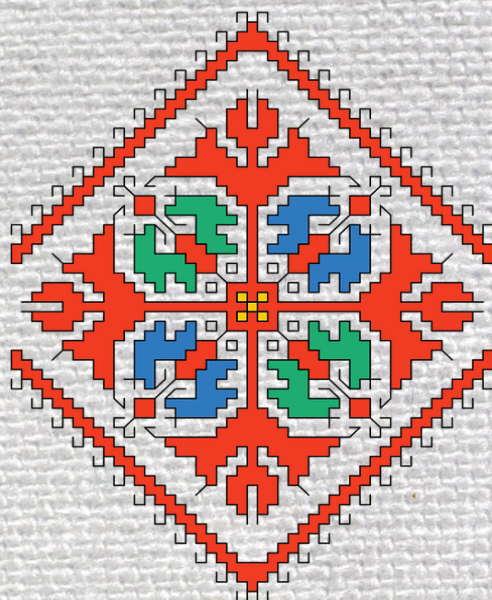


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ГЛАВЕН РЕДАКТОР

гл. ас. д-р Елисавета Цветкова
Факултет по библиотекознание
и културно наследство
Университет по библиотекознание
и информационни технологии
бул. „Цариградско шосе“ № 119,
София 1784, България
тел.: +359 894 70 38 70
е-поща: e.cvetkova@unibit.bg

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Университет по библиотекознание
и информационни технологии
ДИРЕКТОР

доц. д-р Диана Стоянова
бул. „Цариградско шосе“ № 119,
ет. 2, стая 213
София 1784, България
тел.: +359 879 14 83 85
е-поща: d.stoyanova@unibit.bg

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Chief Assist. Prof. Elisaveta Tsvetkova, PhD
Faculty of Library Studies
and Cultural Heritage
University of Library Studies
and Information Technologies
119, Tsarigradsko Shosse Blvd.
Sofia 1784, Bulgaria
tel. +359 894 70 38 70
E-mail: e.cvetkova@unibit.bg

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DIRECTOR

Assoc. Prof. Diana Stoyanova, PhD
119, Tsarigradsko Shosse Blvd.
fl. 2, room 213
Sofia 1784, Bulgaria
tel.: +359 879 14 83 85
E-mail: d.stoyanova@unibit.bg

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ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ **PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES**

LEASING AS CUSTOMER SEGMENTATION: IMPLICATIONS ON VEHICLE CONFIGURATION OPTION

Patrick Schiebel

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *This research paper analyses the role of Leasing as a purchase contract type in the new car configuration choices made by private new car buyers in Germany. Via a literature review, conclusions on Leasing customers are drawn and tested on a data set of 354 respondents using a binomial logit regression model, which provided information on the vehicle configuration they have bought, their purchase contract type, and socio-economic demographics. The literature reviews show that Leasing is used as a means to upgrade the vehicle experience, either via a larger vehicle class or through the configuration of more option items. The data proves that customers upgrade their in-vehicle seating experience through elements like seat heating and three-zone automatic climate control. Furthermore, Leasing customers upgrade the driving experience using ADAS technology. Additionally, a technology innovation affinity becomes visible, which Leasing makes affordable for the first vehicle ownership cycle and avoids investments into the structural vehicle components like a glass roof or a trailer clutch, from which arguably second owners also draw large benefits. The developed understanding of leasing customers in this research paper allows OEMs and Leasing companies to adjust their pricing mechanisms via the residual value to increase new car revenues and increase profitability while delivering an improved customer experience in the new car sales process through targeted marketing campaigns.*

Keywords: *Car Configuration, Option Items, Leasing, Purchase Contract Type, New Car*

