The distance towards power in the organizations from Suceava county

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Abstract: - The present study is a comprehensive analysis of the cultural dimension "distance towards power" in Suceava county organizations, developed in accordance with the processing research methodology of COMOR. The COMOR Project – The managerial behaviour in the organizations from Romania is a complex exploratory research carried out at a national level, in economic organizations from all fields of activity, and it was initiated in 2008 by the Scientific Society from Romania. Its objective is to identify the cultural dimensions that characterize the Romanian organizational management, the analysis of the way in which leadership is perceived, as well as the influence exercised by the national culture on the organizational practices and the behaviour of the managers.

Key-Words: - COMOR project, cultural dimension, managers, managerial behaviour, distance towards power, scores, hierarchy, organizational management

1 Introduction
The Distance towards power is the extent in which people with less power from the institutions (the basic components of society: family, school, community) and the organizations (places where people work) from a country expect and accept that power to be unequally distributed [1]. It is the cultural dimension that expresses the inequalities between the levers of power holders and the rest of society members and reflects the means used within society to demarcate or delimit the social hierarchies.

The human history reveals the fact that the question of equality between people was a major or main concern of all times, regions and civilizations. Although the equality struggle is a constant of all ages covered by mankind, the inequalities between people never disappeared.
Nowhere in the world there are societies in which there have been achieved equality between its members, this thing being almost impossible because, even since birth, the people are unequal from the physical and intellectual point of view, inequalities which amplify during the individual development, depending upon the way in which the power, wealth and information are distributed. As a result, there can be identified three main levers of power:

- The native ability of people (physical and intellectual);
- The level of training and education, reflected in the quantity and quality of the accumulated or gathered information by an individual;
- The people’s welfare or well-being, which, in many cases, is hereditary.

In this context, the distance imposed by the exercise of power reflects the extent to which a society attempts or not to reduce the socio-economic inequalities, the way in which the differences of power and wealth are accepted or sanctioned by its members. From this perspective or point of view, the societies can be divided into two categories:

- Societies in which the distance towards power has a high value, on the background of the acceptance, widening and even the inequalities institutionalization, considering that there cannot be well managed but only through a clear order of distribution of the power and its sources – wealth and information, and where each individual has a well-established status in the social hierarchy. These are the societies in which there is emerging most obvious the social extremes: wealth, expressed through power, influence, money, information and knowledge; poverty, generated or resulting from the lack of power, ignorance, humiliation and even dehumanization.
- Societies where the distance towards has a low value, through the measures taken to reduce the inequalities between people, in an adequate legislative framework designed to ensure equal rights and opportunities for its members. The differences in wealth and power are minimized, with the tendency continuous reduction, the power being legitimized by the vote of the electors.

2. Basic Methodological Guidelines of the COMOR research

The influences of the cultural dimensions upon the organizational management were highlighted by numerous experts, especially being remarked Geert Hofstede's researches, who outlined a comparative analysis/benchmarking model, based on four dimensions of the organizational culture, consisting of the interaction of two sides, simultaneously complementary and opposite, namely: individualism - collectivism, the nearness of power (high / low); the avoidance of uncertainty (in intensive / reduced way); masculinity - femininity. Subsequently, the Canadian Michael Bond identified a fifth cultural dimension originally called "Confucian dynamism" and later on, the future orientation (on a long / short term). The conclusions of the research conducted by Geert Hofstede, between the years 1976-1973, were based on the processing of a number of opinions expressed by 116,000 employees within the branches of the American company IBM, from over 50 countries in the world. They were a reference basis in the comparative analyses made in order to identify the similarities and differences between the different national cultures, having a great practical use especially in the field of international affairs.

As a whole, the COMOR research aims to study widely the opinions expressed by a stratified sample set randomly regarding the main opinions of the employees from the economic organizations concerning the dimensions of the organizational culture, the method and leadership style, the organizational communication and the employee’s motivation, the attitude towards change. [2] In order to capture the multitude of aspects of the cultural dimensions that characterize the organizational management of the Romanian territory, the questionnaire used in the COMOR project has a total number of 80 questions, to which each respondent was asked to give their opinions on a ordinal scale of Likert type with five levels of value judgments (total agreement - ta, partial agreement - pa, indecision - i , partial disagreement - pd, total disagreement - td), referring to two situations: the current practice - Cp (as he perceives reality from his organization) and the desired practice - Dp (as he considers that it should be).

The respondents' answers were quantified, with the help of the data processing software, in statistical indicators specific for:
the descriptive analysis (quantitative): the share of value judgments on each group variable (sex, age, education, managerial training, hierarchical position) and the share of grouping variables on each value judgement (total agreement, partial agreement, indecision, partial disagreement, total disagreement).

the factorial analysis (qualitative) of factual judgments: scores calculated according to converted values of Rensis Likert scaling, deviation from standard, median and module in the corresponding scores in the range of those statistical questions that signify a certain cultural size or a certain type of behaviour.

