

Leadership Profiling of Ocean Going Ship Masters*



Ioannis THEOTOKAS ** · Ioannis N. LAGOUDIS***.

Neilos KOTSIPOULOS ****

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Abstract

Ship Masters of ocean going ships are team leaders and decision makers in charge of managing usually diverse teams that have to confront unexpected situations that might risk the life safety of crewmembers and the loss of the asset. Despite their critical role, research on the Masters' leading role is rather limited. Lack of relevant research becomes even more noticeable if one takes into account that the ocean going ship as a productive unit and working environment is paralleled with the "total institution", i.e. an isolated, enclosed social system that controls aspects of its members' lives.

This paper focuses on the ocean going ship Masters and aims at identifying their leadership profiles and understanding their attitudes and reactions in given circumstances. It analyses and discusses the results of a field study of ship officers of different nationalities employed as Masters

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** Professor, RESHIP Laboratory Department of Shipping, Trade and Transport, University of the Aegean Greece, Greece, Email : gtheotokas@aegean.gr.

*** Assistant Professor, MIT Global SCALE Network, Malaysia Institute for Supply Chain Innovation, Malaysia, Email : lagoudis@mit.edu, ilagoudis@misi.edu.my.

**** Researcher, RESHIP Laboratory Department of Shipping, Trade and Transport, University of the Aegean Greece, Greece, Email : neilosk@outlook.com.

on board ships of a leading international maritime group. Results of the research reveal that the characteristics and the competencies of ship Masters as identified using the specially developed questionnaire, are compatible with those proposed by situational leadership theories. Ship Masters seem to give priority to the people on board and their needs and try to be supportive in their decisions.

Key Words : Leadership, Ship Master, Situational Theory, HRM, Maritime, Total Institution

I. Introduction

Those involved in the maritime industry are aware of the significance of the ship Master as leader in maritime operations. The ship Master is responsible for the coordinated work of a diverse team of seafarers that make possible the effective and efficient operation of production units of high capital cost. This is also highly supported by maritime law, which renders the Master the administrator on-board. Seafaring is characterized by certain attributes that differentiate it from other onshore professions¹⁾. Such are the absence of seafarers from home for a considerable time period and the continuous exposure to sea originated risks. The nature of the profession is also differentiated as the ship is a continuously moving production unit, presenting high levels of hierarchical structures and features common with what Erving Goffman terms “Total Institution”²⁾. This is specifically examined in this research.

The significance of the role of a ship Master on-board constitutes per se a good reason for examining the leadership perspective of this profession, but it is not the only reason that could motivate relevant research. Issues such as the increased interest of the world maritime community in the human element and the limited research on the issue within the shipping industry may also be considered important. It is also interesting to examine the traits that may characterize the ship as a Total Institution.

1) Theotokas(2011)

2) Goffman(1961)

Another reason is to examine the importance of the team on-board and the connection of a successful team with a successful leader.

One of the goals of this integrative review is to examine the ways in which the field of Leadership is evolving and the consequences of its evolutionary paths for the models, methods and specific populations examined. The main goal is to examine the leadership behaviors and convictions of Masters of ocean going ships through the prism of leadership theories. The aim is to connect the term leadership and the traits of ship Masters while performing their duties.

The theoretical approach of this paper is based on the analysis of the main leadership theories. The analysis begins with Trait theory, continues with the Behavioral and the Transformational theory; finally, Contingency theory and Situational leadership theory are discussed.

The leadership theories and models are discussed in section 2. In section 3 the analysis focuses on the shipping industry with the ship Master and the ship as the working and living environment coming under investigation. The methodology used here is described in Section 4, while results of the analysis are presented in Section 5. Conclusions, limitations and further research prospects follow in Section 6.

