SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY REGARDING THE ROMANIAN MANAGER'S MOTIVATION

Florentina SCÂRNECI, Lecturer PhD
"Transilvania" University of Braşov

Abstract

The article presents the results of a qualitative research (conducted in 2008) on the Romanian manager's identity (insisting only on the motivational aspects). 45 managers were interviewed and the data obtained were analysed and interpreted qualitatively (using grounded theory procedures). The motivational factors identified were then tested by means of a pilot study (a questionnaire applied on 207 subjects). The methodological aspects of the researches (concerning data collection, analysis, and interpretation) are detailed in the article. Here are some hypotheses resulted from the pilot study: managers unlike non-managers are motivated by difficult tasks, with great responsibilities and by the need for increased power; the performed managers unlike those that are not so performing are motivated by an even more increased need for power and by the strong wish to be promoted.

Key-words: *managers, motivation, qualitative research, pilot study*

JEL Classification: M_{54}, M_{51}, M_{12}

I. Introduction

This article reveals the results of a qualitative research on Romanian managers as subjects. I shall present the agents that motivate them as they resulted from the analysis and the interpretation of the collected data. This objective had been a part of an extended project which dealt with the identification of the Romanian manager's identity characteristics. The extended project had been part of a PhD thesis that I asserted in 2009, and had been financed by UEFISCSU (The Executive Department for the University Education Financing and Scientific University Research): PN-II-RU-TD-2008, contract no. 33 / 4.06.2008.

I shall briefly describe some methodological aspects of the research and I shall elaborate each motivational factor resulted from the research; I shall also analyse the effects of the different types of motivation specific to Romanian managers.

As I have mentioned before, the main subject had not been the manager's motivation; this developed spontaneously, initiated by the respondents. Consequently, the article at hand does not stand for a true study in the research of motivation, but presents tendencies and hypotheses to be further tested in studies of what satisfies the managers, what do they look for in a job or what makes them work more efficiently.

Social and psychological researches having business leaders as subjects have not been conducted in Romania, or at least no results of such researches have been published (I am acquainted with prospective studies of entrepreneurial behavior – conducted on individuals outside the management scope). We have no scientific information on Romanian business leaders; all we know is from the common knowledge level. Existing international studies – related to managers or to business leaders and their performance – have focused on stocktaking a manager's necessary abilities to become competitive and on the professional development programme structure.

The results of the international studies on managers reveal the following: Bass (1974/1990: 150-162) shows that "the way they think, feel and action in regard to themselves affects the leading trend of people". Levinson and Rosenthal (*apud* Bass) have discovered that business leaders have strong self opinions and ideals. According to Bass, "leaders, in contrast to non-leaders, tend 'to update' their self. It is highly probable that they act at maximum capacity and that they develop in this direction". Many studies back up the idea that "the higher the level reached, the greater the satisfaction level at the working place". "Managers get greater satisfaction at their job as they climb up the hierarchy ladder. Less successful managers get lesser satisfaction off-work and have less spare time for their families and relaxation".

II. **Methodological aspects of the research**

The research has been conduced in 2008 on 45 Romanian managers. We are speaking of people who hold a leading position (over a team of at least 3 employees) in the private business sector. I have been interested in leading the "business" and I have chosen as subjects, team leaders, department supervisors, entrepreneurs, or managing directors.

Twenty managers suspect to the study live in Brasov and had been selected through theoretical sampling – specific to qualitative research. In other words, the sampling underwent the relevance criteria guidelines of cases to be studied (I searched for people who met the "manager" criterion). I have tried to identify, as I have mentioned in the *Introduction*, the identity features managers'. Therefore, to collect data I used biographical research – specific methods and techniques. I have repeatedly interviewed every manager (first, an unstructured interview, then a semi-structured one – in order to clarify different aspects and finally, a structured one – to verify some hypotheses resulted from the data qualitative analysis, and from the application of analytic induction); I conducted biographic, narrative and in-depth qualitative interviews.