These statistical indicators form a complex and rigorous scientific basis in order to substantiate the conclusions drawn up from the COMOR project, which is a complex study, generated on the one hand by the extent of the research (carried out at a national level, in all fields of activity) and on the other hand by the objectives pursued [3], namely:
- The effects of the national culture, or its subcultures, have of their organizational practices and on the managers' behaviours;
- The analysis of the managers' perception and executive staff upon the leadership;
- The analysis of the cultural dimensions that characterize the organizational management from the Romanian space.

The results of the COMOR project are going to be or represent a modest contribution in the field of the Romanian management practice, through the knowledge of the way in which the cultural dimensions influence the behaviour of the local managers and, on this basis, the shaping of the profile of an efficient manager and of the leader of excellence.

3. The Forms of manifestation of the "distance towards power" in the pilot-study of the COMOR project
The analysis of the cultural dimension "distance towards power" is a component part of the pilot-study of the COMOR project, carried out at 15 organizations in Suceava, by processing the responses received from a total of 222 subjects. The distribution of the respondents on social group variables is presented as it follows:
- By gender: 150 men (67.6%), and 72 women (32.4%);
- According to age: 39 young people under 30 years old (17.6%), 176 persons with the age between 30 – 60 years old (78.4%) and 9 persons with the age over 60 years old (4.1%);
- According to studies: 111 persons with secondary education and 110 with higher education;
- According to hierarchy: 81 managers (36.5%) – from all the organizational levels and 141 executors (63.5%). In terms of the activity object of the business, the companies that were prevalent and which are active in the trade (5), followed by those in manufacturing (4), construction (2) Tourism (2) mining (1) and water distribution (1).

The considerable influence that exerts this cultural dimension on the behaviour of managers is also highlighted by the large number of questions of the COMOR questionnaire (32 questions out of a total of 80) through which it is investigated the respondents' opinions on the way in which they perceive distance towards power, as it is at the time of the survey (the current practices) and how it wishes to be during the next time interval (the desired practices). These questions were structured on the main forms of manifestation, namely
1. The stated hierarchy, expressed in two aspects:
- Management 's concern to decrease / increase the distances of the organizational hierarchy, that is the way in which people in positions of power within the organizations are trying or not to establish a correct hierarchy between the categories of staff;
- The manifestation way of the authority and the employees’ influence within the organization, respectively through the skills and professional competence or through the position in the organizational hierarchy and the formal authority conferred by it.

2. The attitude of the hierarchy is an important feature of the distance towards power, manifested by:
- The managers’ involvement for the settlement of intergroup conflicts and interpersonal ones through dialogue and consensus, by mentioning the hierarchical chain that is used, and how the boss is directly involved in resolving and settling any disagreements;
- The concern of the managers for training the successors, in order to ensure the organization more successful accomplishments in the future periods;
- The acceptance by the management of criticism brought by subordinates, enabling
them to comment on the hierarchical superior decisions when they disagree with them or, on the contrary, must listen "blindly" to the hierarchical superior;
- Special privileges for the people or persons who have a certain rank and a certain position (of family/kinship, business etc.).
- The way in which the granting of salaries and rewards takes into accounts both employee’s performance, but also other factors (for example: work seniority, kinship relations, political, business, sympathy etc.).
- The encouragement by the managers to continuously improve the professional performances of the employees, as well as the freedom that the employees have in choosing the methods of achieving the objectives.

3. The regulation of the institutional order, which is reflected by:
- The clear specification of the work tasks in the job description, which has the effect of stimulating the way of conducting the employees’ activity;
- The precise and detailed development of the instructions and work procedures, of the way in which the established objectives can be met, in order that the employees to know from the beginning what it is expected from them, as well as the way in which to act in order to meet the standards and performance indicators, in order to obtain material and moral incentives/stimulants;
- The concern for creating and / or leading the teams, organizing and planning of current and future activities.

4. The organizational mood is a form of manifestation of the distance towards power often neglected in the management of the organization, but with numerous influences on the behaviour of managers, resulted from:
- The bidirectional loyalty employees – organization;
- The commitment or attachment to the achievements of the others (managers, employees), to the successes and joys, but also the sorrows of the employees are shared with the staff members of the group they belong, as a result of the existence of an effective organizational communication;
- Assuming by the manager of the failures of the team directly involved in order to find solutions to solve any problems arising in the achievement of the objectives of the led working group.