II. Leadership Theories and Models

One of the main issues that arise when examining the term leadership is that, in fact, despite the popularity of the topic, a common definition could not be found. Bass and Stogdill³⁾ have observed that there are as many definitions for the term “leadership” as the number of people that have tried to define it. One of the first systematic attempts to study leadership was the trait approach that sought to study traits common to people who are great leaders. This approach, which attracted the interest of researchers throughout the 20th century, perceived leaders as people born with special traits connected with the meaning of successful leadership⁴⁾. It turned out that it was impractical to recognize the personality characteristics which

3) Bass and Stogdill(1990)

4) Northouse(2013)

lead to leadership. Since the 1930s many studies have been conducted in both the psychological and sociological sciences, which criticize this approach. Moreover, the existence of great leaders having completely different personality traits makes apparent the need to focus not only on traits but also on the environment and the followers in order to understand the behavior and the efficacy of the leader.

Behavioral Theory came into play to address issues that criticism to the Trait approach brought to the fore. According to this theory, instead of measuring traits such as self-assurance and loyalty, the behaviors which incorporate these characteristics must be determined. Behavioral Theory focuses on the behavior of leaders and their leadership style and advocates that leaders are not born with specific traits but could learn how to become efficient. It is the actions that define the leader. Numerous studies that made this approach popular for many decades emphasized the importance of the behavior of leaders towards subordinates, and the style with which leadership tasks and functions are conducted⁵⁾. Despite the wide acceptance of the above, the model by itself was not enough to explain all the perspectives of the term leadership. As a result, more theories have been developed until today. Since the early 1970s, Burns⁶⁾ and later Bass⁷⁾ came up with the term Transformational Theory. The main idea of this theory is that people follow a leader who motivates and encourages. The model introduces a leader who creates a vision, shares this vision with the followers and creates a leader–mentor relationship resulting in the creation of a strong bond with them. This leadership profile usually focuses on the “big picture” and on the worries and needs of the people. The transactional theory⁸⁾, on the other hand, promoted the idea that people are mostly motivated through the forces of reward and punishment. This profile is characterized by the values and beliefs of the leader and not by his/her personality traits. The leader is mainly focused on the work that has to be done, giving special attention to detail and efficiency.

The theory that is most recognized and forms the basis of the present analysis is Contingency and Situational Leadership Theory. Contingency

5) McGregor(1960); Blake and Mouton(1964); Tannenbaum and Schmidt(1973), pp.162-175.

6) Burns(1978)

7) Bass(1998)

8) Hollander(1964)

theory is concerned with styles and situations⁹⁾. It contends that a decision a leader makes and seems to be appropriate for a specific occasion may not work in another. This theory tries to explain why a leader could be recognized as highly efficient and successful on one occasion but when the environment changes s/he may fail. Fred Fielder¹⁰⁾ was the first who tried to match the traits and behaviors of leaders under certain situations in order to identify the most efficient leadership profiles. His model demonstrated that the productiveness of a team consists of a combination of leadership profiles and the current environment conditions. According to this, situational variables are leader-group member relations, the task structure and the position power of the leader. Fielder¹¹⁾ created the Least-Preferred Co-worker (LPC) model in order to identify the relationships between co-workers depending on their orientation.

Hersey and Blanchard¹²⁾ developed the Situational Leadership Theory which contends that situational leadership depends on the orientation of the leader. This theory suggests that the selection of the most appropriate action by the leader depends on the job, task or needs to be addressed, and the maturity of the followers. The essence of the theory is that employees differentiate from each other according to their readiness to work. The authors categorized leaders into four leadership profiles: Telling, Selling, Participating and Delegating. All profiles could be efficient in proportion to the characteristics of the follower.

From the so far presented and analyzed theories Situational Leadership seems to be the most widely discussed in the literature on leadership. As will be explained in the following section, this theory is considered appropriate for the analysis of the role of a ship's Master as leader and the situations that influence his/her effectiveness in the workplace environment. In the past, factors such as crew synthesis and limited communication with the external environment of the ship favored the adoption of more authoritarian leadership styles by ship Masters. Nowadays that the conditions have changed, ship Masters' leadership styles seem to have also been altered. Thus, the analysis continues with a

9) Northouse (2013)

10) Fielder(1967)

11) Fielder(1967)

12) Hersey and Blanchard(1982)

presentation of the specific characteristics and conditions that make a ship Master a more complex and special category of leader.