Given the qualitative research features – in general – and those of my research – in particular – I have resorted to field operators. As the theme of my research is identity (a relatively delicate subject, especially where studied in-depth, from a qualitative perspective), as the subjects are managers (people with little free time) and as the qualitative research involves getting acquainted with the subjects and spending considerable time around them. I consider that the most suitable

manager selection method meets the "being part of the group criterion". Therefore, both the field operators and I identified and interviewed people from the subjects' personal circle (friends, relatives, own superiors, etc.).

The subjects of the research were seven women and thirteen men aged from 26 to 69 years old; each of them had a leading position as mentioned earlier. The interviews, yielding in 216 pages, were recorded in a database.

The other 25 subjects of my research were interviewed by journalists from 'Money Express' Magazine. Fragments of the interviews that referred to the responders' personal information – the way they act, make decisions, aspects which motivate them or personal failures, etc. have been included in a volume (*see* LIDERO, 2008). I carried out a secondary qualitative analysis of this material. The subjects are well-known managers and entrepreneurs at national level: a woman and a man, aged between 37 and 66 years.

The materials used were processed by theoretical coding (going through every stage: open coding, axial coding and selective coding, *see* Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Flick (1998)) to elaborate a grounded theory (*see* Strauss and Corbin (1998)) regarding the manager's identity (out of which I shall only address the aspects referring to motivation). The visual presentation techniques that have been used to present the data facilitate conclusion drawing (matrices and networks, *see* Agabrian (2004)); also, for data processing I have used the NVivo 7 software (*see* Gibbs (2002)).

III. **What motivates the Romanian manager?**

I shall present the motivational factors that resulting from the interviews. Each idea win be supported by a personal quote of those interviewed (the managers whose names are revealed, are those quoted in the LIDERO volume).

The subjects enjoy making money, but not as a goal in itself. This motivates them up to a certain point. Past the moment they have it (money), they do not try to make more. There are other stimulating factors at work (these will be analysed later in this chapter). The money these managers earned is not quickly spent on luxurious or unnecessary goods, but rather reinvested. Next, I shall quote some of the interviewed managers:

*Whether you earn 5, or 15 million RON it's the same – this is my life attitude. (*M40 Florentin Banu)

I started with second-hand television sets out of passion, not necessarily because of a moneymaking drive. That was what I did, that was what I enjoyed doing. (M3 Dan Ostahie)

I would always choose something that pays off less but makes me happy. (M34 Adrian Amariei)

Money is a way of making you feel – somehow – better, up to a certain point. (M6 I.A)

I enjoy what I do. I absolutely don't do it for the money. I never did. (M21 Octavian Radu)

I have never thought about how much money I have, or I will have in 5 years-time or what profit I will make. (M19 Marius Ivan)

I have always thought of doing something I enjoy, rather than doing something which pays off better. (M12 F.P)

I buy strictly the things I need around the house. (M17 R.J)

To own the bare necessities: what I need, so I do not forget one should not live only to make money, they should also have fun.

I have only wanted to have a slightly 'better' life than that of an average person; I set my mind on it and I succeeded. (M20 V.N)

This [money] *is not very important to me, because I do not promote myself (the way I dress) but it is wisely invest it, or to save it.* (M32 M.H)

I did not guide myself based on super-comfort; I focused on the bare necessities. I did not invest in (household) devices, gold, or jewellery. I did not invest in luxury. (M32 M.H)

I cannot spend more than a few thousand Euros every month. I don't need a yacht, a villa, or Monaco... (M40 Florentin Banu)

We would have had money to live well, but we have paid the last dime on houses. (M32 M.H)

What I think is of great importance regarding the manager's motivation is not if they truly are not motivated by the money they earn, but the fact that they all unequivocally claim from the beginning they are not. This is a sign that they do not care much about the money they earn, that if they have it, they will not spend it on useless or show-off belongings.

