SUMMARY

Prediction of rewards and sanctions for operational border policemen

The present paper is motivated by the daily experience of professional interaction with Romanian Border Police employees and it is based on the intention to improve the current stand of the assessment system used for granting rewards and imposing sanctions. My intention is not to replace this system, but to rather cover the vulnerable points identified empirically.

Although the research subject is generated by the work environment encountered day by day, there were also other elements which have influenced the choice and which account for the usefulness of this PhD thesis.

First of all, in police type organisations, the identification of psychological variables which predict the professional performance or anticipate the occurrence of counterproductive behaviours is a necessity, from the perspective of optimizing the employees selection and promotion process and of preventing the occurrence of serious events, with repercussions on persons' health and institution image.

Furthermore, the last years witnessed the growing necessity to achieve prediction on performance and especially on counter performance of employees working in police structures, due to the existence of some cases (though a non-

significant statistic number of cases, they had serious consequences) of involvement in negative events with strong media effects (aiding and abetting, obstruction of law, bribery, suicide, homicide), which raised the general awareness of the high risks determined by counterproductive behaviours.

Referring strictly to Romanian Border Police, encouraging high-performance behaviour and anticipating /preventing disciplinary offences represent an obligation undertaken in the perspective of Schengen area accession. Even the EU integration is in itself a guarantee that we must and we can efficiently manage the complex of problems we are confronted with at the Romanian borders.

The present paper particularizes the analysis of professional performance of operational border policemen, by investigating the system of rewards and sanctions, as well as the system of indicators used for assessing the professional activity and personality traits, considered in the periodic employee assessment.

The objective of the present paper is to improve the system of granting rewards and imposing sanctions, working on two front lines. First of all, it sets to investigate the individual qualities which lead to the granting of rewards and imposing of

sanctions. Secondly, it aims to propose a set of assessment indicators in order to enhance the objectivity level of the system of professional activity assessment. This approach is motivated by the fact that these ratings are used for the purpose of granting rewards or imposing sanctions, but they themselves may be perceived as rewards or sanctions.

The better a psychological assessment is designed and conducted (the used psychological instruments are validated from a scientific point of view and they reflect as accurate as possible the psychological variables which are significant to the purpose), the more the level of performance increases and the probability of occurrence of counterproductive behaviours decreases.

In the same way, the more the assessment of the professional activity is based on the investigated aspects, the more reality concordant and predictive for future performance will the assessment results be.

I consider it necessary to differentiate between the purpose of the research and the contribution brought by the conducted research. The thesis aims to analyse the psychological aspects involved in granting the rewards and imposing sanctions in the professional activity of operational

border policemen, as well as to design and test an assessment system. While these steps, aiming to achieve the purpose of the paper, explain the existence of the present research, I wish to put forth grounds for the usefulness of results and the contribution brought in the specific professional domain.

I ventured into the unexplored field of a police speciality (border police) which has not been the subject of such studies until now. Although the activity of border policemen has certain aspects in common with the activity of policemen, the two specialties differ greatly from the point of view of activity specific and fulfilled duties. In my searches I have not identified in Romania a study focusing on the prediction of performance and disciplinary offence, not even for policemen. The studies abroad have not yet approached any subject matter regarding border policemen, although they are well represented at European Union level.

Certainly, throughout time, many studies have been conducted (abroad) for identifying the psychological variables correlating with professional performance in law enforcement agencies, with different results determined by their socio-demographic specific, too. The contribution of the present paper consists in analysing the impact of the psychological

variables in the activity on a specific domain – of operational border policemen.

Moreover, the studies go beyond the results of the statistical analyses. Firstly, they identify punctual aspects in which incongruences between the performed activity and the used assessment criteria may occur. Basing on the results of the analyses and the points identified as having vulnerability potential, the approach is finalized with the proposition of a system of activity assessment indicators, tested for obtaining a standard, non-discriminatory solution with informational value at the end of the professional assessment.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I presented the concept of professional performance from a theoretical perspective. The literature uses this general term for covering valuable behaviours which need rewarding. This first chapter undertakes the presentation of professional performances as an indicator of behaviours which are valuable at the work place and which are consequently rewarded. The rewards received by the employees are granted at organisational level based on professional performance assessment. This concept is usually employed in relation with the reward, a bi-directional relation between

rewarding professional performances and performance motivated by reward.