III. Leadership in the Maritime Context

Human resources are considered as one of the most crucial resources for shipping companies and the basis for the creation of sustainable competitive advantage¹³⁾. This is because the employees of the firm possess knowledge, develop competencies and provide direction to the firm. To succeed in creating competitive advantage the firm should be able to understand the factors defining or affecting the supply of employees at different levels, to recruit high quality employees from the global market for seafarers, to motivate and retain them. Effective recruitment of employees produces results as long as it goes hand in hand with their retention¹⁴⁾. This is very important for the human resources that are employed on board ships, who can be considered as a unique category of employees, taking into account their working and living conditions. Furthermore, as it will be further analyzed in this section, the hard and soft skills, the commitment, the ability to adapt to culturally diverse environments, the ability to cooperate in normal and in emergency situations, are all vital elements for the safe operation of ships. It is crucial for the people that live and work on board ships to possess not only the relevant certificates required by the international legislative framework, but also the skill of team work that will allow them to operate as crew members. This is even more crucial in cases where on board ships seafarers from different nations and cultures are employed. The role of ship Master as leader of the ship is, in this respect, critical. The ship Master should be able to adjust to the specific conditions and to motivate and inspire the team members, and not base the ability to lead on hierarchical power. However, it should be taken into account that interpersonal competence among seafarers is weak and that the authoritarian leadership style dominates onboard¹⁵⁾. These points will be further examined in the following paragraphs.

13) Progoulaki and Theotokas(2010), pp.575-582

14) Theotokas(2012)

15) Bordial et al.(2002)

The ship as a working environment reveals specific characteristics which differentiate it from other operations ashore. It constitutes a production unit operating on a 24/7 basis. The working and living environment onboard remains restrained in terms of space. In parallel, the high levels of formalisation in work and routine create a confined space also in terms of social interactions¹⁶⁾. The working and living conditions in seafaring create psychological stressors which can cause emotional exhaustion and a moderate burnout risk for seafarers¹⁷⁾. All these characteristics increase the risk of the appearance of workplace bullying and make the authentic and transformational leadership style an important factor for decreasing this risk¹⁸⁾. In addition, the working conditions that prevail in certain sectors, as for example short sea shipping, define people's ability to behave and lead¹⁹⁾.

The coordination of the ship's continuous shift in location is conducted by an organization based ashore and is the result of constant communication between the two parties. The great dependence of the ship on the management office and the need to follow orders renders maritime operations similar to the operations of a military unit. Another trait that ships possess is the high level of vertical hierarchical power. Despite the continuous communications between the ship and ashore, the ship Master has full power and control on-board, something that is supported by the institutional and legal framework.

Another trait is that in the seafaring profession high levels of differentiation concerning hierarchical structures, cultures, expertise etc. are observed. Many times, this results in low efficiency and personal conflicts. Aside from psychological issues arising from maritime operations, another important consideration is the exposure of seafarers to notable hazardous situations. These could stem either from natural causes (namely storms or cyclones) or from human actions. For example, in the last five years piracy incidents have increased significantly. According to the International Maritime Bureau, 243 incidents of piracy were reported in 2013.

