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THE SUBORDINATES' PERCEPTION ON THE NAVY LEADER

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Abstract:

The study aims to analyze the effects derived from the structure and function of the cognitive system under conditions of life and work at sea. Equally, we intend to make an inventory of errors that frequently occur in the perception of a leader, on the assumption that any type of behavior aboard ships is governed by the perceived facts and not by the objective ones.

Key words: interpersonal perception, fundamental attribution error, prejudice, stereotypes, influence.

1. Argument

The shipping industry is as beautiful and romanticized in literature as it is dangerous, since it is very complex and has deep implications of different natures: economic, social, technological, political, etc. All these require highly trained crew, both from the professional and the human point of view, able to be competitive in generating efficiency.

As far back as 1998, Porter defined the naval domain, by synonymy with the marine or maritime domain, as "a geographic concentration of companies and institutions interconnected in a particular field. In their turn, they comprise industrial branches and sub-branches, as well as other important entities". The author highlights the importance of clusters as interconnected companies, private institutions, local governing, educational systems, all sharing similar objectives. The naval field clusters prove their validity through a high-level formation and training of maritime personnel, to ensure safety and efficiency of mission, and ship crew: ship sailors, shipbuilders, port workers and logistics staff.

The European Union, operationalising this concept, assigns its main sub-branches: port operation activity and related logistics services provided to ships and cargo, water transport (maritime and inland waterways), construction and repair of ships, offshore activities, and other related activities such as tourism and leisure.

A study conducted by researchers from Cardiff University at the request of the UK Government set itself the objective of analyzing the compatibility between professional training and work experience of seafarers, on one hand, and existing vacancies, on the other hand, depending on the density of maritime clusters. The research report showed that in 2012 there were 132,000 jobs in the inland sector, of which 12% (16,000) were jobs where employers prefer former sea-going personnel, and 6.5% (7000) were jobs for which maritime employers value experience in the maritime domain.

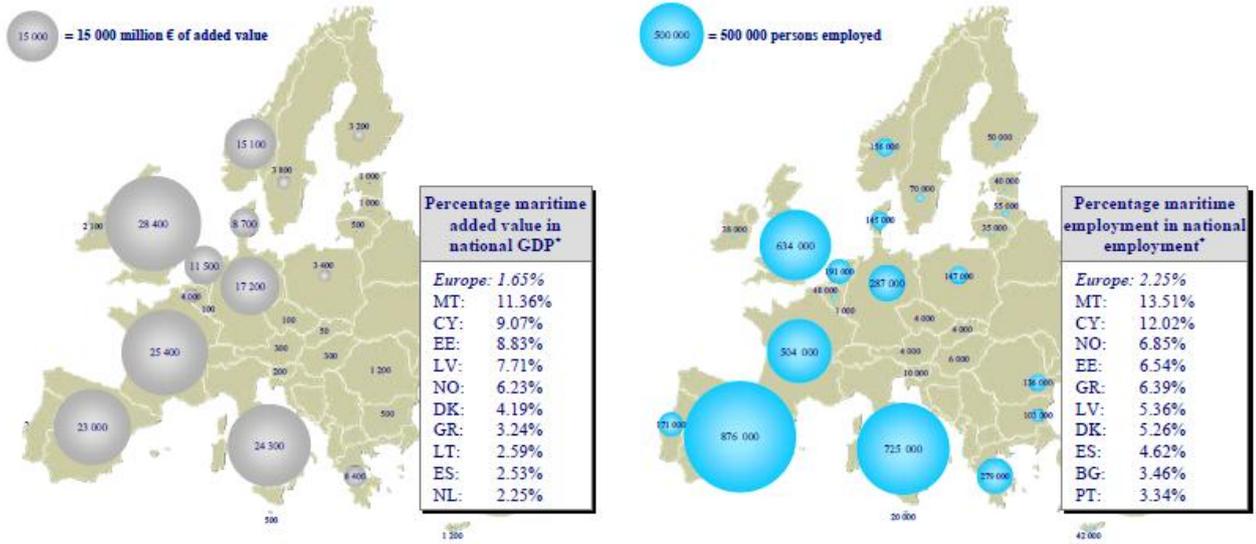
The research report exploits data on clusters in the maritime area of the European Union and their economic relevance in terms of value added and employment.

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This review provides an overview of occupations in the shipping industry for 13 sectors which correspond to the estimated 5 million jobs, of which 2.8 million jobs are allocated to coastal tourism.