4. The quantification of the forms of manifestation of the dimensions „distance towards power”
The quantitative indicator for measuring the opinions expressed by the respondents from the organizations in Suceava is the average value of the scores calculated for the forms of manifestation of the cultural dimension "distance towards power", according to the existing practices and those desired (Table 1). The calculated scores reveal a tendency of the respondents towards a particular value judgment, for the opinions expressed on a scale with five levels or values: from intensely positive (5) to intensely negative (1), respectively from the total acceptance to the total rejection.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Forms of expression of the „distance towards power”</th>
<th>Scores of opinions according to practices</th>
<th>Tendency of opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current - Pa -</td>
<td>Desired - Pd -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The stated hierarchy</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>3,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The management concern to decrease/increase the organizational hierarchy distances</td>
<td>3,777</td>
<td>3,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The attitude of the hierarchy</td>
<td>4,270</td>
<td>4,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The managers’ involvement for the settlement of intergroup conflicts and interpersonal ones through</td>
<td></td>
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dialogue and consensus
- The concern of the managers for training the successors 3,896 4,545 ↗
- The acceptance by the management of criticism brought by subordinates 2,973 3,286 ↗
- Privileges for the people or persons who have a certain rank and a certain position 2,757 1,991 ↘
- The granting of salaries and rewards 3,271 3,340 ↗
- The encouragement by the managers of performance 4,844 4,276 ↗

The regulation of the institutional order
- The specification of the work tasks 4,295 4,741 ↗
- The elaboration and development of the criteria, standards and performance indicators 4,141 4,557 ↗
- The coordination, organization and planning of current and future activities 4,306 4,634 ↗

The organizational mood
- The bidirectional loyalty employees – organization 3,505 4,390 ↗
- The commitment or attachment to the achievements of the others (managers, employees), 3,548 4,026 ↗
- Assuming by the manager of the failures of the team 4,050 4,221 ↗

The average score 3,665 3,973 ↗

Note: The values of the scale: 5 – intensely positive; 1 – intensely negative

The data presented in Table 1 reflect the views of the 222 questioned respondents in the 15 organizations in the county of Suceava, according to the value of the scores calculated in accordance with the terms from the Guideline for developing the pilot study, entitled "Apparatus for econometric analysis explaining the managerial behaviour in the organizations from Romania"[4].

5. Conclusions
On the basis of the data presented in Table 1, the main conclusion that emerges is that the high value of the average score (3,665 for the current practices and 3,975 for the desired practices) reveals the fact that the distance imposed by the exercise of the power has relatively high values, this being determined on the one hand, by the high degree of centralization of the activities, and on the other hand, by the autocratic level of the management exercised in the studied organizations. Most of the calculated scores for the main forms of manifestations of the hierarchical distance have low variations from the average score, having an upward trend in the future time interval. By analyzing the values that record more significant differences towards the average score, the study findings or conclusions are the following:

a) the relatively reduced concern of the management to establish a correct or proper organizational hierarchy (Pa – 2,680), with a slight increase in the future (Pd – 3,207).
b) the privileges of the hierarchical position are located with a difference of about one unit below the average score (Pa – 2,757), having the largest decrease in the future (Pd – 1,991), which denotes the fact that the employees do not agree with salary discrepancies, by disproving some advantages obtained by some staff categories only in terms of the position occupied.
c) the relatively low level of the degree of acceptance by managers of the critics of the subordinates, these ones avoiding to contradict or disagree with the hierarchical head or boss (Pa – 2,973 , Pd – 3,286).
d) although the score that characterises the employees’ encouragement of the performance by managers has the highest value for the current practices (Pa – 4,844), with an almost maximum level, in reality it is a blatant encouragement, driven or determined by the ambition of achieving the objectives of the led working group, in order to thus highlight their managerial capabilities.
e) the special importance given to the manner of regulation of the institutional order, which registers values above the average score, which shows and proves the role and importance of the clear specification of the work tasks, the
development and knowledge of criteria, of the standards and the performance indicators, the organization and planning of the current and future activities.

All these things illustrate the fact that in the organizations that formed the pilot-study sample it is predominant the autocratic management, which is focused on tasks, in which the emphasis is put on the formal authority, the hierarchical relationships between bosses and subordinates being well-defined and strictly observed.

Both the strategic planning, as well as the foundation and decision adoption are made at the top of the organizational pyramid, where the managers have the "monopoly" of information. The employees are discouraged from taking part to the decisions adoption and even to the establishment of the concrete ways of carrying out assigned work tasks. In such a context, there are neglected the many connotations of the creative ability and the innovative spirit specific to the contemporary employee, who asserted more and more as the important factors of the economic growth and achieving the competitive advantage.

References: