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THE COMOR PROJECT – A MULTI-CRITERIA RESEARCH OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN ROMANIA

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Abstract:

Representing an experiment of the Scientific Society of Management in Romania, conducted together with the Association of Faculties of Economics, Romania, the COMOR project 1 studies in an analytical manner the many forms of expression of organizational behaviors - generally - and of managerial ones- in particular through the value judgments of a broad spectrum of respondents (7655 managers and non-managers, males and females, young and elderly people, with higher and secondary education, managers and employees, with or without institutionalized managerial training) working in 594 companies from all areas of economic activity (according to the NACE code 2) of the Romanian counties and who expressed their views in two situational aspects (according to the evaluations of current situation - on the one hand, and - in parallel –according to a prognosis desired by the respondents, on the other hand).

With proper development, the paper presents the arguments that justify the authors' scientific approach, the research features and structures of representativeness of the respondents.

1. Introduction

Like the corporate culture, the organizational culture is the result of a long term interaction between its members, assuming internal links of interrelation well defined between its components: language, traditions, rituals, group norms, principles and values, official philosophy, game rules, work climate (resonant or dissonant), thinking patterns, symbols impregnated in material elements etc., elements that confer their own unmistakable personality traits in relation to other cultures.

The studies and researches conducted by international specialists, but also by numerous Romanian authors offer compelling arguments in favour of intercultural approach of knowledge in the field.

¹ COMOR – Managerial behaviour in organizations in Romania

² NACE-Classification of National Economic Activities

The major changes taking place in the global economy of the 21st century, specific to the informational society, a society based on knowledge, lead to the raise of economic interdependencies of countries worldwide through increasing volume and variety of transactions of goods and services across borders, international cash flows freer and faster and a wider diffusion of technology", manifesting itself in the form of four types of freedom of the contemporary world in the movement of goods, persons, capital and technology. In this context, the economic organizations, far from enhancing their own cultures that differentiate them from each other, tend towards cultural convergence focused on macroeconomic issues, given the particular structure and technology of organizations, without eliminating the people behaviour, a minimum requirement, from the success equation but absolutely necessary for survival and organizational success.

The Romanian economy, which, after more than a quarter of century, after the 1989 revolution, seeks the most suitable ways and solutions to build a free market economy, the "cultural sensitivity" - as Gh. Gh. Ionescu calls it - becomes a major factor for:

- a strategic perspective, which is becoming global, with multiple simultaneous paths which are used in changing contextual market situations;
- an internal cooperation relation (between managers and employees) and a wide cooperation with customers, suppliers, stakeholders outside the organization.

Focused on researching the organizational behaviour, the COMOR project studies various behavioural variables (forms of expression) of respondents in the Romanian economic organizations, to get to know and develop, on the one hand, those national specificities that remain and have grown further, and on the other hand to identify other ways to improve those behaviours that alters one or another part of the cultural dimensions of organizations at inter-regional or national level.

This paper, which is an experiment of SSMA, aims at identifying peculiarities in the Romanian organizational culture and management behaviour through benchmarking models of Hofstede and GLOBE, and it does not discuss a new topic. The organizational culture is one of the topics which enjoy a major concern by the socio-economic theory and practice worldwide, being widely researched, developed and debated in the scientific world. The analytical approach by researching the multiple forms of expression of organizational behaviours- generally - and managerial ones- in particular, investigated in terms of value judgments of a broad spectrum of respondents (managers and non-managers, Males and females, young and old people, with higher and secondary education) working in companies in all areas of the economic activity (according to the NACE code) of the Romanian counties and who expressed their views in two situational aspects (according to the evaluations of the current situation, on the one hand and - in parallel - according to the prognosis desired by respondents, on the other hand), is the novelty that this paper brings in the scientific and the economic environment in Romania and abroad.

The research of organizational culture in Romania is a scientific argument for reconsideration of cultural elements, as drivers of the management process. The study of the economic organizations in Romania highlights cultural particularities of this geographical area, allowing inter-regional and national and other regions of the world comparison, formulating relevant conclusions for the management systems, having the purpose:

- to remove the prejudgement of the existence of a "good model" in management and organization;
- to give managers a better understanding of their own cultural organization and of cultural differences, in general;
- to urge managers to recognize and address the organizational culture in the context of contemporary business;
- to suggest to managers some cultural insights in the context of the dilemmas that the Romanian organizations face in the extensive process of globalization;
- to help managers to see in organizational culture - in general - and in the management - in particular a policy instrument which, although difficult to define, covers a complex reality with vague contours, being irreplaceable and extremely delicate to manage.

