

## SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF MOTIVATION OF SEAFARERS

Dimitar Kanev,<sup>a</sup> D.Ec.Sc., Ph.D., Professor

Sonya Toncheva,<sup>a</sup> Ph. D., Assos. Professor

Venelin Terziev,<sup>b</sup> D.Sc., Ph.D., Professor

Kamelia Narleva,<sup>a</sup> Ph. D., Assos. Professor

<sup>a</sup> Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy, Varna, Bulgaria

<sup>b</sup> National Military University, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

e-mail: d.kanev@naval-acad.bg

**Abstract:** Motivation is a voluntary and consistent effort to act in a certain way or to achieve some goals. It is essential and even critical for solving contemporary problems of the human element at sea. Especially those of attraction, recruitment, and retention in the profession, wastage and turnover rates, safety, security and efficiency of the sector. The study reports on the surveys in other countries as well as in our own country Bulgaria, investigating factors that motivate the attraction and retention in the maritime profession. The analyses of results defend the hypothesis that the maritime industry relies on external motivation, both instrumental and positioning. The instrumental motivation to work comes from the level of wages and fringe benefits, job security and regularity of remuneration, working conditions and time for rest, opportunities for on the job training, professional development and promotions. Positional motivation is related to the perception of work as a source of prestige and public recognition, good organizational environment, and professional relationships. This most important empirical conclusion is in line with the normative theoretical recommendations on the topic. In some specific cases - maritime ecological organizations, maritime education, as well as in the Navy - intrinsic motivation should dominate. The reason for this in the case of maritime education is the creative nature of teaching and research. In other examples, utopian ideas, altruistic concern for others, patriotic, social, religious or political beliefs that private actions should achieve broader goals play a significant role. In conclusion, the paper summarizes the results of the research and makes recommendations how to improve motivation in the maritime industry.

**Keywords:** external and internal motivation, seafarers' incentives, maritime industry

## **Introduction**

Staff motivation has always been a major problem for the maritime business. This is a result of the great importance of the human factor for the safe and cost-effective fleet operations. The crews are entrusted with technical aids that cost millions of dollars and errors are costly and have unpredictable consequences. Ships sail at great distances from the company's office, in adverse weather conditions, under the threat of piracy and terrorism. Tens of thousands of dollars are invested in the qualification of each staff member. (Lambert, 2009) Under these circumstances, no company wants to have unmotivated ship personnel. Mistakes in the selection, high turnover rate and low efforts are not acceptable for the maritime sector. In this sector people must be motivated to work hard, to achieve the best they can, to be loyal, and to adopt and transmit the corporate values and culture.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the motivation of seafarers and to seek new empirical facts about the factors determining the effective motivation of seafarers.

To achieve this goal, we have the following three tasks: (1) to present the results of previous empirical surveys on motivation in the maritime sector; (2) to present the methodology and the results of our own empirical study, confirming in an adaptive form the classical studies in the field and carried out in 2016-2017 with the participation of students from the "N. Vaptsarov" Naval Academy; (3) to analyze the motivational factors in order to build more effective management techniques, programs and policies in the maritime business.

Some limitations of the study should be outlined in advance. The lack of systematic theoretical knowledge and the applied statistical methods for collecting information – surveys, which do not give sound grounds to claim that the results obtained are representative and valid for all conditions. In addition, it is difficult to claim that the results of our own and those of the original research are comparable due to factors such as time difference in the studies, differences in the samples studied, the tools used to process the results, the cultural specificity of the studies. However, the comparative studies are a good way to extend the knowledge of the issues concerned with new arguments for the motivation in the maritime business. This would allow for more accurate predictions to be made and more effective tools and policies to be formulated for personnel management in the maritime business.

The analysis will be structured as follows. Firstly, the theoretical framework of the study and major research on the motivation in the maritime business will be presented. Then, the methodology of our empirical research and its main results will be clarified. Finally, theoretical and applied conclusions will be drawn for the management practice in the maritime business and some recommendations for further research will be outlined.