Apparently, the interviewed managers work with pleasure and out of pleasure. I shall next mention the ideal features of a job (what do managers look for in a job, how the work should be in order to enjoy doing it). The ideal manager work should be the one that gives satisfaction. Such a job is worth dedication, sacrifice, and hard work. The job must be captivating, it must always bring something new and self-teaching and provide promotion opportunities.

It's important to enjoy what you do; only if you enjoy, you will be able to learn something new each day. (M12 F.P)

It's sad to see that most people work to earn money and not for the daily satisfaction offered by their jobs. (M12 F.P)

The ideal job is the one where you go each day, regardless if you have to wake up at 5 a.m. or to work when others sleep. (M12 F.P)

What counts the most is that I enjoy my job. I am not afraid of working, and if I do what I enjoy, the time spent working doesn't count. (M9 I.E)

You only get bored when you cease to be creative, or creativity comes from the pleasure of doing things, and emotions as well. If this emotional capacity of enjoying what you do lacks, you will end completely limited. (M3 Dan Ostahie)

Yes, it is very important to get promoted and have a captivating job, otherwise daily routine kicks in and your productivity drops. As well, you have to learn something from your job, because there comes a time when

you will ask yourself how you have spent your life, and you will realise that you have learnt nothing from your job or from your life. (M9 I.E)

I worked as a network operator for approximately 2 months and I did not enjoy it; it was not dynamic and I could not aim at nothing more than sitting in front of a computer and waste time. I worked with my dad in constructions, but as I said, it was not a job and it did not challenge me; in addition, I could not gain experience and it was not in my field of work. I also worked as a mechanic. I really enjoyed that job as I could disassemble things and I might never put them back together. (M9 I.E)

A year later, I learnt everything one could have learnt in that company – I did not have the chance to be promoted, so I left. (M15 A.C)

What I liked the most was that I could get promoted. (M9 I.E)

It is very important to have this possibility to get promoted. (M9 I.E)

The financial reward is of course very important and managers enjoy receiving credits as important amounts of money; what is more important is the character of the job: challenging tasks, great responsibilities, the smallest possible number of superiors and the greatest power of decision. They are fascinated by the idea of beings little "Gods", of having the destiny of their employees in their hands.

The ideal job is when you do not depend on any superiors. (M10 S.I)

Honestly, I would make my own business where I wouldn't have to file reports, to answer all kind of questions – a business where I would ask questions myself and take free responsibility. (M7 C.B)

I would always choose a job which pays off less but makes me happy. (M34 Adrian Amariei)

I get motivation by money, but also by the trust my manager shows me or the company I work for and the respect they show me; I could not accept to be treated rudely regardless of the pay check. (M6 I.A)

This is why I think money is the first criterion, as you can't carry on with a job which brings him a lot of money to and he [the boss] *pays you as he likes, i.e. change money; I must have money. Your work must be appreciated!* (M6 I.A)

I enjoy taking great responsibilities; when I make a mistake, I admit it and try to make it better. I enjoy holding the decision-marking power. I enjoy leading. (M9 I.E)

I think that taking responsibilities for the subordinates is the reason I enjoy being a manager; it is also because I have to make decisions that will influence people's lives. However, there are moments I do not enjoy my being a little "God", especially when it comes to letting people off. (M9 I.E)

Managers enjoy the job that involves dealing with people, they enjoy when they succeed in impressing them, in gaining their admiration, appreciation, trust or respect.

This thing I enjoyed a lot – working with people. I did not enjoy a "static", monotonous job as sitting in an office and fill in papers... I could not bear this thing daily, working, doing the same things each day. I'd go crazy... (M7 C.B)

You always meet new people and you always learn something new from them and from each relationship... There are extraordinary people whom I really like interacting with and see them building trust in me. (M27 A.R)

I enjoy convincing people that I am right and make them admit when they are wrong. (M9 I.E)

The thing I enjoy most is the fact that I can interact with people. (M12 F.P)

I have good relations with people; I know how to raise my level, or I try to, and I really know how to lower, thus make every man to feel important. (M29 A.B)

Other's respect and appreciation are crucial motivational factors to managers (because work equals their life, they put a lot of weight in their relationships with the employees).