INTRODUCTION

When ordering new cars, customers can configure the vehicle, adding multiple options to the base variant, allowing them to individualize the asset to their demand. Inter alia, customers can use the online car configurator provided by OEMs on their website (Herrmann et al. 2007, p. 391). Literature has discussed the benefits of individualization, which can increase the chance of a sale, as the increase in options provides customers with the possibility to exactly fulfill their demand (Kahn 1998, p. 45), but the range of options needs to be considered carefully, as they can be an obstacle in a sale process if they are not perceived as value-adding, like when options are too closely related and perceived as interchangeable (Dhar 1997, p. 215). While OEMs and large dealers might believe that customers are unlikely to sacrifice individual option-items to purchase a stock car (Flynn et al. 2000, p. 4), individualization needs to find a limit in digital sales, where reduced complexity and usability are driving the conversion rates from traffic into sales (Meurs 2013, p. 25). In a shift towards an omnichannel sales environment, where offline and online need to seamlessly interact, OEMs are implementing agent models, which allow them to take control of the retail outlets while also providing the digital sales environment (Bacher 2020, pp. 20–22). While OEMs have already focused in the past on the marketing for the brand and vehicle segments, their responsibility goes beyond the initial brand marketing into detailed targeting with specific vehicle configurations. With the increased responsibility for customer acquisition, OEMs need to understand and segment customers in detail, allowing them to target them cost-effectively via granular marketing campaigns (Groth and Zawadzki 2016, p. 100). In an early stage of the sales process, where customers might not yet disclose their identity in a digital environment but are rather just browsing for vehicle options, OEM needs to use any available data that is provided by the customer via its actions on the OEM website. As such, the purchase contract type provides a valid segmentation approach, given that customers might make an active choice on an OEM website to view the cost for the vehicle as a monthly

leasing rate instead of the cash-purchase figure. This paper shall, therefore, assess to what extent a leasing customer changes the odds for configuring specific configuration items in a vehicle, allowing us to draw conclusions on differences between a leasing customer and any other buyers. To validate the segmentation characteristics drawn from the literature review, a data set drawn from a customer survey with 354 respondents, providing socio-economic characteristics, the purchase contract type, and a selection of vehicle configuration items, will be tested by performing a binomial logit regression analysis with leasing as explanatory variable individually on each option item provided in the survey.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research of this publication is based on a literature review and the analysis of a data set retrieved from a customer survey on new car buyers from 2022 to May 2024 in Germany with 354 respondents, with a focus to understand on how leasing as a purchase contract type changes the odds for specific configuration items, as a basis for customer segmentation. In the literature review, leasing as a purchase contract form in Germany is explored, allowing conclusions to be drawn on leasing metrics that could influence customer behavior and, hence, customer segmentation. The literature review includes inter alia, published books, research papers, journals, online articles, and websites for more specific applications to the German market and more recent market movements if needed. To test how customers purchase new cars via leasing instead of any other contract type, this paper has access to a customer survey conducted in May 2024. In the data set, 354 respondents have provided details on their car configuration, socio-economic characteristics, and the purchase contract type. For this paper, only the purchase contract type of leasing and the car configuration are analyzed, whereas leasing as a purchase contract type is considered the explanatory variable of the car configuration options. The data will be analyzed using individual logistic regression models, from which the odds ratio will be calculated, considering the p-value for statistical significance. As a result, conclusions are drawn on the customer segment of leasing customers, in particular, on how it differentiates from any other new car buyers.

LEASING AS PURCHASE CONTRACT TYPE IN GERMANY

Historically, customers in Germany could only buy vehicles with cash. With the introduction of Captives, the financing arms of OEMs, customers have been offered financing solutions to increase the affordability of new cars for a wider audience as such financing can be viewed as a means to increase sales for OEMs by taking the burden of saving from customers and providing an advance via monthly payments. With the launch of Volkswagen Leasing in 1966, Leasing was introduced to the German market. Whereas the focus was initially only on corporates, which adapted to this new financing scheme mostly for tax/accounting regulatory benefits, as they didn't need to put the cars on their balance sheets as assets anymore, Leasing is now also widely accepted by private retail customers for their low monthly rates and exclusive access to a vehicle for a preset time and usage scope via a maximum annual mileage (Stenner 2010, p. 2). As of today, Leasing is widely accepted, and financing is the dominant way to buy new cars in Germany; recent studies show that 22% of newly acquired cars have been leased (DAT 2021, p. 4).

