

Proactive Career Planning in the Maritime Industry: Enhancing Millennials' Workplace Enthusiasm in Montenegro and Turkey

Proaktivno planiranje karijere u pomorskoj industriji: jačanje radnog entuzijazma milenijalaca u Crnoj Gori i Turskoj

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the attitudes of millennial maritime students when it comes to career planning and proactive behavior, in order to efficiently, effectively develop each students' potential, and direct the activities of decision-makers (maritime companies and educational institutions). This research was based on a purposefully developed conceptual model and empirical research conducted on a sample of 308 students from Montenegro and Turkey. The research relied on a referential career engagement scale. The relevance of the hypotheses was tested by means of SEM model, logistic regression, Kruskal-Wallis test and eta coefficient. The results obtained show that proactive behavior of maritime students is a consequence of their attitudes established concerning career development. However, the attitudes of students vary depending on their country of origin and the year of their studies. Thus, through the influence on attitudes these two factors indirectly affect the proactive behavior of students. This emphasizes the possibility to foster students' proactive behavior regarding maritime career planning through effectively management of public policies of the country, especially those related to the educational system. These findings explain the relationships between the students and their career planning and proactive behavior, strengthening the students' competitiveness on the market. Therefore, the paper provides a significant contribution in offering insights to decision-makers and the creators of educational policies.

Sažetak

U radu se ispituju stavovi studenata milenijalaca studija pomorstva kada je u pitanju planiranje karijere i proaktivno ponašanje kako bi se učinkovito i djelotvorno razvijali potencijali svakog studenta i usmjeravale aktivnosti donositelja odluka (pomorskih tvrtki i obrazovnih institucija). Ovo istraživanje se temeljilo na namjenski razvijenom konceptualnom modelu i empirijskom istraživanju provedenom na uzorku od 308 studenata iz Crne Gore i Turske. Istraživanje se oslanjalo na referentnu ljestvicu angažmana u karijeri. Relevantnost hipoteza ispitana je uz pomoć SEM modela, logističke regresije, Kruskal-Wallisovog testa i eta koeficijenta. Dobiveni rezultati pokazuju kako je proaktivno ponašanje studenata pomorstva posljedica njihovih stavova o razvoju karijere. Međutim, stavovi studenata variraju ovisno o zemlji porijekla i godini studija. Dakle, utjecajem na stavove, ova dva čimbenika posredno utječu na proaktivno ponašanje studenata. Time se naglašava mogućnost poticanja proaktivnog ponašanja studenata u pogledu planiranja pomorske karijere kroz učinkovito upravljanje javnim politikama zemlje, posebice onima koje se odnose na obrazovni sustav. Ovi nalazi objašnjavaju odnose između studenata i njihovog planiranja karijere i proaktivnog ponašanja, jačajući konkurentnost studenata na tržištu. Zbog toga rad daje značajan doprinos u pružanju uvida donositeljima odluka i kreatorima obrazovnih politika.

KEY WORDS

maritime career planning
proactive behavior
Montenegro
Turkey

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

planiranje pomorske karijere
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1. INTRODUCTION / Uvod

Career planning has gained an increasing amount of importance in the modern business environment, which is characterized by continuous suspension and ruthless competition. A career is considered a professional path of development

taken by individuals during their working life. Each phase in career planning is related to choices made with regards to education, occupation, and employers. Moreover, career planning is inseparable from development, i.e. lifelong learning.

Considering all these aspects, individuals can be considered personally responsible for their own career management [1]. In practice, maritime professionals prevalently manage careers themselves. However, career management responsibilities are partially controlled by companies, recruitment agencies, and other recruitment channels, educational institutions, and general society, which tends to protect the interests and rights of the maritime profession. Considering the factors relevant for career planning in any profession, this paper aims to discover the ways in which maritime students from Montenegro and Turkey, as members of millennial generation contemplate future careers more broadly [2].

Although there is no unique definition regarding the term of birth of Millennials, people born at the end of the past and the beginning of this century can be considered members of this generation [3, 4]. As the first tech savvy generation, Millennials have significantly different way of communication and collecting information compared to other generations [5], which influences their process of making decisions including those related to the career choice. They use various sources of information available online and tend to process it very fast, which enables them to easily make comparisons regarding different options [6, 7]. They make decisions independently, whereas the opinion of their family and friends does not have significant impact on that process. Their career choices are strongly influenced not only by economic, but social and psychological factors as well [8-12]. Thus, their behavior regarding career planning and development, as well as the activities they take in order to acquire knowledge needed for successful career development is different compared to members of previous generations. This emphasizes the importance of research of the factors that determine the proactive behavior of Millennials and the development of their attitudes toward career planning which are defined as their personal evaluation of people, object, events and opportunities that takes place on a conscious or subconscious level [13]. It should be borne in mind that Millennials, as the first savvy generation, also significantly differ from the members of the so called Z generation, which follows them and whose oldest members are also in the higher education system. Some authors believe that members of generation Z are born from 1997 onward [3], while some authors argue that as generation Z members can be considered only those who were born after the year 2000 [14]. One of the main characteristics of members of Generation Z is that they think globally, communicate globally and consume information from all over the world [15]. However, unlike the Millennials, this generation prefers digital media over traditional ones and has a constant need to receive new, different types of information [16]. These differences significantly affect the ways in which members of both generations gather information related to their career planning. Thus, we point out that the carrier planning of Millennials who are maritime students will be in the focus of this paper, considering the fact that most of the students of higher education institutions were members of this generation in the time of conducting this research.

Maritime careers require more than simply planning and investing in classical education and/or experience. Career planning thus has a major impact on the maritime industry, which has influenced the development of a special profile of tertiary education: maritime studies [17-19]. Therefore, maritime

careers necessitate adequate career planning [20]. On the one hand, graduates face the challenge of their first time aboard a vessel (onboarding), their connections within the labor market, and further career planning. On the other hand, companies tend to hire a sufficient number of seafarers to replace those that have left the industry or retired, while the interest of the state lies in the development of human potential within the maritime industry. The purpose of this paper is thus to emphasize the need for a structured system of career planning for millennial students - future seafarers. In other words, this paper aims to expose the importance of Millennials' engagement in proactive behavior prior to graduation, as proactivity ensures a higher level of competitiveness for their first time aboard a vessel and further career development. Similar studies have investigated succession planning, and, unlike this paper, have focused on the ways in which succession planning for seafarers can be used as a tool with which to ensure the sustainability of the supply of ship officers for employers within the global shipping industry [21]. Additionally, this paper confirms that the understanding of the concept of proactive behavior in a person's career has a high degree of importance - even before graduation - and affects their success during the initial years of their professional career [22].