I don't want people to get mad at me, but it's not always working... (M8 I.C)

I always need someone besides me and say: you are doing well, you look well, and you are a good mother or a good employer. (M8 I.C)

Honestly, nowadays it's hard to make yourself stand out. (M27 A.R)

I thought, people really know us, we worked with lots of them and they speak in good words about us. (M27 A.R)

Now, I have the respect and admiration of my colleagues, which feels good. (M11 I.M)

I did not want to embarrass myself. (M8 I.C)

I have always said, I'd like to be appreciated by those around me. (M29 A.B)

They always thanked me when we met [the people I worked with]. (M43 Misu Negritoiu)

Managers also enjoy being among people, being seen, admired, and take public merits. I think one can speak about a motivational dependence among the managers subject to the study. They are addicted to other's appreciations; they want more if they succeed. One of the subjects, after claiming that she always needs someone to tell her she does well, adds: *if you don't tell me all the time, I won't go further* (M8 I.C). The same responder says, *It's not possible! I have to succeed!* This is only because "she does not want to make a fool of herself". Other subjects express similar ideas:

She [the teacher] *hit my head against the blackboard and ever since I have told myself that I will learn Math so this won't happen again and prove I can do better.* (M11 I.M)

My teacher told me that I wouldn't end up very well and that I wouldn't succeed in my university plans, which gave me a huge impulse to prove she was wrong. (M12 F.P)

I wished to prove myself. (M13 D.S)

Everything I've ever done, I have done it out of the ambition to prove myself. (M8 I.C)

I wished to prove I was good. (M8 I.C)

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It got me started to prove everybody what I could accomplish. (M12 F.P)

I didn't want to embarrass him; I also wanted to prove my parents and maybe my boss that I could succeed.

Even though they claimed they did not have personal models, the interviewed managers admitted that they sometimes admired their superiors or elder people, but that they also wanted their achievements; they were motivated by the drive to prove they could accomplish something. Therefore, before becoming managers themselves, they were motivated by other's success and their effects (including the status indicators).

In those times, I had seen Metro's big bosses so I wanted to become just like them. (M11 I.M)

The one I guided myself after in life... not really... but I had seen my schoolmates going to faculty in Bucharest so I wanted to apply and go there... to be like them; that was which motivated me. (M15 A.C)

I had seen the Orange bosses driving in their cars so I wanted to be like them. (M15 A.C)

The qualitative study gives rise to a series of questions leading to the idea of testing the grounded theoretical model. Therefore, is the information resulted from the foundation of a theory based on empirical data (collected from 45 entrepreneurs and managers) valid to all Romanian managers?; are the inventoried motivational factors personal to managers, or are they specific to all people regardless of the position held? In order to answer these dilemmas I have conducted a quantitative research – a pilot study.

"A pilot study is a small-scale research project that allows researchers to get a clearer idea about the things they want to know and about the methods to know, without wasting too much time and money, characteristic to a span study. Pilot studies are used to test questions that will be used next in the query as well as other measurement instruments, but also to clear the hypotheses of the research (Johnson, 1995/2007, p. 351). According Rapley and Hansen, "Pilot studies are developed either to act as small-scale replicas of a span study or to act as a 'trial' for the potential procedural or methodological problems to be dealt with (2006, p. 440). According Bloor and Wood, "Piloting refers to the conduct of a preliminary research to the main study. It supplies the opportunity of an advised thought and change of research's design and instruments" (2006, p. 130).