16) Progoulaki and Theotokas(2010), pp.575-582

17) Oldenburg et al.(2013), pp.407-416

18) Nielsen(2013), pp.127-136

19) Delgado et al.(2012)

Taking into account the above traits, as well as several other characteristics of the seafaring profession²⁰⁾, one might agree with those discussing the similarities of the ship as a working and living environment to what Erving Goffman²¹⁾ terms a “Total Institution”²²⁾. According to Goffman, “A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together, lead an enclosed formally administrated round of life”²³⁾. The ship as a working and living environment can indeed be considered as a total institution where a large number of like-situated individuals are cut off from the wider society for an appreciable time²⁴⁾. The main characteristics of the “Total Institution” come very close or are similar to the ones found on board a ship. First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same authority. There is control over the working and personal life while crewmembers are on-board, a characteristic that is found in other organizations that have been analysed as total institutions, like for example the mines²⁵⁾. Second, all personal activities of a member take place in relation to the activities of other members that they work and live with. As already mentioned, ships are confined spaces in terms of the social interaction of people working on board²⁶⁾. Furthermore, a strict time schedule is followed and everything is conducted under considerable pressure and with continuous adaptation of regulations. Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan specifically designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution. It should be taken into account, however, that the intensity of these phenomena on-board the ship is not the same as that occurring in total institutions as, for example, prisons. Reference to this point is made by Davies who contends that typical characteristics of total institutions, as proposed by Goffman, appear in a diverse way which renders some institutions far more total than others²⁷⁾.

20) Theotokas(2011)

21) Goffman(1968)

22) Poole(1981), pp.207-222; Forsyth and Bankston(1983), pp.8-12; Davies(1989), pp.77-95; Encandela(1991), pp.131-156; Oltedal and McArthur(2011), pp.331-338.

23) Goffman(1968)

24) Forsyth and Bankston(1983), pp.8-12.

25) Pearson, as cited in Badenhorst and Mather (1997)

26) Progoulaki and Theotokas (2010), pp.575-582.

27) Davies(1989), pp.77-95.

On the other hand, a ship is an open system, with continuous interaction with the external environment²⁸⁾. In open systems such as those of the Jesuits and the Merchant Navy, everyone can freely choose his participation in the institution keeping in mind that all hierarchical positions can be stated as accessible, provided the necessary qualification is possessed. The latter characterizes the ship as remunerative, since the potential for career development defines the institution as coercive or not. The higher the expertise and the separation of tasks is the harder it is to differentiate inmate groupings. As stated by Forsyth and Bankston²⁹⁾, the division between supervisory staff and low status participants characterising total institutions also characterises ships. However, it is crucial to quote Smith's³⁰⁾ observation on the hierarchical structure of the ship where despite the existence of official discrimination between Officers and Ratings on a ship, the hierarchical lines are blurred. It has been stated that the shared living experiences of crew members, irrespective of their hierarchical status, can have a profound effect on creating camaraderie and a sense of community among them, strengthening at the same time the hierarchical social order³¹⁾. Finally, the ship as an institution executes an external operation such as the transportation of cargo or passengers rendering both the participants and the institution remunerative³²⁾.

Another interesting issue to examine is the sources of power of the leader in a team. A leader who understands the sources of his/her power would be able to use it more efficiently in every situation confronting him/her. The complexity of the ship as a working environment and the rapid changes in the conditions that might occur from one moment to the next make this understanding a key competency. In the analysis of the power of the ship Masters as leaders we adopt the approach of French and Raven³³⁾ who identified five sources of power, namely the legitimate or position power, the reward power, the coercive power, the referent power and the expert power.

28) Theotokas(2011)

29) Foryth and Bankston(1983), pp.8-12.

30) Davies(1989), pp.77-95.

31) Encandela(1991), pp.131-156.

32) Kotsiopoulos(2013), p.25.

33) French and Raven(1959), pp.150-167.