In this regard, scholarly literature has failed to provide a solution for problems related to proactive career planning of millennial students. Moreover, previous research lacks comparative analysis between countries with considerable seafaring populations and countries with less seafarers. This served as a motivation for this research, which was conducted in two coastal countries (Montenegro and Turkey) with a notable difference in the total number of seafarers. Montenegro has around 7000 seafarers, however the proper registers of seafarers and their exact numbers are still missing [23]. Turkey ranks second in the world for the most trained seafarers after China [24] and has a total of 180,000, out of which 35,000 are active. The absence of official research in Montenegro on the number of seafarers, who are in short supply on a global level, served as one of the motivations of this study - to consider student career planning in order to offer recommendations to decision makers on how to improve the situation in this area. The shortcomings mentioned above and the gaps observed in academic literature also served as further motivation for this research. Besides that, coastal countries generally differ in terms of their maritime education systems, including traditional systems, various degree levels, and comprehensive university systems [25], which is also true for these two countries covered by the research.

Considering the identified literature gap, this paper aims to examine whether there are differences in the proactive career planning amongst millennial students of maritime studies depending on the country of their origin and a year of study. Additionally, the goal of this study is to investigate whether there is a consensus in terms of the attitudes and the activities that constitute the process of proactive career development. As Montenegro and Turkey achieved different levels of development of maritime sector and have significantly different educational systems regarding maritime profession, this research also aims to identify whether these differences affect the attitudes of (millennial) students and consequently influence their tendency toward proactive maritime career planning. Based on the results obtained it will be possible

to understand what drives proactive behavior of maritime students and whether the official educational system should be modified in order to provide knowledge for maritime students that is in line with requirements of the market, but also how to make students to take more active role in their own maritime career planning. Unlike the previous research that investigated the nature and importance of proactive behavior on career planning but failed to explain the role of different market conditions and educational system in that process, this research examines the role and the impact of these two external factors that can be effectively managed by policy makers in order to foster proactive career planning of maritime students, which emphasizes the originality of this paper.

The structure of the paper is composed of five segments. After the introductory part, the second one presents the main findings and conclusions of previous research regarding the career development and proactive career planning. The third section provides the research hypotheses, the explanation of the conceptual model that underlies this research and describes the methodology, materials and methods applied within it. The research results and the following discussion are given in the fourth section of the paper. Finally, the paper ends with an analysis of main implications of the study and recommendations for future research in the field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW / *Pregled literature*

Timely career planning is extremely important when it comes to the realization of professional goals and the achievement of personal satisfaction. In the most contemporary literature, career planning is considered as the mediating mechanism through which proactive graduates attain the early career outcomes (i.e. employment status and perceived overqualification) [26]. Career planning is the process of an individual's identification and application of the steps and activities necessary for the attainment of professional goals. There are three basic stages of career planning: (1) self-assessment; (2) career exploration; and (3) job searching [27]. Additionally, career planning has multiple positive implications for both employees and employers in terms of flexibility, the alignment of employees with corporate goals, and the strengthening of the development potential of employees and the organization as a whole.

Career planning is specific with regards to millennials - new young generations - who are optimistic, have high expectations, and want to achieve professional success [28]. Growing up in a digitally connected world, these generations use the Internet as a tool for learning, building relationships, socializing, and working. Career planning at the beginning of the twenty-first century has been unpredictable due to the consequences of the economic crisis over the last ten years, which resulted in pessimism and discouragement among young people i.e. Millennials [29].

Weinrit & Neumann [9] indicate that external and internal factors determine the choice of seafaring careers and further career planning. These authors state that the motivations behind the career choices of most young people i.e. Millennials are determined by economic factors (high salaries, the opportunity to sustain the financial well-being of a family, career opportunities, etc.), social factors (desire for education, the responsible work of seafarers, the status of a specialist, the perception of the maritime industry as a promising line of work

for residents of coastal regions, etc.), and psychological factors (the perception of seafarers' duties as interesting, with being a captain seen as a dream job). In this regard, career planning, which positively affects professional successes [30, 31], is a systematization of information about career choices and the preparation of activities.

Practice has confirmed that Millennials rarely find a perfect maritime company within which they build a career throughout their working life. Moreover, nowadays people prefer to search for alternative arrangements, exhibiting proactive behavior [2]. Previous research, however, does not indicate a general degree of engagement in such behavior during one's career. Proactive behavior can be defined as self-starting behavior, which is oriented to the changes and goal achievements in the future [32, 33]. In other words, proactive career planning behavior refers to initiatives and interventions that shape future careers. Proactive behavior includes: (1) goal setting; (2) exploring options; and (3) formulating plans [34], implying that individuals gradually become the managers of their own careers, driven by a unique set of personal needs [35].

For quality career planning and development, the most important thing is that the individual cares about his career future and increases personal control over his/her professional future, shows curiosity in exploring his possibilities and future scenarios, and strengthens self-confidence to follow personal aspirations [36]. Maritime students are suggested to improve their career planning skills by means of different methods and resources [20, 37], such as: connecting with partners and employers; assistance from educational institutions, assistance from lecturers and graduates who actively navigate, informational methodical publications for students on how to prepare for a maritime career, use of active learning methods, teaching (teamwork, seminars, projects, simulators), training, international student exchange and similar programs.

Recent research by Jackson & Tomlinson [38] has concluded that although students are actively involved in career planning they still need additional counseling and guidance. Therefore, this paper underscores the importance of continuous research into students' attitudes and their comprehension of internal and external factors that influence career planning in the maritime industry, as well as the necessity of their proactive behavior throughout their studies. In order to facilitate the understanding of the complexity of the career planning process, onboarding, and employment of millennial students, this paper aims to uncover what they as future seafarers think and do with regards to future career plans. Researchers tend to detect whether or not maritime students actively research future career options, whether students' behavior could be predicted, and which factors affect maritime career planning.

Professional career planning skills of maritime students include skills related to the self-cognition and self-development abilities, social skills, skills of labor (work cognition and ability to adjust to work and lifelong learning) and all of them are influenced by external factors, such as [20]: legal regulation of maritime profession (international, national and EU legal acts), peculiarities of the maritime labour market, peculiarities of the maritime profession, and human, material and technical resources. Additionally, Green, et al. [39] found that long-term training increases student proactivity and career adaptability and facilitates the transition from university to work. Hence,

training and development, as the key factors of competency in the maritime workforce, should be implemented throughout undergraduate studies and through the companies that hire seafarers [40].

The observation of the students' year of study also could be indicative of their change in attitude towards professional engagements, especially during their studies [41], which results in increased engagement with career planning. Similarly, Berdick, et al. [37] found a relatively high interest in proactive career planning that grows with the age of student. Hence, in the paper we proposed that the range of specific factors, such as training and development, the year of studies and impact of country of origin could be significant to maritime student career planning.