Through this pilot study, I aimed at refining the theoretical model (which resulted as an application of the specific process in the construction of the *grounded theory*); to test it on a smaller scale (i.e. the entire identity model specific to managers, not only the motivational one, presented hereby). The operationalization was inductive or estimative (based on the information collected through the interviews with the 45 managers). Each indicator of the operationalization was measured through at least one question in the questionnaire. The population to whom the research referred to was the active population in Romania (people legally employed in Romania in December 2008).

As I conducted a pilot study, I did not project a research with a representative sample at a national level. Therefore, the sampling is nonprobabilistic and its

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results will not be generalized to the whole universe of the research. The sampling is nonprobabilistic and the sampling method used was – the snowball: through relatives, friends, colleagues, students I got to managers that facilitated further the road to other managers – colleagues, superiors, business partners, etc. I presented in detail the manager selection procedure, because they were harder to find.

As I stated above, I had used nonprobabilistic sampling (theoretical or purpose sampling as it is also known). I interviewed the subjects so as they could test my hypotheses. Therefore, I selected only people that had never held a leading position, people that held once or more times a leading position, but do not currently, and finally people who currently hold one. I selected more managers than non-managers in order to create analyses on subpopulations with leading positions (team leaders, department supervisors, and institution managers).

I considered that one holds a leading position if he or she has at least three subordinates. I grouped the people holding leading positions in four categories: team leaders (who have a small number of subordinates, are responsible for their productivity and have their own superiors); department, area or branch supervisors (leaders with employees in their subordination, who are not only responsible for those but also for the department's performance, and have as well superiors); institution, organisation or business managers (they are direct responsible for the institution's or business' performance and have one superior – the one that has in his subordination the whole institution or the business' owner) and finally, independent organisation or institution managers or business owners (who do not have a superior).

Related to the businesses the respondents might manage, I have grouped them according to their size: small businesses (up to 10 employees and a turnover up to €500,000 per year), medium businesses (up to 50 employees and a turnover exceeding €500,000 – up to €5 million per year) and large businesses (more than 50 employees and a turnover – exceeding €5 million per year). Unfortunately, I was unable to question a manager leading a large business.

The selected subjects work in the public sector, the private sector or in NGOs; they are women and men, aged between 20 and 62. 207 people have been questioned out of which 57 have never held a leading position, 36 held once or more times a leading position, but not anymore and 114 people held a leading position (at least 3 employees in subordination). Of those holding a leading position, 27 were team leaders, 36 were department supervisors, 20 were institution, organisation or other business managers and 29 were independent organisation or institution managers or business owners. 134 women and 73 men have been tested, 63 are working in the public sector, 132 in the private sector and 12 in NGOs.

The questionnaire included closed questions, with multiplied pre-coded answers (the majority with a 5 scale answer hierarchy) or pairs of opposed enunciations (bipolar items as in the semantic differential) with a 7 scale answer hierarchy. The most encountered variables were category and discrete variables. Consequently, the measurement levels I had access to were the nominal and ordinal levels.

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Hereby I reproduce the questions in the questionnaire regarding motivation:

Please consider your past and the events you've undergone since childhood. Try to appreciate to what extent the following enunciations are true to you. First, we will focus on professional aspects:

It is important to me that my job provides me the opportunity to improve myself professionally (always to learn new things).

It is important to me that my job provides me the chance to get promoted.

It is important to me that my job involves establishing relations with people (whom I can impress, win their admiration, appreciation, confidence or respect).

It is important to me that my job proves to be challenging with difficult tasks and great responsibilities.

It is important to me that I have as few superiors as possible, so I can have greater power.

As strange as it may seem, I have to admit I am fascinated by the idea that I am or I may be a little 'God' that holds the faith of my subordinates.

I wish I were perceived in a good way by the others (admired, respected and appreciated).

I have accomplished a lot due to the ambition to prove myself.

I often think (whenever I have to act or make a decision) that it is very important not to embarrass yourself.