## **Theoretical framework and previous empirical studies on the motivation of seafarers**

Behavior is a function of many factors, depending both on individual characteristics and on the social environment. They are related to the satisfaction of two fundamentally different types of motivation defined initially by Edward L. Deci in 1975. (Deci 1975)

The first is external motivation in which the source of motivation is external to the person, and the stimuli are formed by impacts not related to the activity itself. External source motivation can be regarded as instrumental and positional. The instrumental labor motivation arises from the level and regularity of payment and the additional benefits, promotion and career prospects, working conditions, employment security, and the expectation of receiving on the job training or the acquisition of valuable information. The position motivation, in turn, is related to the perception of work as a source of prestige, the organizational environment, the relationship with the colleagues and management, the desire to gain social status. The second type of motivation is the internal motivation based on perceiving the work as interesting, pleasant and attractive because of its important goals, content and means, the existence of a sense of realization in the work and the full use of the skills and abilities of the personality. (Ryan and Deci 2000)

These two types of motivation are not addictive. External incentives have good results when the work is routine, repetitive, boring, and not very socially important. In activities that are of social importance or require creativity, the external motivation restricts and replaces the internal motivation. In these conditions, external motivation does not work, or it is counterproductive, and worsens the performance. (Etzioni 2011)

The largest empirical study of motivation in the maritime sector "Life at Sea" is conducted in 2012 by the English company "Shiptalk Ltd." in collaboration with "The Sailors Society". (Shiptalk Limited 2012) This survey involves more than 40 000 sailors from a wide background from countries across the global. United Kingdom, India and USA make-up 41.39% of the results. Bulgarians are in the same group with seafarers from Indonesia, New Zealand and Spain, which represents 1,64% of the survey. The results prove the strong predominant importance of the external instrumental motivation in shipping. The leading motives for choosing the seafaring profession are purely instrumental - payment, career opportunities, visiting different parts of the world. The question "Why did you choose to sail," was answered by 42.01% in the following way: "I wanted the maritime career" and 15.78% answered - "Better career opportunities"; 34.02% choose "Better pay than on the coast" and

33.61% - "For the money". Those who have chosen the answer "To see the world" are 34.22%. "The salary" was selected by 76.23% of those who answered the question "Which aspect of the maritime career is most important to you". The same study proves that instrumental motivation is also leading to retention in the seafaring profession. To the question "Why do you continue to sail" 50.20% answer "I get a salary I cannot get on shore", and to the question "What would keep you in the seafaring profession" 62.09% answer "More money", 59% - "Better financial benefits, incl. Pensions, etc." and 39.14% - "Better benefits from work".

Another study on motivation in the shipping business in Taiwan (Kiriaki and Chang 2008) also confirms the role of the instrumental motivation. It finds out that the strongest motivator is the high payment. A second important factor is the ability to build new skills. The cash bonus takes the fourth position and the possibility of promotion – the sixth. The results do not show great differences depending on age, gender, position in the company, and family status. Given the importance of the instrumental incentives for seafarers, the material incentives take the main place in the structure of incentives. Of these, the emphasis on monetary compensations is the strongest. Compared to other sectors, payments are considerably higher, both in the form of wages or bonuses for attraction, retention, performance, or for completing the contract free of accidents. According to the 2010 Marine Business Survey, in many cases the remuneration received depends directly on the periodic assessments of performance at the end of the voyage or every six months. (PwC 2010, 8) In addition, the study proves that employment security and low unemployment are relevant to the attraction and retention of seafarers.

Another observable motivator are non-monetary working conditions: free food aboard the ship, decent living conditions and a balance between working and resting hours on board, managing workload, pace of work, working time, weekly rest, long coastal breaks. In the field of health and safety at work, ship and port medical care, sports facilities, as well as serious measures ensuring the safety and security of the ship are provided. Measures are taken to offset social exclusion and distance from the family, such as regular communication and on-line contact with family and friends on the shore, including the possibility of family members being allowed to get on board. In support of this, polls of the English company "Shiptalk Ltd." prove that nearly 7% of the respondents define working conditions as a serious reason for choosing the seafaring profession.

The motivating role of the on the job training, covering the cost of education, clear career plans, opportunities for ship hierarchy promotions, professional shore mobility and other

factors should not be omitted as well. The cited study of motivation in Taiwan proves the role of career development as one of the most important reasons for choosing job at sea. (Kiriaki and Chang 2008) In the study of “Shiptalk Ltd.” 7.58% determine the prestige of the seafaring profession as the main reason for choosing it. (Shiptalk Limited 2012) Much of the preference for career growth is also likely to have a positional character. In the quoted study of motivation of Taiwanese marine companies, the positional motivation is most strongly represented by the factor "good working atmosphere". This factor occupies third position and is important for nearly half of the respondents. (Kiriaki and Chang 2008)