Highlighting the systems of symbols, traditions, rituals, values and behavioural norms shared in the studied organizations, but also of the way of thinking and action, the procedures for internal integration and adaptation to the external environment, are important milestones for researchers and practitioners, policy makers, investors and the public. The culture study supports theoretically and practically the relevant organizations, aware of the influence of values on organizational life. Practically, all processes in the organization are influenced sensitively - in terms of content and modalities of development – by cultural entity as organizational culture is directing efforts towards the stated objectives, develops motivation of employees for the expected performances, provide the structure and mechanisms which coordinates employees' efforts without having too many formal rules and procedures.

Similar to the national culture, the organizational culture has strong roots developed in history; it has myths, heroes and symbols that evolve around the values inherited by organization from previous generations, creating a kind of collective subconscious and influencing critically the ability of the system to change.

Referring to the common identity of national and organizational culture, the Dutch Professor Geert Hofstede concludes that **each national culture, defined by values, supports organizational cultures, defined by practices** (our emphasis). This was the impetus that instilled us not only the curiosity, but mostly the need of knowing and disseminating the cultural specificities of the economic organizations of our country to help improve management practices, aiming at the understanding of intercultural communication.

The bivalent approach - regional and by sector - enables the multidimensional analysis, in a trans-cultural view of the major role that the human factor - in general and its behaviour (organizational and managerial) - in particular, from different types of economic activities (agriculture, industry, trade, transport, construction, services, etc.), and the cultural sub-national entities have for durable and sustainable development of the Romanian society as an entity.

2. Characteristics of the research

The COMOR project develops and complements the previous researches in Romania ³ through a comprehensive national application, presented as an aggregated study of the organizational structures in terms of sectors (areas of economic activity); territory (counties, development regions, national economy); employment in the organizational hierarchy (managers and non-managers); demographic and educational structures (male-female; age; level of education and training; management training).

Thus, overall, the research findings are based on the 7655 respondents' opinions from 594 economic companies with a sectoral and an inter-regional distribution, shown in table 1.

So from the beginning, the COMOR research has two essential characteristics:

- It is comprehensive in order to investigate all the economic sectors and all development regions of Romania;
- It is representative due to the large number of respondents who work in all fields and across the country, which gives it a high degree of confidence in the assessments made for defining cultural dimensions expressed by specific organizational behaviours.

3. The representativeness of respondents

The gender of respondents (male-female), their age on age groups, the education level (secondary or higher education), the occupational status of organizational structures (managers or non-managers), the level of managerial training of employees - generally but also of those who hold management positions - in particular, constitute the main factors which imprints its bipolar mark on the expressed value judgments (pro, against or abstentions) on various aspects of the expression forms of cultural dimensions.

3.1. The gender and age of the respondents

The expressed opinions (pro, against or abstentions) on issues or concrete forms of manifestation of the investigated organizational behaviours, are marked by traits of temperament or attitudes, professional and life skills of respondents, i.e. the psychological or moral profile of them. Amid innate skills of the individual, his moral profile is formed based on education and experience, i.e. acquisition due to the environment as a result of its integration in the socio-professional relations system

³ In 1997-1998, CEMAT SA, under the management of Professor Cezar Mereuță, organized a survey formed of 2,041 people in 25 companies; in 2004, Professor Olimpia State shows the experience of a hotel unit, based on opinions expressed by a number of 105 respondents; in 2005, Interact Training Company in Bucharest, Romania with The Gallup Organization Romania, published a study that shows a new perspective on the evolution of the business environment in Romania; in 2006-2007, GLOBE Romania runs an organizational behaviour research in agri-food industry, financial services and telecommunications services, based on a random sampling; in 2008, the Gallup consulting firm published the results of a research conducted in 125 organizations; in 2011, Angelica-Nicoleta Onea through her doctoral thesis proposes solving atypical problems of valuing of cultural elements with regional specificity.

(family, school, organization, society, i.e. the socio-professional group of affiliation in its various existential situations) (Didier, 1998).