IV. Methodology

This study aims at exploring the leadership profiles of Masters of ocean going ships and understanding their attitudes and reactions under given circumstances. The survey used here was conducted in the context of a thesis project at the Department of Shipping, Trade and Transport of the University of the Aegean³⁴⁾. The tool used for data gathering was a specially developed questionnaire, based on the literature review and the analysis of the task environment of ship Masters presented in section 3 of this paper. The questionnaire is divided into three parts; the first part includes 15 questions that explore the general leadership assumptions of the Masters, the second part includes 27 questions related to specific situations onboard while the third includes questions on the demographical characteristics of the sample. The first and the second part of the questionnaire include YES/NO questions and Likert scale questions (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

With regard to data collection an online questionnaire was developed. There are several reasons that led to the decision to conduct an online survey, such as the characteristics of the population and the recruitment of respondents with covert behaviors. Online studies are also appropriate when the population under study is distributed across a large geographical region³⁵⁾. When conducted properly, online surveys offer advantages such as flexibility, convenience, the possibility to reach large samples, and control of the answer order. Major eventual weaknesses include the respondents' lack of online experience, unclear answering instructions, and low response rate³⁶⁾. The characteristics of the research population made the use of the online research tool an attractive option. The LimeSurvey³⁷⁾ platform was used for the structure, the choice of questions and the final synthesis of the questionnaire. The answer databases were extracted to a datasheet using the MS Excel 2010. Once the data was checked and the codification was performed, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS20) was used for data analysis.

34) Kotsiopoulos(2013)

35) Van Selm and Jankowski(2006), pp.435-456.

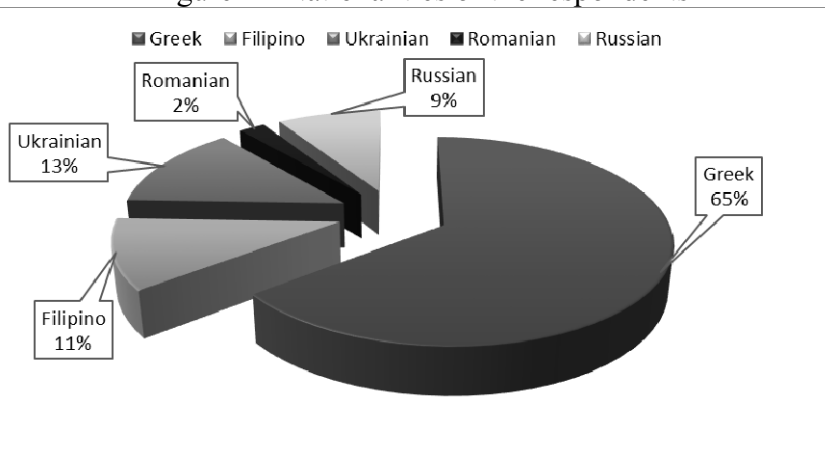
36) Evans and Mathur(2005), pp.195-219.

37) <http://www.limesurvey.org/>

The sample consists of ship Masters of three different vessel types: tankers, bulk carriers and containerships. The Masters participating in the current research are employed by a shipmanagement company of Greek interests, which operates a fleet of over forty ships of all the aforementioned categories and is considered as a leading player globally. It is worth mentioning here that in light of the principle of confidentiality the company name or other relevant information are withheld. The management of the company agreed to provide access to the contact details of the company's ship Masters. The participation of the Masters was not mandatory, in order to ensure the highest level of objectivity of the results. For this reason, the management of the company did not intervene at any stage of the survey. In total, 45 ship Masters participated and the response rate was approximately 40%.

Out of the 45 respondents 29 (64.44%) were Greek, 6 (13.33%) Ukrainian, 5 (11.11%) Filipino, 4 (8.89%) Russian and 1 (2.22%) Romanian. The sample is considered representative of the nationality mixture of the Masters employed at Greek-owned ships. Furthermore, the sample included only one woman, who responded. It should be noted that the representation of women in the specific the population corresponds to the gender representation in the profession observed in the world and the Greek-owned shipping industry.

<Figure 1> Nationalities of the respondents



The age analysis of the respondents reveals that all age groups are represented, the majority being above the age of 41. The analysis of their sea service time and their service as ship Masters shows that they are experienced, as the vast majority appear to have served as ship Masters for a period of more than 24 months.