Countries differ in terms of economic development and educational systems, which influences career planning, especially in specific sectors such as the maritime sector [17]. Many countries still face the lack of maritime employees and educated seafarers [25, 42-44]. In accordance with the literature review provided, the lack of research on career planning among millennial maritime students is evident, particularly in developing countries such as Montenegro and Turkey, which motivated this research. Increased competitiveness and the European integration process undoubtedly requires the comparison of the two countries in various maritime aspects. For example, in terms of tourism, which is the main economic branch of both countries, the research indicated that the practices of Turkey - which achieves increasingly positive results every season - could benefit not only Montenegro, but other destinations in the Western Balkans as well. The Balkans could benefit in terms of the creation of strategies and the valorization of potentials [45].

Previous studies also show that students' established attitudes about career planning have not been analyzed through the lens of their country of origin, the year of their studies, and proactive behaviors (completed training, the time the students plan to spend onboard, early decisions on the type of ship they want to work on, etc.). This paper investigates the aforementioned specific factors among maritime students from Montenegro and Turkey which are members of generation of Millennials and who study and specialize in seafaring (hereafter referred to as: 'the students'). This paper thus aims to fill the observed research gap.

3. HYPOTHESIS, MATERIALS, AND METHODS / *Hipoteze, materijali i metode*

The paper relies on three hypotheses based on relevant literature and the application of the data obtained from the empirical research of the two countries (Montenegro and Turkey):

As previous studies revealed, the young people's choice of maritime career depends on perception of its positive and negative characteristics [9, 10, 28, 46]. They form the attitude towards maritime career depending on the interaction between economic, social and psychological factors [9]. Thus, the choice of maritime career is determined by personal motivation, perception of personal abilities and the perception of the benefits and challenges of maritime profession [8, 10, 27, 47]. However, the previous studies did not investigate the impact that attitudes have upon the proactive behavior of young people once they chose the maritime career. Thus the first research hypothesis is defined as follows:

H1: *The students' attitudes towards career planning in the maritime industry have impact upon their proactive behavior.*

The economic factors that affect the maritime career as choice of young people is influenced by characteristics of the country and the prevalent market conditions [17]. Besides that, the extent to which maritime profession is considered to be important for the economy of the country influences the way in which policy makers tend to develop it [17-21, 48]. Similarly, the differences in the level of maritime sector development cause the observed differences regarding the availability of network needed for students to acquire new skills, voluntary training and knowledge outside the formal education [49, 50]. Thus, the second research hypothesis is defined as follows:

H2: *The country of origin directly affects the students' attitudes towards career planning in the maritime industry and thus indirectly influence their proactive behavior.*

As previous research confirmed, the formal education plays a key role in students training and the process in which they acquire knowledge required by the prevalent market conditions [12, 48, 51, 52]. Thus, creating adequate educational and training program is of great importance for coastal countries [42-44]. These countries generally differ in terms of their maritime education systems [41, 48]. However, although the importance of education in maritime career development is unquestioned, the previous studies did not explain how the attitudes of students towards maritime career change depending on the time they spend in school i.e. university. Thus, the third hypothesis is defined as follows:

H3: *The year of the students' studies directly affects the formation of their attitudes towards career planning in the maritime industry and thus indirectly influence their proactive behavior.*

Based on the aim of the paper and the defined hypothesis, the conceptual model of the research is developed, as presented in the Figure 1.

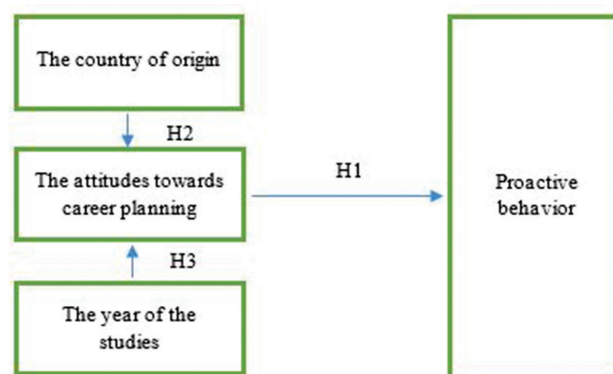


Figure 1 The conceptual model of the research
Slika 1. Konceptualni model istraživanja

The given conceptual model explains that students' proactive behavior regarding their career planning is directly influenced by their attitudes (H1). On the other hand, the attitudes they formed towards the nature and individual's engagement in that process is influenced by two defined factors. The first one is related to the country of origin (H2) and it can include various aspects, such as maritime industry development, the characteristics of maritime labor market etc. The second one refers to the year of the studies (H3), assuming that students in the higher year of study gain more knowledge and experience

related to the specificities of maritime vocation, which shapes their attitudes towards their own career planning in that field. Hence, the model at the same time highlights the indirect effect of country of origin and year of study on proactive behavior of maritime students.

Five independent variables were defined in order to determine whether or not the students had the established attitudes regarding career planning (H1) and if there were significant differences in the proactive behavior of students depending on their country of origin and the year of their studies (H2, H3). The variables were based on the questions from the questionnaire and eight of them were related to the students' attitudes towards maritime career planning: C1 – Care for the career development, C2 – Developed plans and goals, C3 – Personal values, C4 – Attitude towards voluntarily participation in education and training and C5 – Assumed duties for professional progress. Four independent variables were related to proactive students' behaviour: C6 – Actively seeking for career design, C7 – Undertaken career activities, C8 – Seeking information about the maritime and labour market, C9 – Making contacts (network). Control variables were the two characteristics of the students – their country of origin (Montenegro or Turkey) and the year of their studies (between preparatory and the fourth year of study).

In order to collect data needed for the research, an empirical survey was conducted in Montenegro and Turkey. As these are two countries in which maritime professions are considered to be important to the economy, the authors wanted to compare the two systems – which have different levels of development – primarily in terms of how they prepare young people who plan to link their future careers to the maritime industry. The maritime segment in Montenegro is part of the so-called “Blue economy”, which participates in the gross domestic product on average with 0.6% – 0.8% [53]. The potential that Montenegro has in this regard is much higher, making it easy to find an adequate benchmarking partner for comparison, which is why the authors opted for Turkey. Our reasoning for this is that the maritime segment in Turkey is extremely developed; as shown by the fact that, of the total goods transported to and from the country, 85% pass through 71 Turkish ports [54]. In addition to this, the maritime sector is an important source of employment in Turkey. According to a report by the European Commission, the sector provides around 300,000 jobs. Although different sizes, both are developing countries, making them suitable for comparison.