The studies conducted up to now present an image which is dependent on the professional category, data collection methods and culture of origin. The lack of studies on this subject in the Romanian literature signal a drawback, both in conducting such researches and, especially, in the manner of approaching the performance assessment process. The present study aims to offer an image of performance in accordance with reality. First of all, it investigates the professional performance at the level of the objective indicator – the reward. In addition, by particularizing the significant predictors of the professional performance of operational border policemen, the research is directed towards rewarded, observable and quantifiable behaviours.

In the second chapter of the thesis, I approached the subject of counterproductive behaviour, generator of disciplinary sanctions. At Romanian Border Police level counterproductive behaviour is commonly referred to as "disciplinary offence". The term of counterproductive behavior is most frequently used in the literature, consequently the

theoretical aspects will be presented from the perspective of this term. The counterproductive behavior is presented firstly from the perspective of its definitions, following the particularization on aspects which help substantiating the research conducted in this thesis. Furthermore, modalities of classification focusing on counterproductive constructive / destructive behaviors are presented. The chapter ends with the presentation of 3 types of explanatory models: based on emotions, based on psychosocial mechanisms and factorial approaches.

The vision of the present paper is that of the counterproductive behaviour determined by individual factors and not by external environment factors, without intending to investigate the counterproductive behaviours. The observed effect of counterproductive behaviours is the modality of ascertaining its presence and the applied sanction, respectively.

The third chapter presents firstly some general aspects regarding rewarded and sanctioned human behaviour. Secondly, it approaches the particular case of rewards and sanctions applied in the Ministry of Internal Affairs structures. These rewards and sanctions are taken into account as consequences of

identifying high-performance behaviours or disciplinary offence of the employees.

From the presentation of the legal regulations it may be drawn that in fact counter performance or counterproductive behaviours in this institution are represented by the concept of disciplinary offence, a well defined concept, but difficult to quantify, demonstrate or prove without doubt, involving most of the times subjective assessments of the concerned persons. Certainly, the system tried to protect itself by working up many procedures regulating the carrying out of specific activities and containing actual elements which can be determined or assessed. But when we speak of ethics and deontology, truth lies with the beholder and objectivity seems to be more a desideratum as a reality.

The fourth chapter represents the beginning of the investigative approach comprising the first three studies of the thesis. The purpose of the research is to investigate the capacity of prediction of the individual psychological factors concerning rewarded and sanctioned behaviours within RBP structures, referring to the professional activity of operational border policemen. The research was structured into 3 studies, each with

distinct objectives, but having identical variables and instruments.

The objective of the first study was to identify the psychological factors which are predictive for high-performance behaviours of operational border policemen. The results indicate that the greatest number of rewards will be granted to a border policeman who has low scores in cognitive abilities tests, who is pleasant, likes to socialize, carries out his duties diligently, is male and has officer rank.

The second study focuses on the prediction of disciplinary offences of operational border policemen, starting from the identified psychological factors. Sanctions are more frequently applied, without significant difference in personality structure, degree of motivational involvement or professional category, to male employees with great motivational persistence. It seems that disciplinary sanctions are applied most frequently when the individual has a tendency to preserve his / her motivation in tasks on a long term. The relation is bilateral in the sense that persistence in counterproductive behaviours entails clearly more sanctions and these sanctions seem not to hinder the individual to remain motivated in his / her professional activity.

In the period in which the research was conducted many employees were dismissed and this offered the possibility to analyse the relation between the dismissal decision and individual psychological variables. In this sense, it is valuable and appreciated for an operational border policeman to be extravert, pleasant, diligent and motivationally persistent and it is advisable not to manifest behaviours associated with anxious states, extrinsic motivational involvement, vulnerability and dependence on colleagues, in order to get stabilized in the institution on a long term.

Conclusion can be drawn that in Border Police structures, as far as operational policemen are concerned, the existence of a high degree of emotional stability, self-containment, independence and motivational persistence is encouraged and the occurrence of behaviours associated with hyperperseverance, as well as of behaviours associated with a high level of cognitive abilities is discouraged. Combined with the first study, I can say that it is valuable and appreciable for an operational border policeman to be extravert, pleasant, diligent and motivational persistent and that it is advisable not to manifest behaviours associated with anxious states, extrinsic

motivational involvement, vulnerability and dependence on colleagues.