<Table 1> Age and sea service time of respondents

<u>Age</u>			<u>Sea service time</u>			<u>Sea service as ship Master</u>		
Group	Number	Rate	Months	Number	Rate	Months	Number	Rate
30-35	10	22.2%	36-84	7	15.66%	0-24	16	35.56%
36-40	8	17.8%	85-120	6	13.33%	25-60	13	28.89%
41-50	14	31.1%	121-156	13	28.89%	61-96	8	17.78%
51-	12	27.7%	157-192	11	24.44%	97-132	4	8.89%
Other	1	2.2%	197-..	7	15.56%	133-..	3	6.67%
			Other	1	2.22%	Other	1	2.22%

V. Analysis and Discussion of Results

The analysis of the results revealed certain trends indicating the behavior and beliefs of ship Masters as leaders in specific situations. The first part of the questionnaire included questions related to the leaders' perception of employees and the workplace. The analysis of the responses to several questions reveals that while in principle the majority believe that a more democratic and participative style of leadership is more efficient, the specific task environment asks in several cases for the implementation of more directive behaviors (Table 2). When, for example, ship Masters are asked if the leaders should provide guidance without pressure to subordinates, more than 80% of the respondents agree or strongly agree (mean 4.07), while 60% of them believe that it is good practice to encourage employees to take initiatives and work without supervision (mean 3.64). However, when they are asked if employees must be supervised while performing their duties, more than 65% of the respondents agree or strongly agree (mean 3.67). When the question

becomes even more specific and refers to whether in complex situations, which are very often the case on board a ship, leaders should let subordinates handle their problems on their own, only 25% agree or strongly agree (mean 2.56). Moreover, almost 95% of the respondents believe that the leaders' responsibility is to give orders and to clarify procedures (mean 4.36). It is interesting to note that the majority of ship Masters do not perceive leadership as a skill related to traits and personal characteristics, but more as a skill that leaders develop through experience. Almost 58% of the respondents agreed that a leader is not born with specific traits and more than 90% affirms that a leader gets his traits through experience.

<Table 2> Leaders' perceptions on employees and workplace

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
Providing guidance without pressure is the proper behavior to subordinates.	4.07	0.704
It is a good practice to encourage employees to take initiatives and work without supervision.	3.64	0.936
Employees should be supervised while they are performing their duties.	3.67	1.022
In complex situations, leaders should let subordinates handle their problems on their own.	2.56	1.054
Effective leaders give orders and clarify procedures.	4.36	0.558

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

The following stream of questions focused on leaders' relations with the crew members as shaped by their respective role on the ship. The responses here reveal that ship Masters adopt a balanced approach which respects the hierarchy and promotes discipline and, at the same time, gives priority to people when conditions allow. In other words, the current conditions in the working and living environment on-board question the command and control hierarchical approach, asking of the Masters to be more engaging and consultative when the situations or the competencies of crew members favor this approach. This finding corroborates those of previous studies³⁸.

38) Encandela(1991), pp.131-156; Bordal et al.(2002)

The balanced approach Masters adopt is evident in their perception on the source of power they have as leaders of the ship (Table 3). To make clear the meaning of sources of power and to reduce the risk of ambiguity, the questionnaire included the key words for each source, i.e. legal for the hierarchical power, punishment for coercive power, and admiring for referent power. Masters acknowledge that power stems mostly from hierarchy, their ability to reward people and their expertise. It should be noted that coercive power, which is mostly applicable in highly hierarchical organizations that have similar characteristics to those of total institutions, is considered as of little or very little importance by the majority of respondents.