Figure1. and Table1. show the number and percentage of jobs for sub-branches of shipbuilding industry, for the member states of the European Union. (ECOTEC)

Figure 1.a - Added value (percent of GDP), € 186 600 million;
 b - Total number of employees, 4.78 million people. European average of added value relative to the total number of employees € 39,000.



Sector	Job vacancies occupation	%
Coastal Tourism	2 800 000	56.74
Fishing	420 000	8.51
Maritime transport	303 000	6.14
Naval equipment	287 000	5.82
Maritime ports	284 000	5.76
Recreational boating	253 000	5.13
Military Navy	180 000	3.65
Shipbuilding	153 000	3.10
Maritime services	88 000	1.78
Supply platforms	81 000	1.64
Wind power	48 000	0.97
Maritime working	20 000	0.41
Port operation equipment	17 800	0.36
Total	4 934 800	

Table 1.Total number of employees in the naval sectors (adapted from ECOTEC)

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In this socio-economic and geopolitical context, which is a competitive and ever changing one, the extremely complex issue of psychology of sea-going crews, the impact of multiculturalism on the safety of commercial missions impose paradigms as: experience, expertise, skills, i.e. Effective Leadership.

2. Shaping the image of the leader under conditions of life and work on board ships

Research on leadership issues, as a "universalia" of human behavior, have focused especially on the relationship leader – follower, as a social influence relationship, which gives us the opportunity to analyze this interaction in systemic, psychosocial, multivalent approach.

In reference to this, the issue of leadership on board ships centers upon changes produced in crew behavior, at the psychological level, especially at the intellectual, attitude or behavioral-acting levels.

From this perspective, some representative definitions may better clarify the issue:

- "A complex psychosocial phenomenon that involves the activity of individual or collective psyche, in such a manner, so as to obtain the desired positive, desired, favourable psychosocial effects." (Zlate, 2007).

- "Leadership is a process and an ability. The leadership process is the use of non coercive influence to direct and coordinate activities of members of a group, organized to achieve the objectives of the group. As an ability, leadership consists of a set of qualities or characteristics of certain people who are perceived by employees as successful individuals using this influence. " (Hollander, cited. Zlate, 2007).

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As a result of a critical analysis of models and definitions of leadership, J.Rost (1993) develops his own definition, which adds a number of explanations and arguments:

- "Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and their followers who intend to produce changes that reflect the development of mutual goals." (J.Rost, 1993).

- the relationship leader - follower is based on a relational, multidirectional, and noncoercive relation. This implies that the relation involves multiple interactions or interactions of circular type, not only from the leader to the group, but also from the group to the leader, as well as among group members through willingly agreed actions.
- leaders and their followers accomplish leadership together as a two-sided relation, while the activism of the subordinates is a power resource in achieving best results in all activities on board.
- the naval crew being an ad-hoc - built group goes through different stages in its formation, in terms of multiculturalism, relationships with the naval leader being all the time under the paradigm of intent, and of constructive and transformative change.
- a common vision of the mission to be accomplished is built; it is controlled by national and international procedures and conventions in the maritime domain. The common goals are part of wider objective, they are holistic and integrated, and they define mutuality. The objectives, on the other hand, are usually quite specific, and often more segmented, being given priority in

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check- lists. "Leadership is more who we are than what we do, it means the organization's culture more than its efficiency, it is more about how the leaders and their followers are integrated into the community than as they satisfy their needs and achieve their desires individually or in groups." (Rost, 1993)

The specific conditions of life and work at sea, the subordinate's reporting to the leader, to the marine environment characteristics on both the technical specifics of the activities and the unusual aspects of human problems on board (multiculturalism, confessions, communication in English - other than their mother tongue, quick adjustment to a new psychosocial climate ...), acquires new meanings.

The interpersonal perception is built by the perceived facts (and not by the objective ones), governing the conduct of the naval crew as a result of the structure and function of cognitive systems within specific contextual conditions. Cognitive systems are organized according to one's personal equation; the perceptual selection is consistent with the goals, interests, and personal motivations.