The practice of position motivation is primarily directed to the Master of the ship. The phrase "The First after God" is clear enough to express the respect for him and for the social status he holds on board the ship. For the crew, a traditional mechanism of positional motivation is to build a culture of recognition in which those who are doing well are recognized and well-respected: respect for the work and contribution of others, concentration on success, offering and receiving gratitude, praise and recognition of good work, giving a positive attestation for work and offering for promotion. An effective instrument for positional motivator is also to support the activities of others, both during the ship's work and in personal problems or in preparation for exams. Employee care, attention to personal and service issues, corporate solidarity, moral incentives, shortening the distance between master and crew, including authorizing direct access to a report without following the hierarchy, also have a strong motivating role. And last but not least, the celebration of professional success, birthdays and other personal events play role in creating a good organizational environment. Due to the above-mentioned factors that characterize positional motivation, about 20% of Shiptalk's respondents want to work at sea until they retire.

The internal motivation, though not prevalent in these studies, is also present. The study of “Shiptalk Ltd.” as the 5th most important factor points to the possibility of personal development. The other factors related to internal motivation - the ability to take responsibility during work and the variety of tasks - occupy the last places in the priorities of the respondents. The study on internal motivation can be judged by the fact that it is important for 54.71% of the respondents to receive satisfaction from their work, and 32.58% declare that they are satisfied with their work at sea. The questions, however, do not allow direct conclusions to be drawn on internal motivation as they do not explain the source of satisfaction - the work itself or what it brings as a benefit.

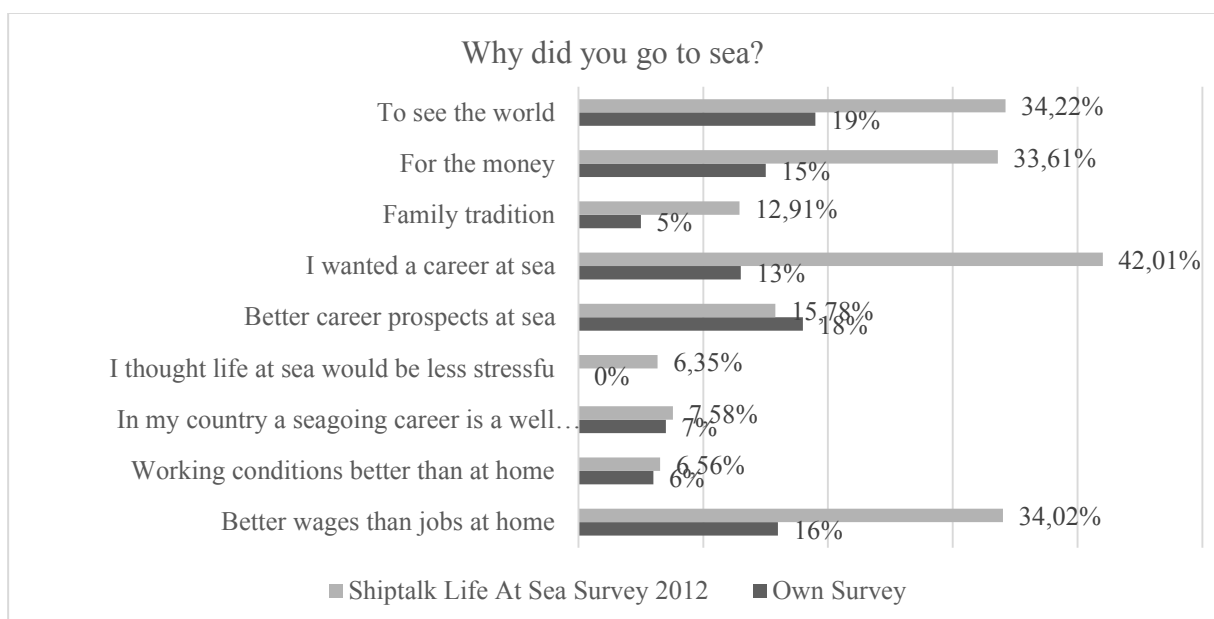
### **Study at the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy - Varna**