The dominant leasing product in Germany is "Kilometer-Leasing", translated into kilometer (KM) leasing, in which the lessor takes the residual value risk and provides exclusive access to the vehicle over a pre-defined leasing duration, with a maximal annual mileage, which is required to estimate the residual value of the vehicle for the lessor. As such, customers are aware that they need to return the vehicle at the end of the contract within age-acceptable conditions, which are set in the leasing contract, and only minor scratches are allowed. (Joho 2017; Bauer 2022; ADAC, 2023)

Captives have been critical in the OEM Groups, as some OEMs would have been likely deficient in some years without the Captive contribution (Diekmann 2009, p. 3). Not only do OEMs have a strong interest in promoting Captive offers, but the nature of the product with a fixed end and vehicle return provides retailers with a unique opportunity to re-sell a new vehicle. As such, Leasing is also fundamental for customer loyalty management, which has been measured to increase by 20 percentage points in financing contracts (Schürmann 2010, pp. 92–94). Following the logic of increased purchase power via leasing contracts, multiple proofs can be found within the literature. Whereas OEMs only invented car

financing as a solution to increase demand and affordability in the 1920s (Berger 2007, p. 182), it is assumed that 20% fewer vehicles would have been sold if there hadn't been an offer from Auto-Banks, like Captives (Diez 2010, p. 20),

Leasing has been proven to have a positive effect on the vehicle transaction in terms of ticket size. Customers have used Leasing to upgrade their vehicle from a smaller or used car to a bigger car and accept lower rebates, which is in line with the initial purpose of increasing sales (Lorenz 2001, p. 88; Mannering, Winston and Starkey 2002, p. 155, 161). While the leasing share might not be the highest for the models with the highest price, this could have different reasons around ownership demands. Within the economics of Leasing particularly goods that show a higher residual value are of higher attractiveness for Leasing, as they hold their value and hence require fewer amortization payments during the leasing period, hence cheaper for the customer (Desai and Purohit 1999, p. 42). In terms of options, empirical studies have been able to show that customers select more paid extra options via leasing contracts, which can be explained with the logic that the marginal costs on the monthly leasing rate are rather within the low Euro range, making the barrier to select more options perceivably lower (Lorenz 2001, p. 88; Schiebel 2024, p. 9).

As such, we conclude that Leasing is expected to have a positive impact in terms of increasing odds for items with individual options. Options that increase the used car value (residual value) are expected to be highly attractive for Leasing, although only if leasing providers calculate leasing rates granularly enough to consider different depreciation curves for options and the base vehicle price. Furthermore, options that are perceived as expensive for a one-off purchase might become attractive via low leasing rates.

OPTIONS INFLUENCED BY LEASING

Using the statistical software R, the explanatory variable of leasing as purchase contract form has been analyzed in a binomial logit regression model for each option item individually. All option items collected in the available data set are analyzed and displayed in the following tables 1–3. The options are categorized into interior options, which include interior trim, multimedia extras, upholstery selection, configuration of seats, automatic climate control, and heating options. The second category, the exterior options, includes the exterior trim, tire options, roof selection, front lights configuration, and any other options. Within the third category, sensor options, option items linked to parking sensors and cameras, and advanced driving assistance systems (ADAS) are reviewed. The table hereby displays the intercept and the coefficient, each with the related significance and the odds ratio, which is the exponent of the coefficient, describing the ratio leasing increases the likelihood of leasing customers configuring this specific option. It is important to note that only a conclusion from the data set can be drawn if a confidence level is statistically significant. Considering the sample size and the data set, the significance level is set as a minimum of $p < 0.05$ (Lehmann 1958, p. 1167; Kim, 2015, pp. 1–2, 10). In the following tables, the odds ratios with a statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) are highlighted in light blue, whereas a medium ($p < 0.01$) and darker ($p < 0.001$) blue signals a stronger significance level.