We bring here the question of each individual's cognitive development, i.e. the complexity of their cognition that determines the use of criteria and dimensions which, usually, are different in terms of quantity and especially quality (access to tangible vs. access to concrete, increased mentalizing...), correlating with the accuracy of interpersonal perception and the formation of less dichotomic, and more detailed images. Thus, the determinants of cognitive organization are influenced, on the one hand, by the external stimuli characteristics (the personality of ship crew leader) and, on the other hand, by the factors of the person who perceives (momentary mental states, prior knowledge, set of attitudes...). Personal factors, tributary to the interests, the similarity of attitudes and values, or to motivations, can lower recognition thresholds to certain stimuli, in the absence of adequate psychological background.

Subsequent to perceptual identification, the interpretation and meaning allow distortions that can lead to cognitive - emotional dissonance. In other words, if the facts perceived in connection with crew members or leader, are incongruous with its system of attitudes, values, interests, motives, a reinterpretation occurs to make everything compatible with prior knowledge.

It is one reason to understand why it is necessary to have thorough knowledge about all the subordinates, who are expected to reach performance in their activity on board.

Motivation plays an important role in the perception of the leader on board, with reference to the theory of reasoned perception, because this creates a progress - oriented and selective perception, overestimating or, conversely, underestimating the leader according to his importance in meeting the subordinates' needs. Thus, a generalized phenomenon, an irradiation of personal values, supported by positive or negative emotional tones is established. If the leader-follower relationship is a positive preferential relationship, it will develop based on shared mutual values. Moreover, the explanatory model of cognitive balance expresses the tendency to perceive the system of representative values of the leader, coupled with a tendency to harmony and psychological balance. One can conclude that the perception of the leader by subordinates is highly motivated.

In the perception of the leader during international voyages we can recognize the implicit theory on personality, which has its origins in the empirical psychology, of the "common sense", at intrapersonal level; the subordinates will capitalize those dimensions of the leader's personality according to the importance that they themselves value more.

In this case, a set of circumstantial variables comes to the front: emotional experiences, irritability, fatigue, age, subordinates personality dimensions (sociability, and submissiveness, autonomy ...)

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3.Errors in the way the leader on board ships is perceived

A brief analysis of the aforementioned leads us to conclude that the perception of the leader by his followers is highly personalized, often occurring errors with consequences on performance and psychosocial environment on board.

We intend to go over a few such errors, especially due to the particular conditions on board.

The ship crew as a small group from a psychosocial perspective has a heterogeneous composition, as it is multinational, multi-confessional; in it the multicultural socialization involves assimilating, accommodating and integrating unusual elements from other cultures, since we know that communication can be done in the English language, which is other than their mother tongue.

In this particular context, prejudice and cognitive stereotype as part of the group's organization can generate errors in the interpersonal perception. The approach of social psychology stereotype contain "stereotyped attitudes", which refer to the declarative content of a group's organization, while the prejudice is the emotional engram attached to the stereotype. Prejudice, through its affective, cognitive and conative component, generates simplifying abstractions about reality perceived subjectively, building fixed representations about the leader or a particular socio-professional group within the domain of activity.

Related to preconceptions, cognitive stereotypes are formed, based on implicit personality theory, being governed by a tendency to over generalize, underestimating or over estimating certain personality attributes of the leader in terms of emotional detachment. Cognitive stereotype distorts the image of the leader, by overgeneralization, polarization of evaluation through dichotomizing, or through negative memory.

Another common type of error in the way the leader is perceived is aimed at the fundamental attribution error, explained by social psychology in terms of causal attribution ("locus of control", Rotter, 1966).

In terms of risk and uncertainty existing on ships, the need to anticipate provides mental consonance, with the illusion of control, emphasizing the importance of the cause to the detriment of uncontrollable uncertainty. Subordinates will tend to overestimate the factors related to mood at the expense of context, or environment, when it comes to evaluate on the leader's decisions. In other words, a leader of the internal type, who assumes responsibility, will be appreciated with sympathy, if he is successful, or if the failure consequences are not severe, while an external leader will attribute the failure to bad luck or environmental circumstances.

In general, within sea-going work groups, each crew member needs to be integrated into that group, or to receive recognition; here, the self – protection error, or the ego-defensive error, i.e. the tendency to apply over punitive measures, avoiding censure or social undesirability, which in the shipping industry can mean huge financial costs.

In conclusion, in light of the above, the conclusion is that the quality of psychological importance of the human factor on board is of utmost importance; the need for constant training, self-awareness and personal optimization, psychosocial skills training, interpersonal relations and teamwork should always be in the attention of sea-going personnel.

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