The authors developed a questionnaire relying on the motives and aims of the research, the hypotheses defined, the results of previously published research, and the assessment of the theoretical model shown in Figure 1. The questionnaire was conceived on the basis of a proven engagement scale, containing nine items (C1–C9) with a 5-point Likert scale [2]. The questionnaire was written in Montenegrin and Turkish and forwarded online to 358 student e-mail addresses. Based on the explanation of the sampling procedure (the condition that the participants were maritime students), it can be concluded that this research utilizes a stratified random sample. This way the research included the respondents of similar age and for all of them it can be assumed that they are interested in maritime career. In addition, as they attend maritime studies, this sample

enables investigation of the impact of educational system on their attitudes and proactive career planning. Finally, the existing differences in the market development and training they receive during studies enables making comparative analysis of observed countries and making conclusions regarding the influence of country of origin and educational system on proactive maritime career planning and the way the impact of these factors can be managed in order to foster the proactive behaviour of maritime students.

The survey lasted for thirty days, during which time 308 surveys were filled in and returned – 150 from Montenegro and 158 from Turkey. The responsiveness degree was 86%. It should be noted that undergraduate students of all years of study participated in the research. Maritime studies in Montenegro last three years while, in Turkey, there is a preparatory year followed by four years of study. Although the research included undergraduate students, all of the respondents were adult and the participation in the survey was voluntary. Additionally, the survey was anonymous and it was conducted based on the ethical principles of working with students. Thus it did not require any formal ethical statement or approval. The survey was conducted in the first quarter of 2020.

The data collected was processed in the SPSS program (Statistics 20) and, during the analysis, the hypotheses postulated were tested by means of the Structure Equation Modelling (SEM), logistic regression, Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test [55] and eta coefficient [56]. The following sections will present the results and discussions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION / *Rezultati i rasprava*

The reliability of the data gathered through the questionnaire was determined before the hypotheses testing. The reliability coefficient for the independent variables, without control variables, was 0.839, which is an acceptable value of this coefficient for research in the humanities.

The paper will further analyse: a) the characteristics of the students and their attitudes towards career planning and b) the difference in the proactive behaviour of the students in relation to the country of origin and the year of their studies.

4.1. Students Attitudes towards Career Planning and Tendency towards Proactive Behavior / *Stavovi studenata o planiranju karijere i sklonost proaktivnom ponašanju*

The SEM model was applied order to test the first hypothesis and examine whether the attitudes of students regarding career planning have impact on their proactive behavior. The model included analysis of nine variables – five variables used to describe the attitudes of students regarding career planning and four of them used to describe their proactive behavior. The SEM includes a random error, denoted by “e”. Error e1 is related to the ability of the variable, which represents the “Care for the career development” in explaining the variance of the factor “Attitudes towards maritime career planning”, error e2 is related to the ability of the variable, which represents the “Developed plans and goals” in explaining the variance of the factor “Attitudes towards maritime career planning”, etc. The results of estimation of SEM are given in below in the path diagram i.e. figure 2:

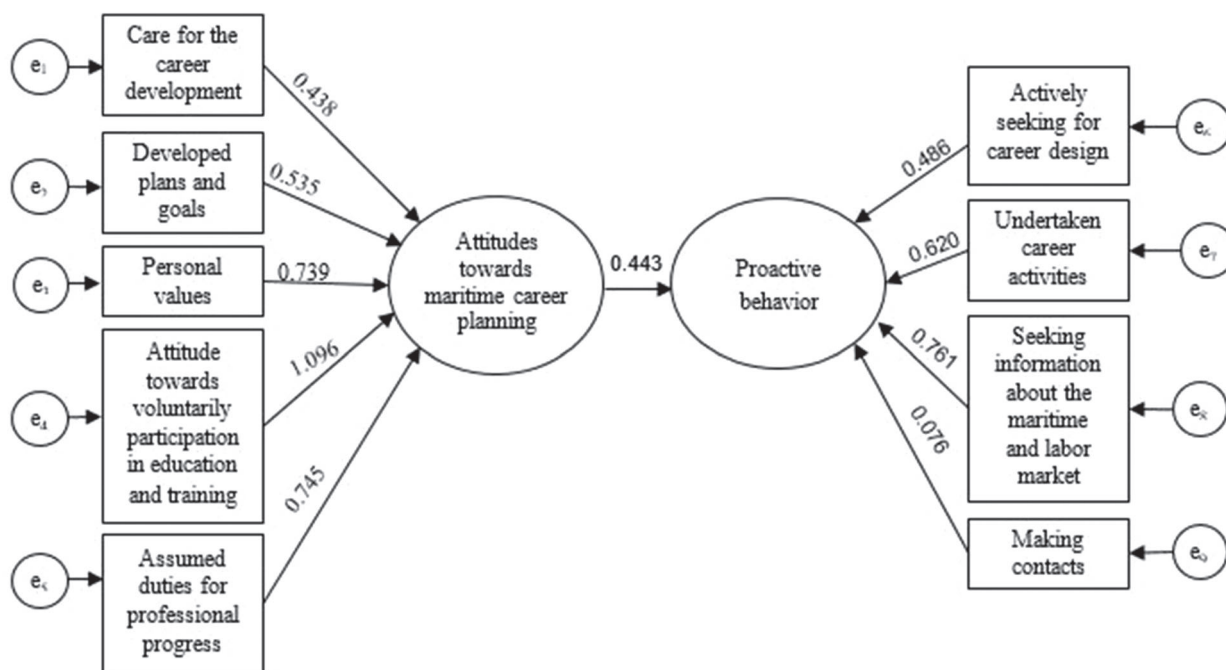


Figure 2 Path diagram of the estimated SEM model
Slika 2. Dijagram puta procijenjenog SEM modela

In order to test the validity of the regression coefficient, their statistical significance was examined. The obtained results are presented below in the Table 1.

All regression parameters of the estimated model are statistically significant, with a risk of error of 5%. This is evidenced by the corresponding values of the probabilities of regression coefficients, which are marked with asterisks. The obtained results reveal that the latent variable Attitudes has a positive effect on the variable Proactive Behavior, as the obtained value of the regression coefficient is 0.443. This means that forming a clear attitude of the students about what they want from their future maritime career is a key to fostering their proactive behavior in achieving their professional goals, which confirms the first research hypothesis (H1). The results also reveal that all five observed variables significantly influenced the formation of the attitudes of students towards future career planning in

maritime affairs. However, the formation of the factor Attitudes was the most influenced by the variable C4, which reflects the desire of the respondents to participate on their own initiative in education, training and all other activities that can help them develop their future careers. These results are expected as the participation in the training courses within the company can help students to better understand the characteristics and real challenges of different working positions in maritime career, thus helping them to properly prepare themselves for their future vocation through acquiring needed practical knowledge and skills [1, 2, 40].