The responders had to choose one of the following answers: *I totally disagree; I partially disagree; I agree; I strongly agree; I do not remember / I cannot tell / I cannot appreciate.*

Also, there had been two opposed enunciations to which the responders had to answer the extent to which one of them fits most: *I prefer a job in which I do not have to report further to a superior* or *I think I prefer a job in which I have to report to a superior (I would be better organised or performant).*

The questionnaire was developed so that it was self-administrated (because of the approached theme – identity – which is relatively fragile, the questions personal, and its easiness regarding application – I did not dispose of field operators). The questionnaire was distributed both on paper (in a sealed envelope) and by e-mail. After finishing the query, I created a database. I used the SPSS 14 software to process the data.

Because of the sample's proportions and the population's volume processed statically, I did not use refined statistic instruments. The data analysis results had been interpreted and used cautiously; they only generated new hypotheses and instruments to be tested in the future. I tried to identify the statistic relations between the variables; most frequently I tried to associate the variables. I used the bivariate analysis (the association of two nominal variables or of two ordinal variables). I also calculated and evaluated the "Chi-Square" test (the values were evaluated taking into consideration the degree of freedom on each contingency table and the critical χ^2 values in the different probability levels). I also used the coefficients of association in nominal variables: Pearson's Contingency Coefficient (C) – calculated in big association tables, Goodman and Kruskal's Lambda Coefficient (λ) and the Uncertainty Coefficient (U); and in ordinal variables:

Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma Coefficient (γ), Somer's d Coefficient and Kendall's Coefficients (τ_b and τ_c). Through the evaluation of these coefficients, I have discovered the intensity (with reference to 0 value) as well as the orientation (with reference to the sign of the value). The conclusions regarding the existent association of variables were reached with reference to statistic independence.

I shall present only the results of the processing that refer to motivational aspects. Therefore, which are the motivational characteristics of managers – revealed as opposed to non-managers? Or which are the motivational characteristics of performant managers – revealed by contrast between them (taking into consideration the hierarchy position or the size of the business)?

As a result of the measurements, I shall firstly mention only the motivational variables that associate positively and significantly (in probability levels under the value of 0.05) with the leading position. The motivational variables associate in such a manner with the leading position depending on the identity variables. Therefore, men that hold a leading position are motivated by professional challenges (difficult tasks with great responsibilities). In other words, we are speaking of difficult, demanding work that offer the possibility to prove their abilities. Then, the ones in the private sector are motivated by power (they want the fewest number of superiors in order to hold greater power themselves).

I shall also present the motivational variables that associate positively and significantly with the importance of the leading position they hold (or with performance: I have considered that the more important the position held is the more performant the manager is) – i.e. the manager has more subordinates or he assumes more risks, responsibilities or has fewer superiors etc.). Consequently, the ones that hold a more important position are motivated by the opportunity to ascend or get promoted (the association is stronger amongst women) and by power (they want jobs with the fewest number of superiors in order to have greater power themselves; this association is stronger amongst women and amongst the ones working in the private sector). To sum up, a manager is motivated by power and by the possibility to be promoted.

IV. **Conclusions**

Throughout this paper, I have tried my best to describe the characteristics of the motivational factors regarding the Romanian managers. They resulted from a qualitative research (an interview of 20 managers and a secondary analysis based on interviewing other 25 managers). After the inventory of these factors I have designed their testing through a quantitative research that would emphasize the motivational differences between managers / non-managers and performant managers / less performant managers. The testing conducted on a nonrepresentative sample generated some ideas worth taking into consideration in regard to a future testing on representative samples: what differentiates managers from non-managers from a motivational point of view may be their preference towards difficult, challenging tasks that require great responsibility; the desire of holding the greatest amount of power at the working place; them being the utmost

superior (or having the fewest number of superiors); what motivates the performant managers as opposed to the less performant managers may be their stronger power desire and their desire to ascend.

Knowledge of the Romanian manager's motivational features has a great relevance in the further improvement of their performance; it may also help identify the future potential managers, the future potentially performant managers and the capitalization of their work.

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