Table 1. Empirical results of leasing (explanatory variable) on interior options

INTERIOR OPTIONS	Intercept	Significance	Coefficient	Significance	Odds-Ratio
INTERIOR TRIM					
ALUMINIUM/METAL OPTIC INTERIOR TRIM	-1.2189	*** ($p = 0$)	0.5585	* ($p = 0.0354$)	1.7481
WOOD INTERIOR TRIM	-2.9565	*** ($p = 0$)	0.3056	($p = 0.5484$)	1.3575
LEATHER-ALTERNATIVE TRIM	-1.5251	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.6844	($p = 0.0764$)	0.5044
BLACK INTERIOR TRIM	-1.1139	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.5909	($p = 0.068$)	0.5538
MULTIMEDIA					
WIRELESS CHARGING	-0.3928	** ($p = 0.0018$)	0.3708	($p = 0.1293$)	1.4489
MULTIMEDIA INTERNET CONNECTIVITY	-0.0228	($p = 0.8532$)	0.6346	* ($p = 0.0117$)	1.8863
PREMIUM CAR SPEAKERS	-0.1295	($p = 0.2949$)	-0.1582	($p = 0.5188$)	0.8537
MOBILE DEVICE REMOTE CONTROL	-0.7741	*** ($p = 0$)	0.4414	($p = 0.0781$)	1.5549
UPHOLSTERY					
LEATHER SEATS	-1.0142	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.0124	($p = 0.964$)	0.9876
LEATHER-ALTERNATIVE SEATS	-0.9948	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.6279	* ($p = 0.0461$)	0.5337
TEXTIL SEATS (BLACK/GREY/WHITE)	-0.1447	($p = 0.2418$)	0.4324	($p = 0.0779$)	1.5410
SEATS					
COMFORT SEATS	-0.1447	($p = 0.2418$)	-0.2333	($p = 0.3441$)	0.7919
SPORT SEATS	-1.0338	*** ($p = 0$)	0.1175	($p = 0.6648$)	1.1246
ELECTRONIC SEATS (also with MEMORY FUNCTIONALITY)	-0.6535	*** ($p = 0$)	0.2297	($p = 0.3596$)	1.2582
FRONT SEAT HEATING	0.4086	** ($p = 0.0012$)	1.1363	*** ($p = 0.0002$)	3.1151
AUTOMATIC CLIMATE CONTROL					
MANUAL	-2.0880	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.7569	($p = 0.1304$)	0.4691
1 ZONE AUTOMATIC CLIMATE CONTROL	-1.1139	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.9780	** ($p = 0.0073$)	0.3761
2 ZONE AUTOMATIC CLIMATE CONTROL	-0.5701	*** ($p = 0$)	0.2824	($p = 0.2542$)	1.3263
3 ZONE AUTOMATIC CLIMATE CONTROL	-0.9377	*** ($p = 0$)	0.5596	* ($p = 0.0274$)	1.7500
HEATING					
HEATED WINDSHIELD WASH SYSTEM	-0.5373	*** ($p = 0$)	0.0206	($p = 0.9348$)	1.0208
HEATED STEERING WHEEL	0.0532	($p = 0.666$)	0.1897	($p = 0.438$)	1.2089
PARKING HEATER	-0.7918	*** ($p = 0$)	0.3218	($p = 0.2039$)	1.3796
Significant codes: **** 0.001 *** 0.01 ** 0.05 * 0.1 ' ' 1					

Interior option items are options that allow customers to configure the interior of their vehicles; some options have a stronger optical factor, and others upgrade the functionality and related vehicle experience. Whereas functional options allow for logical explanations, optics are driven by individual preferences, where conclusions are more difficult. The data analysis shows that leasing increases the odds by 75% for customers to configure the aluminum interior trim; as this is an optical design element, it is difficult to explain if leasing customers tend to have all the same tastes. Continuing with the multimedia options, leasing customers tend to configure the multimedia internet connectivity; this can be explained by the short leasing durations of less than four years typically, leading towards customers' expectations of having the most recent functionality equipped, with digital internet connectivity being one of them. The decreasing odds for leather alternative seats and high odds for front seat heating show the logic of certain expectations of leasing customers towards premium seats. Similar premium expectations are shown with automatic climate control, where customers tend to configure the three-zone automatic climate control rather than only one zone. Concluding on interior options, customers configure a certain premium standard, with digital internet connectivity, premium seat functions, and three-zone automatic climate control.