The formation of factor Proactive behavior was influenced by all four observed variables (C6-C9). However, the most significant variable in that process is the one that represents the effort of respondents to gather information about potential employers, professional development programs and the labor

Table 1 Structural equation modeling results
Tablica 1. Rezultati modeliranja strukturne jednadžbe

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Attitudes	<---	Proactive behavior	0.443	0.0412	10.747	***
Care for the career development (C1)	<---	Attitudes	0.43872	0.0411	10.674	***
Developed plans and goals (C2)	<---	Attitudes	0.53554	0.0498	10.753	***
Personal values (C3)	<---	Attitudes	0.73997	0.0535	13.831	***
Attitude towards voluntarily participation in education and training (C4)	<---	Attitudes	1.09657	0.0927	11.829	***
Assumed duties for professional progress (C5)	<---	Attitudes	0.74599	0.0644	11.583	***
Actively seeking for career design (C6)	<---	Proactive behavior	0.48621	0.045	10.804	***
Undertaken career activities (C7)	<---	Proactive behavior	0.62038	0.0549	11.300	***
Seeking information about the maritime / labour market (C8)	<---	Proactive behavior	0.76132	0.065	11.712	***
Making contacts i.e. network (C9)	<---	Proactive behavior	0.0766	0.018	4.255	***

*** The regression coefficient which is statistically significant with level of significance of 5% (two-sided test), Standard Error (SE), Critical Ratio (CR), Probability (P).

market in the area in which they are interested in to develop future career. The formation of this factor was the least yet significantly influenced by variable F4, which represents the effort of students to make and maintain contacts with people that potentially are important for their career development, while the other variables have stronger impact. These results are also expected, as the accurate information regarding the labor market are needed for students in order to access the available options regarding employment and the extent to which those options enable fulfillment of their economic, social and psychological goals [9, 29, 30, 57].

In order to confirm the reliability of the results given above, the validity of the SEM specification was tested. The obtained values of the tests used in that process are given below in the Table 2:

Table 2 Goodness of Fit Indices of estimated structural equation model (SEM)

Tablica 2. Indeksi primjerenosti procijenjenog modela strukturne jednačbe (SEM)

GOF Indices	criterion guidelines	sem results
Chi-square		
Chi-square		7171.701
Degrees of freedom		35
Probability level	p>0.05	0.065
Absolutes fit measures		
Root mean square error approximation (RMSEA)	<0.1	0.815
Incremental fit measures		
Normed fit index (NFI)	>0.9	0.932
Comparative fit index (CFI)	>0.9	0.935
Parsimony fit measurement		
Parsimony-adjusted normal fit index (PNFI)	>0.5	0.529

As the empirical values of the indices are within the given limits, it is concluded that the results of SEM specification can be considered valid.

The results of SEM indicate the relationship that exist between the attitudes of students towards career development

and their proactive behavior, but does not reveal whether there are differences in students' behavior depending on the country of origin. However, through this research, we also wanted to find an answer to the question of whether or not there is a difference in actively taking measures to design a future career in the maritime industry, depending on whether the respondents come from Turkey or Montenegro. To answer this research question, we applied regression analysis and evaluated ordinal logistic regression. Logistic regression can be used to predict a dependent variable based on independent variables and determine the percentage of variance in the dependent variable as defined by the independent variable; to rank the relative importance of independent variables; to assess the effect of the interaction; and to detect the influence of an interval-controlled independent variable. Ordinal logistic regression implies that a dependent variable is considered to have 3 or more categories that can be naturally compared, but ranking does not necessarily mean that the "distances" between them are equal. In the model of active measures undertaken when designing future careers, we had 5 categories of dependent variables: (1) almost never; (2) occasionally; (3) a moderate amount; (4) quite often; and (5) very often. The model included only one independent variable, and that was the country of origin of the respondents, which had two categories: Montenegro and Turkey. For the country from which the results would be compared, we took Turkey, and for the category of active participation in designing future careers, from which the other options would be compared, we took very active participation.

Prior to the analysis of the evaluated model, we examined the quality of the model by testing the hypothesis that there was no correlation between the dependent and independent variable in logistic regression. We tested the model by comparing the initial value of the logarithm, i.e. the model without an independent variable, which is 38,864 with the final model, or the model with an independent variable, which is 33,392. With 1 degree of freedom, χ^2 is 5,472, which is significant at a level of 0.019.

The results of the evaluation of the logistic regression model are given in the following Table 3:

Table 3 Ordinal logistic regression of active participation in designing future careers as a result of the country from which respondents come

Tablica 3. Redna logistička regresija aktivnog sudjelovanja u osmišljavanju budućih karijera prema zemlji iz koje dolaze ispitanici

C1 ^a		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
None of activities	Intercept	-2.686	.597	20.256	1	.000	
	[Country=Montenegro]	-.276	.841	.108	1	.042	.759
	[Country=Turkey]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.
Occasionally	Intercept	-2.398	.522	21.083	1	.000	
	[Country=Montenegro]	-.564	.789	.510	1	.075	.569
	[Country=Turkey]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.
Average	Intercept	-.023	.214	.011	1	.915	
	[Country=Montenegro]	-.779	.319	5.973	1	.015	.459
	[Country=Turkey]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.
Very frequently	Intercept	.359	.196	3.338	1	.068	
	[Country=Montenegro]	-.325	.269	1.457	1	.022	.722
	[Country=Turkey]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.

At the beginning, it should be emphasized that all parameters in the regression are statistically significant with a risk of error of 5%. The chance that a student of the Faculty of Maritime Studies from Montenegro does not undertake any activities in designing the future career, compared to a student from Turkey, is 24.1% lower than the chance of them taking an active role in building a future career. The chance that a student of the Faculty of Maritime Studies from Montenegro in relation to a student from Turkey sometimes undertaking certain activities which may affect his/her future career is 42.1% lower than their chance to be active in building a future career. The chance that a student of the Faculty of Maritime Studies from Montenegro, compared to a student from Turkey, would undertake a sufficient number of activities in designing the future career is 54.1% lower than their chance of taking an active role in building the future career. Finally, the chance that a student of the Faculty of Maritime Studies from Montenegro, compared to a student from Turkey, would often undertake certain activities in designing a future career is 27.8% less than their chance of taking an active role in building a future career. In other words, students of the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Montenegro, compared to students from Turkey, very often undertook activities to design their future careers because the chances for this option are higher compared to all other offered alternatives.

The results obtained can be explained by differences in the maritime sector development and the differences in education system in two observed countries. The maritime sector in Turkey is very developed and represents important generator of job positions [54]. Hence, the maritime students have more chances to find a suitable employer and working position within this sector in Turkey compared to Montenegro. On the other hand, the maritime sector in Montenegro is less developed, despite its potential to grow [53]. Thus, maritime students from Montenegro have less different options regarding the choice of employer and job positions within the country, which at the same time brings stronger pressure of competition amongst graduate seafarers. These market conditions foster them to be more engaged in collecting information regarding available job positions and to make extra effort in acquiring skills and knowledge as the main source of advantage on the labor market.