<Table 3> Leadership and sources of power

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
The source of power for the leadership of the ship stems from:		
Hierarchical power	3.91	0.905
Coercive power	2.51	0.992
Reward power	3.78	0.831
Referent power	3.09	1.08
Expert power	4.04	0.721

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

The respondents were asked to what extent the ship as a workplace appears to have characteristics similar to organizations like a prison, a military unit, a re-education camp and an asylum. All these organizations are referred to in the relevant literature as organizations that have characteristics similar to those of total institutions. It is interesting to note that while the vast majority perceives ships as organizations of little or very little similarity to prisons (mean 1.73) and asylums (mean 1.51), this is not the case when it comes to military units and re-education camps (Table 4). These results confirm conclusions of other studies³⁹⁾ that ships

39) Foryth and Bankston (1983), pp.8-12; Zurcher(1965), pp.389-400.

have a lot in common with total institutions. While at sea, many of the general characteristics of total institutions proposed by Goffman⁴⁰⁾ describe the conditions onboard ships. This, however, is not the case when the ship is in a port, provided of course that seafarers are not denied a short leave or do not encounter problems in securing time and access ashore, which, for security reasons, is very often the case in various ports worldwide as stated by the ITF⁴¹⁾. Thus, findings culled from the responses presented in Table 4 show that ships as working and living environments for seafarers appear to have characteristics similar to those of total institutions as well as characteristics that do not allow their analysis as clear types of total institutions. If factors such as ship type (i.e. cargo ship or passenger ship) or sector and sea routes (i.e. coastal shipping or ocean going shipping) are also taken into account, similarities and differences might become clearer. Another factor that might differentiate the perception of respondents on the issue is their position in the ship's hierarchy. It is possible that research among ratings would reveal more coherent perceptions on the issue of ship as a type of institution.

<Table 4> Ships as a type of Total Institution

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
The ship as a workplace appears to have characteristics similar to organizations like:		
Prison	1.73	1.009
Military Operation	2.76	1.066
Re-education camps	2.67	1.123
Asylum	1.51	0.97

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

One of the characteristics of ships as working environments is that while they are continuously on the move, far away from the head office, the control that the office intends to have on every aspect of their operation is very high. Especially in the last few years, advanced ICT technologies

40) Goffman(1961)

41) International Transport Workers Federation

further facilitate this control. Several questions in the second part of the questionnaire were focused on the cooperation of the ship Master with the office and the possible obstacles that may arise during their communication (Table 5). It seems that the majority of respondents prefer to have the ship supervised by the office and believe that it is safer and more efficient to have the office involved in the analysis of the situation and the actions that might be taken because of this. At the same time, however, they state their preference for the existence of rules and procedures that will regulate the communication with the office in a way that does not distract the crew from the ship's operation. They also support the idea that in specific situations it might sometimes be necessary to disobey orders. This might explain their preference for control of the communication of crewmembers with the office.

The last group of questions examines the prestige Masters believe their position affords them and the satisfaction they derive (Table 6). It seems that they believe that ship Masters should participate in the selection of crew members, be able to provide the proper motivation to them, which, however, should not be differentiated from member to member, and to have the same team members in each embarkation. This should be considered as a necessary step for the enhancement of team coherence and team spirit. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of respondents plan to continue their career as ship Masters, which suggests that they get satisfaction from their career. However, they would like to make their job more interesting by having more experiences from different positions at the head office, which means that they need to spend some time ashore as well.

<Table 5> Relations and communication with the office

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
There must be continuous supervision from the office because of the difficulties that could rise in sea operations.	3.51	1.076
In case of increased risk, first you should inform the office and then take the appropriate actions to minimize risk.	3.18	1.29
There must be standard rules that determine the procedures of when and how the ship communicates with the office.	3.47	0.85
There should be a limit in the time that ship communicates with the office because of distraction of the shipping operation.	3.36	1.046
Sometimes might be necessary to disobey orders of the office.	3.31	1.1
It is accepted that the communication of the crew members with the office should be direct.	2.42	1.011