The third study aims to test the impact of the obtained ratings on the granting of rewards and application of sanctions. By this study I intend to indicate the parts where the rating system may be improved, more precisely, the parts where we can work to improve the modality of assessment of the professional activity of operational border policemen. This third study envisaged two utilities. Firstly, it completes the first two studies, rendering a broader image of the rewards and sanctions system implemented in the professional activity of operational border policemen. Secondly, this third study serves as a preliminary investigation of the current situation of the relation between the ratings obtained upon assessment and the system of rewards and sanctions. It is useful because it provides the link with the following investigative approach which aims to propose a new system of indicators based on which the assessment of professional activity of operational border policemen could be carried out.

I consider I have identified the parts where improvement of the assessment system of professional activity of operational border policemen may be initiated. First of all, observing the

relations existent between ratings and personality traits, I consider that the present rating system is based excessively on subjective factors Moreover, I believe that the rating system should present stronger relations with the applied sanctions and rewards. Likewise, the rating system should differentiate among employees in the context of dismissal, but it should not discriminate employees based on gender and professional category, as it happens at the present moment.

Considering the results of the three studies presented, Chapter 5 proposes an approach of designing and testing of an assessment system based on objective indicators to be used in rating the professional activity of Border Police employees.

The results obtained until now indicate that the current rating system is based excessively on subjective factors, observing the relations existent between the ratings and personality traits. In addition, I do not consider that the current rating system has sufficiently strong relations with granted rewards and imposed sanctions. Moreover, results indicating a discrimination, based on gender and professional category, occur, without linking the obtained rating to the dismissal

decision. It seems that men and officers achieve higher ratings and dismissed employees do not differ from the remaining employees from the point of view of the obtained rating. Another aspect worth mentioning is the inconsistent relation between the assessment system and intelligence level.

I wish to propose through this last approach of the thesis a possible assessment system for the professional activity of operational border policemen, mentioning that institution regulations do not allow the complete modification of the assessment sheet, but they allow the introduction of the 9 indicators proposed for testing in this study. I wish to replace the blank spaces intended for the 8 indicators which account for 70% of the general rating in the assessment sheet with the tested, objective indicators, whose wording will not lie with the hierarchical superiors. These indicators of the professional activity are meant to be discriminative and consistent, as they are designed and tested through methods of qualitative and statistical analysis.

Mention must be made that the new system of indicators referred to one of the working lines in the operational field, namely the activity in the land border crossing points. I have

applied a multifaceted assessment methodology for developing a system of assessment indicators, by interviewing and applying questionnaires to employees from different hierarchical levels.

Thus, criteria and indicators for evaluating the professional activity of operational border policemen working in the land border crossing points were identified. After the answers were recorded, they were analysed in cooperation with institution's specialists and a set of 9 assessment indicators was established (in reality there are 8, 1 being specific either to the worker in the I line or to the worker in the II line) which lead to a rating expressed on a four level scale (*very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory).*

In the testing phase, I have investigated the improvements brought to the rating system through an applicative approach of investigating the indicators used in relation to two sets of variables. Firstly, the investigation was made in relation with sanctions and rewards to see whether they foster stronger relations with the new indicators. Subsequently, I have tested the independence of the indicators from employee traits, as well as avoidance of discrimination based on gender or professional category upon rating. I have also tested the

existence of a consistent relationship between intelligence and the obtained rating based on the proposed indicators.

The results of this study substantiate the increased usefulness of the developed system of indicators. Firstly, the indicators based on which the rating is established have a greater degree of objectivity due to two reasons. On the one hand, because the indicators are directly related to the professional activity, the assessment made by the hierarchical superiors is not necessary. Hence, the access to the data bases and the process of establishing the rating is more facile and the system is completed at a high degree of objectivity. On the other hand, the increased objectivity is supported by the lack of influence of the personality traits and of other personal features on the obtained rating. Secondly, the designed indicators offer the possibility to grant ratings strongly proportionate to the applied rewards and sanctions. Especially, the relation between the obtained rating and the applied sanction is what clearly differentiates the different employee categories. Last, but not least, the relation between indicators and intelligence turns out to be concordant with the expectations and the results quoted in the literature.

I consider the proposed set of indicators a solid starting point for which additional grounds may be obtained in future

research. The set of assessment indicators will be applied on a panel with a view to implement it in the yearly employee assessment sheet. Moreover, the personality traits which were identified as having significant relationships to rewards and sanctions will be proposed to be introduced in the yearly employee assessment sheet.

The usefulness of the present thesis is rendered by the proposals of improvement of a working environment through elements which increase the quality of the assessment process, without criticizing the current situation. The contribution can be identified both at the diagnosis level and at the level of testing a solution by employing scientific methods.