Besides the maritime sector development, the differences in education system of observed countries also affect the required level of proactive behavior of students. The formal education of Turkey enables students from early age to focus on the subjects of interests, while the universities tend to organize numerous training courses for their students held in the companies they cooperate with [24]. This findings are also confirmed by the results of descriptive statistics in this study. Namely, the results of the education received before enrollment onto maritime studies showed that 72.2% of the students from Turkey (114 students) attended specialized secondary schools, while 66.7% of the students from Montenegro (43 students) went to general secondary schools. Additionally, the majority of students from Montenegro (up to 80%, or 120 students) did not receive any form of training onboard, while more than a half of the students from Turkey (54%, or 86 students) did receive onboard training. Furthermore, taking the year of the studies into account, we can see that out of the total number of students (86 students)

who attended onboard training in Turkey, most (39.5%) were in the fourth year of their studies. On the other hand, a total of 30 students attended onboard training in Montenegro, while 40% of them were in the third year of their studies. These findings revealed a significant difference in the number of trained students in the two countries examined whereby, in both countries, the students who received training were in their final year of study. Most of the students from Montenegro who did not attend onboard training (120 students) were in their first or second year of study (67.5%). In Turkey, however, most students without onboard training (72 students) were in their first (38.9%) or preparatory year (45.8%), which constituted 84.7% out of the total number of students from Turkey who were not trained.

Interestingly, Montenegro does not offer preparatory education while, in Turkey, this type of education lasts two semesters and the lessons are taught in the English language. Preparatory education provides the students with proficiency in English, which is considered a keystone of world class education standards in every global and competitive maritime environment of the twenty-first century. Students seek to achieve a high level of language proficiency, development of their academic skills, improvement of their critical thinking skills, as well as learners' autonomy and study skills.

Thanks to the well-adjusted education system to the needs of maritime students in Turkey, besides theoretical, they have a certain level of practical experience and are better informed about the prevalent market conditions and the requirements of different working positions within the maritime industry. This makes them better prepared for labor market compared to students from Montenegro, which is the reason why maritime students from Montenegro need to be more proactive oriented in order to achieve the same results regarding the level of acquired knowledge related to the maritime profession. The findings regarding onboard training could be related to other studies that emphasize the necessity and importance of training provisions. For example, a study by Surugiu et al. [40] claims that education and lifelong learning represent the key factors of competitiveness. Namely, these authors state that the students, i.e. future seafarers, should be trained during undergraduate studies at maritime schools and universities and after their studies, in maritime training centers in the companies that hire seafarers. In this sense, special attention should be devoted to the transfer of knowledge for the attainment of specific competencies and skills, not only theoretical insights. Higher educational institutions would thus proactively affect career planning.

4.2. The Differences in the Proactive Behavior of the Students / *Razlike u proaktivnom ponašanju studenata*

In relation to the nine independent variables that were previously defined, our analysis further investigated the responses of the students from Montenegro and Turkey to the questions regarding their attitudes and proactive behavior in career planning.

The analysis of the expected responses indicated that the standard deviation had a high value for each question and for both countries (Table 4). The analysis of all of the average values of particular answers showed that the students provided the responses that were assigned the values of 3 or 4 on the Likert scale.

Table 4 The average values of the responses regarding proactive career planning in the maritime industry for Montenegro and Turkey
 Tablica 4. Prosječne vrijednosti odgovora u smislu proaktivnog planiranja karijere u pomorskoj industriji za Crnu Goru i Tursku

Country		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9
Montenegro	Mean	4.27	4.28	4.22	3.52	3.91	4.11	3.93	3.79	3.97
	N	150	148	150	150	150	150	150	149	149
	Std. Deviation	.889	.895	.961	1.257	.958	.901	1.021	1.124	1.074
Turkey	Mean	3.82	4.11	4.15	3.02	3.04	3.90	3.57	3.89	3.46
	N	156	157	157	156	157	157	157	157	157
	Std. Deviation	.883	.839	.871	1.116	1.140	.907	.955	.852	1.206

It is evident that, among the students from Montenegro, the highest rated variable was C2 (goal setting and career goals) while, in Turkey, the variable with the highest rating was C3 (contemplation of personal values, interests, skills, and weaknesses). The comparison between the average values of the responses for all variables showed the greatest difference in the absolute values per particular variable in the case of assumed duties (C5).

The Kruskal-Wallis (H) test determines whether or not the medians of two or more groups are different. A test statistic is calculated and compared to a distribution cut-off point. The test statistic used in this test is called the H statistic. The hypotheses for the test were: H_0 : population medians are equal and H_1 : population medians are not equal. The Kruskal-Wallis test shows whether or not there is a significant difference between groups. The definition of the H statistic is given below [58]:

$$H = \left[\frac{12}{n \cdot (n+1)} \cdot \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{T_j^2}{n_j} \right] - 3 \cdot (n+1) \quad (1)$$

whereby n represents the sum of the sample sizes for all samples, c is the number of samples, j is the sum of ranks in the j-th sample, i.e. is sum of ranks in the j-th sample, and n_j is the size of the j-th sample.

Country of origin and their attitudes and proactive behavior were first compared in relation to career planning (Table 5).

Table 5 The impact of the country of origin on proactive behavior in career planning, based on the Kruskal-Wallis test
 Tablica 5. Utjecaj zemlje podrijetla na proaktivno ponašanje u planiranju karijere, na temelju Kruskal-Wallis testa

Null Hypothesis	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of C1 is the same across categories of Country.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C2 is the same across categories of Country.	.032	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C3 is the same across categories of Country.	.273	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C4 is the same across categories of Country.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C5 is the same across categories of Country.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C6 is the same across categories of Country.	.020	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C7 is the same across categories of Country.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C8 is the same across categories of Country.	.768	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C9 is the same across categories of Country.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

General null hypothesis of the Kruskal-Wallis test claims that the mean ranks of the groups are the same, but in the first column of the Table 5 we define the null hypothesis for every group. In the other words, the initial hypothesis of the test assumed that there was no difference in the students' attitudes towards career

planning nor their proactive behavior depending on their country of origin. The test results indicated that, for most of the variables describing attitudes and proactive behavior (C1-C9) in relation to the country of origin, the initial hypothesis regarding equality was rejected (Table 5). In other words, there is a significant difference in the attitudes and proactive behavior of the students from the two countries. The difference regarding the attitudes is, above all, notable towards their care for career development (C1), plans and goals setting (C2), voluntary participation in education and training that supports their career (C4) and all assumed duties that could influence career development (C5). However, there was no statistically significant difference in attitudes when it comes to the students' comprehension of personal values, interests, skills, and weaknesses (C3). The results of examining the differences in students' proactive behavior depending on the country of origin revealed that the difference is notable in terms of activities regarding career design (C6), the activities the students undertook to achieve their professional goals (C7) and degree of making contact with people who could offer professional help (C9). There is no statistically significant difference in proactive behaviour of students when it comes to their level of knowledge regarding the labor markets in relevant regions (C8). Hence, the conclusion is that the students behaved similarly only with regards to activities related to their knowledge concerning the future labor markets and the personal values that a maritime career imposes, which correlates with previous studies [30, 59]. The results presented could be explained by the fact that the participants belong to similar generations, share the basic psychographic characteristics and values, and follow the same social trends. This confirms the international nature of the maritime market, meaning that market-related information is available and is gathered at a global level.