Table 2: Empirical results of leasing (explanatory variable) on exterior options

EXTERIOR OPTIONS	Intercept	Significance	Coefficient	Significance	Odds-Ratio
EXTERIOR TRIM					
CHROME EXTERIOR TRIM	-1.3302	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.0699	($p = 0.818$)	0.9325
ALUMINUM EXTERIOR TRIM	-1.3534	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.2693	($p = 0.4016$)	0.7639
BLACK EXTERIOR TRIM	-1.1974	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.5074	($p = 0.1187$)	0.6021
TIRES					
ALL-YEAR TIRES	0.0228	($p = 0.8532$)	-0.4466	($p = 0.0709$)	0.6398
WINTER TIRES	-0.1447	($p = 0.2418$)	-0.1429	($p = 0.56$)	0.8668
RESERVE TIRE	-1.4493	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.3425	($p = 0.3113$)	0.7100
ROOF					
SLIDING ROOF	-2.1274	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.9522	($p = 0.0828$)	0.3859
PANORAMA GLASSROOF	-1.3534	*** ($p = 0$)	-1.1316	** ($p = 0.0073$)	0.3225
PANORAMA SLIDING ROOF	-1.8414	*** ($p = 0$)	0.3706	($p = 0.2517$)	1.4486
FRONT LIGHTS					
LED FRONT LIGHTS	-0.1907	($p = 0.1237$)	-0.5190	* ($p = 0.0419$)	0.5951
ADAPTIVE LED LIGHTS	-0.4725	*** ($p = 0.0002$)	0.7154	** ($p = 0.0037$)	2.0450
OTHERS					
TRAILER CLUTCH	-0.6535	*** ($p = 0$)	-0.7466	* ($p = 0.011$)	0.4740
ANTI-THEFT ALARM	-0.1295	($p = 0.2949$)	0.3279	($p = 0.1794$)	1.3881
Significant codes: **** 0.001 *** 0.01 ** 0.05 * 0.1 ' ' 1					

While in the interior trim options, the leasing customers have shown a preference for aluminum, within the exterior trims, there are no specific options predominately represented. Within the roof, leasing customers tend to equip a vehicle with a panorama glass roof, which could be explained by the high-ticket size of 1330€ for the BMW X1 (BMW, no date), leading to a perception of paying much of the option for the secondhand customers, where only enjoying the benefits for a short period of the vehicle lifetime. With a similar technological focus, as previously shown in the interior options on multimedia, leasing customers configure the adaptive LED lights and avoid only LED front lights, as an expensive feature, where the incremental value is compared to the standardly equipped light. The data also confirms that customers have less willingness to equip the vehicle with a trailer clutch, a similar explanation as the panorama glass-roof could apply, as a trailer clutch is only slightly less expensive than a glass-roof with 1000€ for the BMW X1 (BMW, no date). Concluding the exterior options confirms the technology affinity of leasing customers but shows limits in terms of expensive option items, which are less likely to be configured.

Table 3: Empirical results of leasing (explanatory variable) on sensor options

SENSORS	Intercept	Significance	Coefficient	Significance	Odds-Ratio
PARKING					
PARKING SENSORS (front and/or rear)	0.7566	*** ($p = 0$)	1.0352	** ($p = 0.0016$)	2.8156
REAR DRIVING CAMERA	0.7218	*** ($p = 0$)	0.6104	* ($p = 0.035$)	1.8412
360-DEGREE CAMERA	-1.2189	*** ($p = 0$)	0.7022	** ($p = 0.0073$)	2.0181
ADAS					
PARKING ASSISTANT	-0.2988	* ($p = 0.0166$)	0.9106	*** ($p = 0.0003$)	2.4858
EMERGENCY BRAKE ASSIST (e.g. for City)	0.2214	($p = 0.0743$)	1.0455	*** ($p = 0.0002$)	2.8449
(ADAPTIVE) CRUISE CONTROL	0.8455	*** ($p = 0$)	1.6394	*** ($p = 0.0001$)	5.1522
LANE DRIVING ASSISTANCE	0.3613	** ($p = 0.0039$)	1.1836	*** ($p = 0.0001$)	3.2661
AUTONOMOUS DRIVING	-1.8096	*** ($p = 0$)	0.1049	($p = 0.758$)	1.1106
Significant codes: **** 0.001 *** 0.01 ** 0.05 * 0.1 ' ' 1					