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

<Table 6> Ship master as leader

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
The captain of the ship as the team leader should participate on the decision of selecting the crew members.	4.2	0.769
Motives should be the same for all crew members.	3.89	0.983
If a crew member is given the proper motives, he/she can be successful and meet his/her expectations.	4	0.692
You prefer to embark with the same team members in each embarkation.	3.69	0.803
Your career plan is to continue as a ship Master.	3.98	0.794
A plausible switch between shore and ship job may set your job more interesting.	3.76	0.913

Scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

VI. Conclusions and Further Research

The ship Master is the key person for the effective and efficient operation of the ship. In his/her portfolio of activities are included almost all tasks of senior managers. In parallel, they are the leaders of the team, the persons who can inspire, engage, motivate, train and reward people.

This important role of the ship Master has not received the expected attention of research on HRM in shipping.

This paper focuses on the ocean going ship Masters and aims at identifying their leadership profiles and understanding their attitudes and reactions in given circumstances. To this end, the characteristics of ships as working environments and the factors that lead to the differentiation of the roles of different crewmembers on board ships have been analyzed.

The first observation is the global acceptance of Situational Leadership by the participants. Ship Masters believe that leaders are created through experiences and situations and their efficacy depends on their relationship with their subordinates. They appear to believe in principle in a more democratic and participative style of leadership, however they adapt to the situation by becoming more directive. The responses highlighted that the degree of orientation either to people or to tasks is differentiated according to the situation. In addition, the importance of the team in the effectiveness of the leader is emphasized. Ship Masters consider a crucial factor the coherence of the team, which must be maintained in any situation. Related to this is the ship Masters' perception of the leader's sources of power. It is acknowledged that power stems mostly from hierarchy, the ability to reward, and expertise.

An interesting element is also the acceptance of the ship as a type of Total Institution by the ship Master, which, however, differs from other such institutions identified in the literature, as the ship spends time at sea, continually changing its location. Within this institution, despite its highly hierarchical structure that could favor legitimate and coercive power, expertise remains the main source of power for the ship Master.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of the team and of the motivation of crewmembers as a crucial factor for its effectiveness. There seems to be a unanimous acceptance of the role of the Master as crewmember mentor.

Ship Masters appear to prefer having the ship supervised by the office and at the same time having the office involved in the analysis of the situation and the relevant actions. They would like to control the communication of the crew with the office and also be able to disobey

orders from the office in low risk situations. They would like to be given more power as leaders in the selection of their crewmembers, and they state their willingness to continue their career as ship Masters.

An interesting result relates to the variability in responses. As observed from the standard deviations throughout Tables 2 to 6 the respondents appear to express their perceptions based on their personal experience. This result is aligned with situational theory, which states that the selection of the most appropriate action from the leader depends on a number of variables such as the task characteristics, his/her experience and the maturity of the followers. In addition this significant level of variability is aligned with the shipmasters' view that leaders are created through experiences and situations and their efficacy depends on their relationship with their subordinates. Thus personal experiences reflect the bias in the participants' responses.

If one takes into account the increased interest of the world maritime community in the human element, then research on the leadership skills of employees that bear the responsibility for the management of people onboard is of primary importance. While the present analysis contributes to the understanding of the role of ship Master as leader, it fails to confront several limitations stemming mainly from sample size. It should be mentioned, for example, that there are factors related to specific characteristics of the shipping companies, as for instance the number of ships they manage or the Human Resources Management practices they implement with regard to crew recruitment and selection, which might affect the ship Masters' behavior. Thus, this research should be considered as the first step of a wider research on the issue. Some suggestions are listed below:

- Sample increase. The questionnaire could be addressed to more ship Masters from different national and business contexts.
- Conducting action research on-board in order to capture real time data.
- Inclusion of the diversity issue (cultural or other) in the analysis to research its effect on leadership profiles.

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- Comparative analysis of leadership skills of ship Masters with those of CEOs of other industries that fall under the Total Institution characteristics. Such cases can be mining businesses, military units and re-education camps since they appear to relate to the present analysis. *

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