The influence of the students' country of origin on their attitude formation regarding career planning and their proactive behavior was analyzed by means of eta coefficient with a square value representing a relative measure of association [56]. The eta squared adopted a value between 0 and 1 and represented a proportion of variance within a dependent variable explained through an independent variable. The formula for the calculation of the eta squared is [60]:

$$\eta^2 = \frac{SS_{\text{effect}}}{SS_{\text{total}}} \quad (2)$$

whereby:

SS_{effect} = the sum of the square values for the given independent variable (factor).

SS_{total} = the total sum of the square values for all factors, interactions, and mistakes in the ANOVA analysis.

The 0.01 value of η^2 indicates a small influence, the value of 0.06 indicates a moderate influence, and the value of 0.14 or more indicates a big influence.

The survey of the students from the two different countries and the analysis of the η^2 coefficient indicated that assumed duties have the most considerable impact ($\eta^2=0.144$) on proactive behavior in relation to future career planning in the maritime industry. The concern for career development ($\eta^2=0.062$) has a slightly less notable but still significant influence.

Table 6 Eta coefficient as a measure of the association with the country of origin of the students

Tablica 6. Eta koeficijent kao mjera povezanosti sa zemljom podrijetla studenata

	η	η^2
C1 * Country	.248	.062
C2 * Country	.094	.009
C3 * Country	.037	.001
C4 * Country	.207	.043
C5 * Country	.379	.144
C6 * Country	.119	.014
C7 * Country	.180	.032
C8 * Country	.054	.003
C9 * Country	.217	.047

Based on the results of the research, the Kruskal-Wallis test applied, and eta coefficient, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the attitudes and proactive behaviors of the students depending on their country of origin (Montenegro or Turkey). In other words, for most of the variables analyzed, except for C3 and C8, the country of origin affects the attitudes and proactive behavior, while assumed duties (C5) and care for career development (C1) have the most notable impact. The results presented thus accept the second hypothesis (H2).

The research further examined the existence of differences in the students' attitudes towards career planning and their proactive behaviors depending on their year of study (which is a significant characteristic of the students).

Considering the year of the students' studies, their attitudes and behavior regarding career planning in the maritime industry usually varied. Their attitudes that varied were related to their care for career development (C1), perception of voluntary participation in education and training (C4) and the assumed duties that could

Table 7 The results found when testing the hypothesis for differences in proactive behavior depending on the students' year of study

Tablica 7. Rezultati dobiveni testiranjem hipoteze za razlike u proaktivnom ponašanju ovisno o godini studija studenata

Null Hypothesis	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of C1 is the same across categories of Class.	.002	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C2 is the same across categories of Class.	.110	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C3 is the same across categories of Class.	.137	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C4 is the same across categories of Class.	.002	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C5 is the same across categories of Class.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C6 is the same across categories of Class.	.590	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C7 is the same across categories of Class.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C8 is the same across categories of Class.	.099	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of C9 is the same across categories of Class.	.008	Reject the null hypothesis.

facilitate professional progress (C5). Proactive behavior varied depending on the activities the students undertook in order to achieve their career goals (C7) and their level of contact with people who could offer professional help (C9).

The observation of their year of study is significant because, unlike personal characteristics, career arrangements usually change over time [41], especially during studies when young people approach the beginning of their careers, triggering an increased engagement in planning.

By means of the Kruskal-Wallis test, further analysis confirmed the existence of differences in behaviors regarding career planning of the students in the paired years of the studies (any pair of the years compared). As the data for each pair of years was too extensive, this paper focuses only on the results for the C1, C4, C5, C7 and C9 factors, which previously indicated variations in the students' attitudes towards career planning (Table 7). The results are presented below in the table 8.

Table 8 The differences per the pairs of study years in relation to the students' behavior regarding career planning
Tablica 8. Razlike po parovima studijskih godina u odnosu na ponašanje studenata u pogledu planiranja karijere

	Sample 1 - Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig. ^a
Concern for career development	Preparation Class-1	55.708	16.752	3.325	.001	.009
	Preparation Class-2	48.159	16.889	2.852	.004	.044
	Preparation Class-3	66.825	16.819	3.973	.000	.001
Voluntary participation in education and training	Preparation Class-2	52.249	17.404	3.002	.003	.027
	Class-4 Class-2	56.985	17.404	3.274	.001	.011
The assumed duties of future careers	Preparation Class-1	67.495	17.228	3.918	.000	.001
	Preparation Class-2	77.079	17.332	4.447	.000	.000
	Preparation Class-3	82.834	17.297	4.789	.000	.000
	Preparation Class-4	77.153	20.233	3.813	.000	.001
Activities undertaken for future career development	Preparation Class-1	53.797	16.942	3.175	.001	.015
	Preparation Class-2	77.063	17.044	4.521	.000	.000
	Preparation Class-3	62.976	17.009	3.703	.000	.002
Network establishment and maintenance	Preparation Class-4	84.681	19.897	4.256	.000	.000
	Preparation Class-2	49.508	17.227	2.874	.004	.041
	Preparation Class-3	56.164	17.227	3.260	.001	.011

Legend: Class 1 indicates that the students are on the 1st year of study, Class 2 means that the students are on the 2nd year of study, Class 3 covers the responses for the students on the 3rd year of study and Class 4 means that the students are on their 4th year of study.

The results showed that care for the career development differs between students in their preparatory, first, second, and third years of study. Other pairings of years of study showed approximately the same proactive behavior. The students' concern for career development is undoubtedly a desirable activity of proactive behavior and career planning. The results previously obtained are therefore significant for career planning, as the changeable nature of maritime careers, especially over the last three decades [1], requires the responsible behavior of professionals whose integral contribution is career planning in terms of career management.

As the results presented in Table 8 suggest, the attitudes towards voluntarily participation in further education, training or other events that could support the career development varied between the students of preparatory and second year, as well as between the students of second and fourth year of maritime studies. Other pairings of years of study revealed approximately same attitudes towards this issue. These variations can be explained by the fact that students of the preparatory year of maritime studies in Turkey usually did not attend any onboard training, unlike the students of second year, when they usually have the first training of this type, which strongly affects their attitudes. Similarly, students of third year of maritime studies in Montenegro have more onboard trainings compared to students of previous years, which supports the obtained results.