The sensor section of the analyzed data views parking and ADAS sensors. The statistical model hereby shows increased odds of equipping parking sensors, rear driving cameras, and 360-degree cameras, which can't be explained anymore with the recent technological advancements, as the options have been

available for some time, but could be explained with customers being required to return the vehicle without damages, including small parking accident scratches. The ADAS systems described in the options are the available predecessors of autonomous driving, which is not yet widely available in vehicles, where leasing customers show a clear configuration preference to equip these items in the vehicle. Particularly, adaptive cruise control shows the highest odds in the whole data set for leasing customers, which could be explained by leasing customers wanting comfort in their long-distance drives, like the premium seating experience previously identified.

CONCLUSION

Leasing is a structured financing contract form that is available to new car customers in Germany. Within a leasing contract, the lessor provides exclusive access for a pre-defined time period and mileage to the customer in return for a monthly payment, which covers amortization until the set residual value, interest rates, operational expenses, and profit margin of the lessor. Past research has shown that customers use leasing to upgrade their vehicle experience, from configuring more option items up to switching towards a higher vehicle class. To understand what configuration items customers prefer, we need to understand the elements of only a temporary ownership situation, as customers return the vehicles after typically 3–4 years to the lessor. Analyzing the configuration options in individual binomial logit regression models with leasing as an explanatory variable confirms previously identified economics. Leasing increases the odds for customers to upgrade their in-vehicle (interior) experience by configuring a more premium seating experience with seat heating and the avoidance of leather alternatives. This is complemented via three-zone automatic climate control and decreased odds of one-zone climate control, which can create conflicts on the temperature setting with other customers. The driving experience is significantly upgraded as well by having high odds for the selection of advanced driving assistance systems (ADAS), indicating a technological innovation affinity of leasing customers. Such affinity is confirmed by selecting adaptive LED front lights and internet connectivity for the multi-media system. While technological innovations tend to benefit the first owner more than the second vehicle ownership cycle, due to the newness of the items, leasing customers tend to consider these and avoid larger investments into the vehicle structure like a glass roof or a trailer clutch, which would drive the long-term value, and make the vehicle attractive in the used car market. Furthermore, leasing customers seem to be aware of potential damages arising from parking accidents, which they would need to reimburse at the end of the lease to the lessor. As a result, all parking sensor options are configured, which can prevent the vehicle from being damaged. The results have practical implications for OEMs and Leasing companies, which can adapt their pricing mechanisms via a differentiated view of the residual value of the vehicle base trim and then a differentiated view of each of the configuration items, allowing them to understand for which monthly price leasing customers are willing to also fund long-term vehicle investments, e.g., into a trailer clutch or glass-roof, which might be attractive features in the used car market. Concluding the research, this paper elaborates on the previously identified elements of leasing, increasing, and upgrading the vehicle experience by providing a more detailed view of what exactly leasing customers tend to configure and how this could be used to increase revenues and profitability of leasing companies and OEMs, as well improve the customers experience long-term, by developing dedicated marketing campaigns and next best configuration recommendations for leasing customers.

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ЛИЗИНГЪТ КАТО СЕГМЕНТАЦИЯ НА КЛИЕНТА: ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ВЪРХУ ОПЦИИ ЗА КОНФИГУРАЦИЯ НА ПРЕВОЗНОТО СРЕДСТВО

Резюме: Тази изследователска статия анализира ролята на лизинга като тип договор за покупка при избора на конфигурация на нови автомобили, направен от частни купувачи на нови автомобили в Германия. Чрез литературен обзор се правят заключения за клиентите на лизинг и се тестват върху набор от данни от 354 респонденти, използвайки биномен логит регресионен модел, който предоставя информация за конфигурацията на превозното средство, което са закупили, вида на техния договор за покупка и социално-икономическата демография. Литературният обзор показва, че лизингът се използва като средство за надграждане на изживяването на превозното средство или чрез по-голям клас превозно средство, или чрез конфигурация на повече опции. Данните доказват, че клиентите надграждат изживяването си при седене в автомобила чрез елементи