Table 1
The COMOR sample distribution from sectoral and regional perspective

No.	Areas of economic activity	Companies Respon- dents	Economic development regions								Total Romania
			North East	South East	South	South -West	West	North -West	Centre	Bucharest -Ilfov	
1.	Agricult ure and Forestry	Compa- nies	3	7	11	4	8	7	5	5	50
		Respon- dents	45	67	114	30	100	93	59	46	554
2.	Industry and Energy	Compa- nies	18	37	42	28	41	38	38	22	264
		Respon- dents	285	475	578	542	642	378	591	303	3794
3.	Construc- tions	Compa- nies	11	8	12	12	3	13	6	15	80
		Respon- dents	150	71	110	194	40	99	54	243	961
4.	Trade	Compa- nies	11	15	10	10	4	16	6	16	88
		Respon- dents	163	147	104	99	41	117	77	226	974
5.	Trans- port	Compa- nies	-	5	5	1	2	5	3	2	23
		Respon- dents	-	61	61	10	23	51	46	29	281
6.	Tourism	Compa- nies	2	4	2	2	3	5	4	-	22
		Respon- dents	30	34	16	18	35	45	27	-	205
7.	Services	Compa- nies	6	8	6	13	6	11	4	13	67
		Respon- dents	90	75	51	193	50	113	54	260	886
	TOTAL	Compa- nies	51	84	88	70	67	95	66	73	594
		Respon- dents	763	930	1034	1086	931	896	908	1107	7655

The history, as the free and careful observation of organizational practices offer us many examples showing that, in terms of temperament, men - in general - are more alert, more energetic, more impulsive and dominant, more unscrupulous, more realistic and cynical, they know better to exploit situations of life for their benefit, therefore, they are - in general - less choleric and sanguine than women. Thus, the organizational behaviour of the studied companies is underlined through all opinions expressed by men and women, respondents with different temperaments (choleric, phlegmatic, sanguine, melancholic).

Thus, the male respondents prevail in the research with 4130 persons, representing 54 % of the total sample of 7,655 respondents, while females are 3,525 persons, representing only 46 %. The high number of male respondents in comparison to the female ones is observed in six development regions (Bucharest-Ilfov, South Muntenia, West, South-East, Centre and North-East), while in the South-West Oltenia and North-West, the number of female respondents is higher than the number of male respondents.

The young people (aged under 30 years) as people on the verge of adulthood, are entry level in their professional career and family life. During this period, they seek their own way that will evolve throughout their working lives. Besides physiological needs (food, shelter) and safety ones (personal security, stability, structured and ordered environment and release of anxiety), as defined by Maslow, the youth manifests strongly the need of belonging to the organizational group where they seek acceptance, affection, companionship, friendship. The main expectations from the organization refers to job security, minimum wages, safe working conditions, rules and clear work procedures, inter-networking opportunities at work – within a team or within other forms of work organization.

Being entry level, young people in this age group represent 24 % of the research sample.

In the adulthood (between 30 and 44 years), having already made a choice on an identified and desired path, persons live the feeling of high self-confidence, paying great attention to the needs of esteem (respect, status in the organizational hierarchy, recognition from others in the group). The expectations from the organization side refer to the recognition of professional competence, promotion in prestigious positions, awards and other means of reward.

The 3625 respondents in this age group, accounting for almost half of the research sample (47.4 % of the total of 7655) are persons who, professionally, have confidence, whether they are managers or employees, male or female, they fully show their competence in their field, they have a corresponding occupational status according to the recognition of professional and human qualities that they possess.

The persons in the third group (aged over 45 years) manifest a particular concern for the needs of self-realization. The COMOR research shows two stages:

- The first phase is the period of full manifestation of career in which the individual reaches his full potential, by aspiring for advancement in the upper organizational hierarchy, or by maintaining the current position through continuous training (courses) to strengthen the good professional reputation;

- The second stage (usually after 60 years old), representing the top of adulthood, is specific to the gradual detachment from the career when the individual is preparing to withdraw from its professional life by retirement.

This group is formed of 2191 respondents, representing 28.6 % of the research sample.

The three age groups - with different personal needs and professional aspirations, perceive the variables of organizational behaviour in their own way, expressing their opinions in relation to specific interests, which allow us, through aggregation, to obtain a correct characterization of the investigated dimension of the organizational culture: individualism or collectivism; low or high power distance; increased or reduced uncertainty avoidance; masculinity or femininity; short or long term orientation.