The results regarding students' attitudes towards assumed duties that could affect future career development indicated that they varied only for students in preparatory year compared with those in other year groups. Other pairs of year groups showed approximately the same degree of proactive behavior. It should be pointed out that, although there are different education systems in Montenegro and Turkey, here students are viewed equally, i.e. the total sample of students was taken, and the years of study were considered competitive from preparatory to fourth, with no other differences among students. Namely, although there is a difference in the length of the maritime studies in the observed two countries, relevant maritime conventions and International Maritime Organization (IMO) define a minimum of uniform standards for all educational institutions, regardless of the organization of studies. In other words, although there are certain differences in the organization of preparatory and undergraduate studies, the education system in both countries is in line with Bologna system of education and learning outcomes are harmonized internationally with the IMO. Therefore, the set of knowledge and skills that maritime students should acquire is quite uniformed and comparable, regardless of the differences in the length of studies, which is caused by the organization of studies prescribed by the Ministries of Education of the given countries.

Considering all the activities that the maritime students from Montenegro and Turkey undertake in order to affect their future career development, the research results suggested that proactive behavior differs among the students in preparatory year and the students in the fourth year of their studies. However, the behavior of the students is almost the same when considering the pairs of any of the four years of studies, except the preparatory year.

Extensive previous research has identified a great variety of activities and factors that the maritime students consider when career planning [10, 11, 61]. In other words, the research proved

that the decisions that the students make stem from a synthesis of internal and external factors that determine their choice of maritime career [9]. These findings confirm the importance of the activities for career planning, underscoring the need for additional activities that are determined by economic, social, and psychological factors.

Taking into account the establishment and maintenance of contact with people who could facilitate future career development, proactive behavior varied only among the student groups in their preparatory year compared with the student groups in their second and third years of study. Other pairings of year groups showed approximately the same proactive behavior. These findings are significant for career planning and correlate with other studies confirming the relationship between networking (the establishment of valuable contact) during early career planning and subsequent objective and subjective professional successes [22, 62].

Based on the findings presented in the table 8, it is undeniable that the students' year of study affects their formation of attitudes and their proactive behavior regarding career planning. The results obtained thus accept the third hypothesis (H3).

Ultimately, it can be concluded that discussions of career development for the maritime students of Montenegro and Turkey must consider a wide range of factors. Some of these factors can be related to previous studies [9, 10, 11, 22, 40, 41, 61] that underscore the importance of training, concerns for careers, activities undertaken, contact establishments, etc. Unlike previous studies, this paper suggests that the specificities of the country of origin and the year of the student's studies should also be taken into account. This is particularly relevant for less developed countries because the comparison between Montenegro and Turkey has revealed the influences of preparatory education and the duration of training (which is typical for Turkey) on the formation of attitudes and proactive career planning. These findings facilitate the improvement of the students' competences and their overall competitiveness.

5. CONCLUSION / Zaključak

Career planning has been extensively researched in the past. However, there was no research on the career planning of maritime students, especially in Montenegro and Turkey. Previous research on similar topics, especially in less developed countries, has mainly been conceptually driven and did not profoundly analyze the students' attitudes pertaining to the career planning. Moreover, the prism of proactive behavior and the comparative analysis of the two countries applied in this paper has never been observed in previous studies. In this sense, the research conducted for the purposes of this paper bridges the research gap defined.

This research identified the factors that affect the formation of students' attitudes regarding career planning. The selected factors whose influence was examined in this research are their country of origin and the year of their studies. In this regard, the research detected considerable variations in attitudes and behaviors regarding future career planning between the students from different countries. These variations are related to future career designs, the activities the students undertook in order to achieve professional goals, the activities undertaken related to career development planning, contact with people

who could offer professional assistance, voluntary participation in education and training, and all assumed duties that could affect career development. However, there are no statistically relevant variations in terms of the students' attitudes and behaviors when it comes to the contemplation of personal values, interests, skills, and weaknesses, as well as their knowledge of the labor markets in relevant regions.

Furthermore, the research identified significant differences in the number of students who received onboard training in the countries examined. This is a consequence of different educational systems and different degrees of proactive behavior in participants.

In order to better understand and improve the research field, the paper emphasizes the impact of students' attitudes towards career planning on their proactive behavior. As the country of origin and year of studies has significant impact on attitudes, these factors should be considered when developing and fostering proactive behavior in career development of millennial students.

The results obtained provide several important implications for theory and practice. They emphasize the importance of millennials' attitudes towards career planning as the main prerequisite of their proactive behavior. Hence, developing positive attitudes regarding continuous learning and training, care for career development and shaping plans and goals related to professional success results in proactive behavior of students. As the country of origin and year of study have significant impact on students' attitudes, they are considered important factors that indirectly affect their proactive behavior regarding their career choices and successes. Based on these conclusions, several practical implications for decision makers in the field of formal education and maritime industry can be provided. In order to ensure the competitiveness of millennial students on global labor market and foster their proactive behavior regarding career development, formal education should implement practical training of future seafarers to a greater extent. Additionally, it should be focused on empowering students self-initiative and encouraging them to search for relevant information and training outside the formal education system. The decision makers within the maritime sector should be better connected to education institutions, in order to ensure additional courses and training for students, which will result in graduated seafarers that already have developed skills needed for successful accomplishment of working tasks related to their job position.

The results obtained and the limitations of this study could motivate future research. Firstly, this research was conducted on students in Montenegro and Turkey. Further research could investigate the career development planning of maritime students in a broader context, e.g. Eastern Europe or wider. This would expose the differences between the developed and the developing countries, i.e. the differences in a broad geographical context. Secondly, this research could be expanded with additional variables and the analysis of new influential factors, which would offer a more integrated insight into the research field in the countries analyzed. Thirdly, the comparison between career planning among maritime students and students from other faculties would be an innovative stance (offshore vs. onshore careers). This would establish more profound relationships between career planning, proactive behavior, and the further development of competences, with the aim of

improving this research field. Finally, the further research in this area should also involve Z generation, whose oldest members are already included into the higher education system. What characterizes Generation Z is that they are technically savvy and favor communication through technology [63]. When it comes to education, members of this generation focus on learning and acquiring the skills needed for their future careers [64]. A different, digital environment characterizes the growth of this generation, compared to previous ones,, and this has resulted in a change in thinking, inclinations, expectations and learning styles [16]. Furthermore, the research on this topic gains even more importance during the COVID 19 pandemic, given that this research was done before the introduction of online platform-based teaching methods during the current moment in seafarers' education and training. In this regard, future research on career planning in the maritime industry should be focused on Generation Z in the post COVID 19 pandemic period, in order for maritime companies and relevant educational institutions to direct their activities towards digitalization and thus respond to the challenges facing this generation.

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