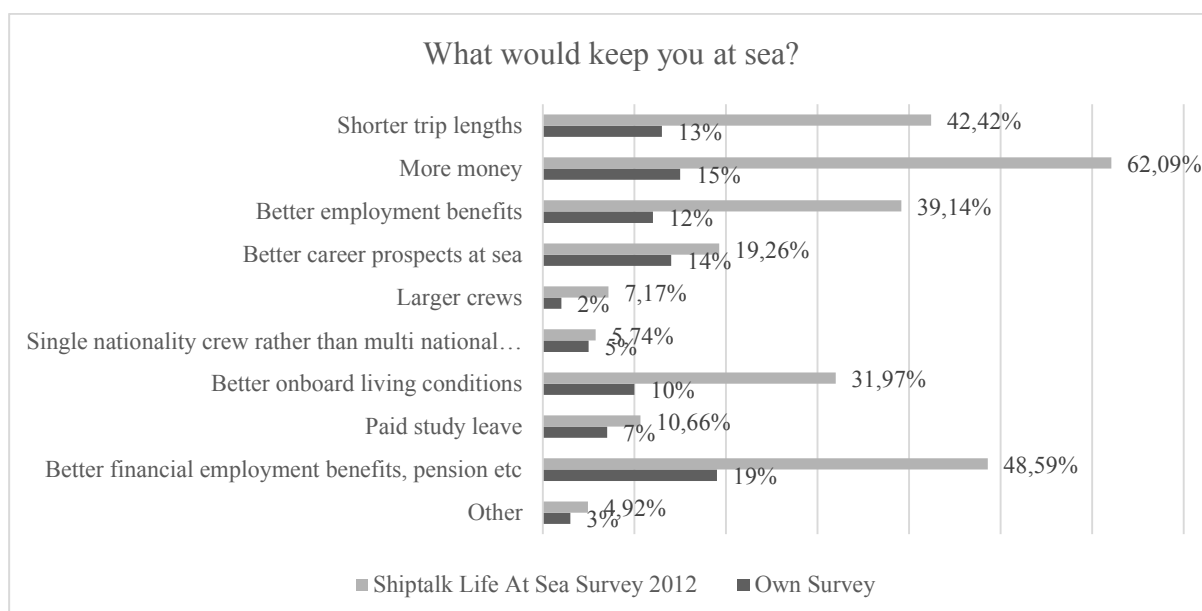
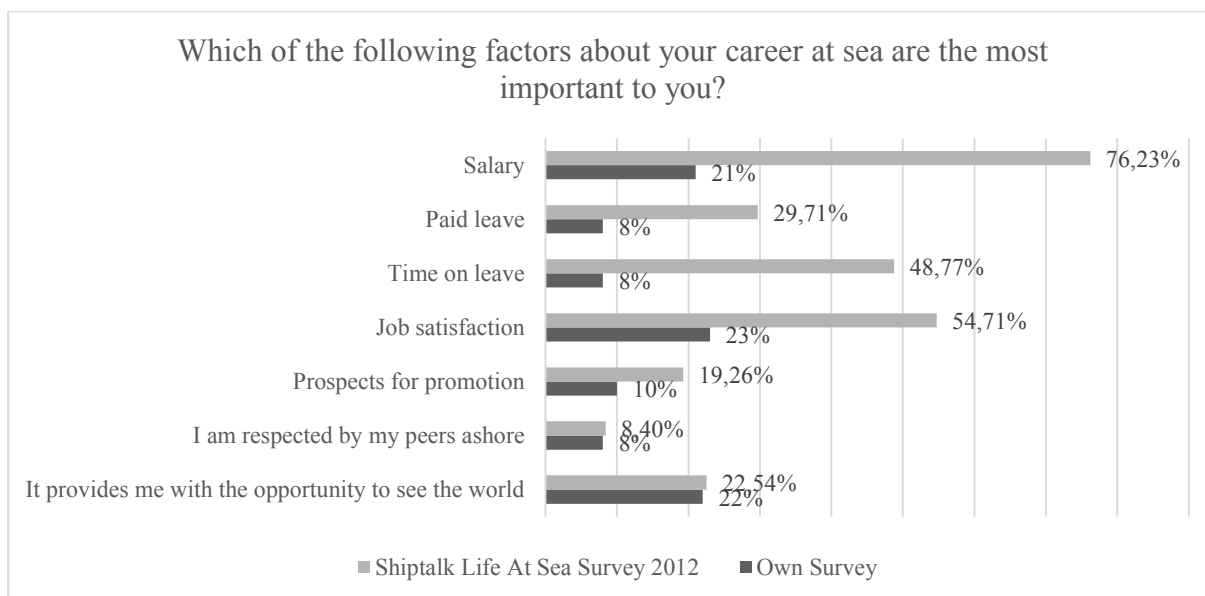
**Data.** Object of the empirical study are students of the first year, full time education, trained in the civilian specialties of Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy, Varna. The sample is formed on a voluntary basis and involves 139 people, which is 64% of the total population. The sample reproduces sufficiently well the characteristics of the general population and is representative of it. The poll was conducted between November 2016 and January 2017. Before taking part in the survey, participants declared their informed consent to participate.

