correlation with VDOG.

## Organizational Factors

Organizational career management refers to a management method which is implemented by the organization and can retain employees and conduct self-actualization with the purpose of developing employees' potential [26]. Based on the researches of enterprise employees, Liu et al. [1] discussed the influence of organizational career management on employees' occupational commitment, job satisfaction and VDOG, and found 4 dimensions of organizational career management: equal promotion, information supply, and attention to training and occupational development. The correlation between occupational development and VDOG is between 0.268 and 0.402. The correlation between occupational commitment and VDOG is 0.406. The correlation between job satisfaction and VDOG is 0.499. The test result of intermediary effect shows VDOG plays the intermediary effect in the relation between organizational career management and occupational commitment. Meanwhile, it also plays the intermediary effect in the relation between organizational career management and job satisfaction, and plays the partial intermediary effect in both the process where equal promotion factor influences occupational commitment and job satisfaction, and the process where attention to training influences job satisfaction. Besides, it plays the complete intermediary effect in the process where attention to training influences occupational commitment. In one word, the research about the influence of organizational career management on VDOG just starts, only limited to the research of Liu [1]. Seeing from the limited research result, organizations should formulate an equal promotion system, and increase professional skill learning and training chances to improve employees' organizational career management so as to enhance their VDOG level.

## Social Factors

### Intergeneration Gap

Different life experience will lead to different work attitude [27]. Hence, Meriac et al. [28] found in a research that, those born in US in 1981-1999 present higher VDOG level than those born in 1965-1980. This research has important enlightenment for discussing employees' intergeneration gap and management countermeasures [29].

### Social Refusal

Twenge [30] et al. applied situation test method to verify the influence of social refusal on VDOG. All subjects were classified into 2 groups (social acceptance group and social refusal group). Besides, the subjects of social refusal group were informed that nobody was willing to cooperate with them, while the subjects of social acceptance group were informed that all were willing to cooperate with them. Then, situation test was used to measure their VDOG. The result indicates that the subjects of social refusal group has stronger VDOG tendency, and further firms their VDOG choice.

### Social Culture

Different cultural background will also lead to the difference of VDOG. Asian people consider it is very normal to do some boring work or work overtime on holidays. In this way, they make more efforts than others, gain others' approval and gain better performance. This embodies Confucian school pays attention to repression of immediate gratification. Western people feel difficult to bear this. However, researchers also found delay of gratification of Chinese children is lower than that of western children. Meriac et al. [28] found those born in 1981-1999 (Y generation) own higher delay of gratification than those born in 1965-1980 (X generation). The researches of Chinese scholars show self-control ability of post-80s and post-90s employees of Y generation is low, which may easily result to low VDOG [31].

## Summary

VDOG is becoming a research hotspot of management circle. There are many researches on its influencing factors. But, the researches on VDOG are not systematic and in-depth, and there are still many key problems to be further explored deeply. (1) There are many individual influencing factors about VDOG, but the researches on organizational factors and social factors are short, and further discussion is still needed. (2) The objects of study mainly focus on enterprise employees and nurses, but the research in other fields is still very deficient. Whether existing research conclusions have industrial particularity? These need to be studied deeply. (3) At present, relevant researches mainly concentrate on theoretical discussion, and the discussions on practical application and enlightenment of VDOG are still insufficient. So, we should focus on these aspects in the future.

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