**Statistical analysis.** The statistical method used is an online survey. The online form of the survey does not affect the representativeness of the sample as all students, part of the general population, have free access to the Internet and the online survey. The research task of the study is to verify the characteristics of the distribution of answers to the questions asked. The statistical method is the frequency analysis of the statistical indicators number and percentage. The coding and analysis of the results was done by exporting them from MOODLE and processing them in EXCEL.

**Empirical results.** Our research puts out three questions borrowed from “Shiptalk Ltd.”: "Why did you choose to sail?", “Which of the aspects of the maritime career is most important to you?” and "What would retain you in the seafaring profession?” The suggested options for selecting the respondents also repeat those from the study of "Shiptalk Ltd.". The only difference in our research is that respondents should choose only one answer, whereas in the original research they can choose multiple answers. The results of the study and their comparison with those from the study of “Shiptalk Ltd.” are presented in the figures below.

Figure 1. Empirical results





**Conclusions from the study.** The results of the survey are in line with those from the original study of “Shiptalk Ltd.” and reveal a motivational structure with the predominant importance of external motivation. The most widespread motives for choosing the seafaring profession among Bulgarian students are the ability to see the world (19%), better career opportunities (18%), better payment than ashore (16%) and money (15%). After these answers is only the desire to follow the maritime career (13%), based on internal motivation. The strongest motives for retention in the seafaring profession are also instrumental - better financial benefits (19%), more money (15%), better seafaring opportunities (14%), better work benefits (13% %) and favorable working conditions - shorter trips (13%) and better ship life (10%). As

to what factors are perceived to be the most important, our research reveals one important specificity. The answers to the question "Which of the aspects of the maritime career is most important to you", 23% put "Job satisfaction" in the first place. This factor is perceived as important for the "Shiptalk Ltd." survey, but it occupies a second place and is outpaced by the Salary factor. The weight of the "opportunity to see the world" factor is also greater in our study. Probably the reason is that young people have romantic expectations of the seafaring profession. However, the answers to other questions testify that in their actual choices they are not driven by them but by the real external stimuli of the monetary and non-monetary working conditions in the sector.

## **Conclusion**

The revealed specificity implies the formation of two fundamentally different approaches to the motivation of the people in the maritime industry – internal and external motivation.

The first one should be targeted at experienced sailors. Given the objective characteristics of the maritime profession - routine, low level of creativity, the need of high discipline and of following a predefined set of rules, precise schedules and goals - the external motivation has advantages. For this reason, the maritime sector should continue to focus on relatively better payment and improving the working conditions.

The second approach should be targeted at potential candidates and people at the beginning of the maritime career. The attracting to the seafaring profession must consider and exploit the existing romantic and utopian ideas in young people. To avoid disappointment and leaving after the first confrontations with reality, the maritime education system as well as the training onboard periods should gradually adapt them to the realities of the seafaring profession.

The internal motivation is not a main drive for maritime profession, but must be a priority in some other specific cases. For example, in maritime education, maritime non-profit organizations, and in the naval forces. Unlike the merchant navy, in those spheres, the internal motivation is more productive than the external motivation. In the case of maritime education, the reason is the creative nature of teaching and scientific activity. In the maritime non-profit organizations and in the naval forces the utopian ideas, altruistic concern for others, patriotic, social, religious or political beliefs, the idea that private actions should achieve broader goals, also have a significant role to play. In these and other similar structures, people are ready to work, not because they expect any utilitarian benefits, as with external motivation, but because they value the job itself and receive work satisfaction. In order to stimulate their innovativeness, rather than rely on rewards and punishments, it is better to create favorable



conditions for people to work and then rely on their reciprocity. These favorable conditions include (1) giving them a goal and understanding about the importance of their efforts; (2) be autonomous in their decisions about what and how to do it; and (3) to offer them opportunities for personal and professional growth and accumulation of expertise in dealing with new challenges and responsibilities. (Pink 2011)

Given the limitations of the study, its conclusions and recommendations should not be generalized. Their task is to broaden the knowledge about motivation in the maritime business and to stimulate future research and scientific discussions in the field.

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