като отопление на седалките и тризонов автоматичен климатроник. Освен това клиентите на лизинг надграждат изживяването при шофиране с помощта на технологията ADAS. Освен това афинитетът към технологичните иновации става видим, което лизингът прави достъпен за първия цикъл на притежание на превозното средство и избягва инвестициите в структурните компоненти на превозното средство като стъклен покрив или съединител на ремарке, от които може би вторите собственици също извличат големи ползи. Развитото разбиране за клиентите на лизинг в тази изследователска статия позволява на производителите на оригинално оборудване и лизинговите компании да коригират механизмите си за ценообразуване чрез остатъчната стойност, за да увеличат приходите от нови автомобили и да увеличат рентабилността, като същевременно предоставят подобро изживяване на клиентите в процеса на продажба на нови автомобили чрез целеви маркетингови кампании.

Ключови думи: конфигурация на автомобил, опционални елементи, лизинг, вид договор за покупка, нова кола

Патрик Шийбел, докторант

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

E-mail: patrick.schiebel@outlook.com

. ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ
PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

**THE PRINCIPLE-ORIENTED MEDICAL ETHICS ACCORDING TO BEAUCHAMP
AND CHILDRESS – APPLICATION TO THE NEEDS OF PATIENTS WITH PTSD**

Rainer Zeitz

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *The article deals with the application of the four medical ethical principles of Beauchamp and Childress to patients with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Given the numerous challenges that PTSD sufferers face in everyday life, sensitive communication between medical, nursing and therapeutic staff is of central importance, especially in life-threatening situations such as sepsis. The principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice form the basis for the ethical care of these patients. The first principle emphasizes respect for the autonomy of patients through comprehensive information and involvement in treatment planning. The second principle, the principle of non-maleficence, aims to avoid retraumatization and to choose safe, evidence-based treatment approaches. The third principle of beneficence promotes the psychological and physical well-being of patients through targeted treatment and the promotion of self-efficacy. Finally, the fourth principle of justice emphasizes non-discriminatory treatment, regardless of socioeconomic status. Applying these principles ensures ethically sound and patient-centered care that respects and promotes the individual well-being of patients. The article shows how these principles can be specifically applied to the needs of PTSD patients and discusses the challenges and limitations associated with this.*

Keywords: *Posttraumatic stress disorder, communication, trauma-sensitive communication, resource orientation, client-centeredness, ethics*

INTRODUCTION

People who have experienced posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) face numerous challenges in everyday life. Communication with patients plays a central role in this context. This applies in particular to medical, nursing and therapeutic staff. Against the background of this challenging initial situation, this article deals with how sensitive communication can take place with people affected by PTSD. The situation is all the more serious if they have or have experienced a life-threatening illness. An example of this is sepsis combined with a stay in the intensive care unit (Schellung/Epple, 43–45). The four medical ethical criteria according to Beauchamp and Childress have been chosen as the starting point. The structure of the article is derived from the interest in investigating this question. The first section explains the basics in this regard. This is followed by an application to the situation of patients with PTSD.

BASICS

Before we can address the actual question, the four principles should first be explained in their basic features. Beauchamp and Childress (1979) have developed a model of principle-oriented medical ethics. It is used in the medical, nursing and psychotherapeutic fields (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 36–37). A specific objective is to give the relevant professionals a framework that they can use as a guide. The focus is on maintaining and promoting the well-being of patients in the best possible way. This is particularly true for nursing staff, who typically spend significantly more time with patients than doctors and thus have an important influence on their recovery (Marckmann 2000, pp. 74–75). Beauchamp and Childress' principles are principles that follow "common sense" (Gerhard 2015, p. 153), and are sometimes referred to as middle principles. This addresses the assumption that most people would already agree with them

intuitively (Gerhard 2015, p. 153). The four principles will now be presented in detail in order to then apply them to the case of PTSD and make them more specific in the following chapter.

First principle: respect for the patient's autonomy

The first principle relates to freedom for patients – especially in a situation where they are restricted and dependent on care. The expectation is that they can make decisions as independently as possible (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 37–39). Beauchamp and Childress make a distinction in this context between negative and positive freedom (Beauchamp 2010, p. 37). Negative freedom means that, if possible, no manipulation or coercion should be exerted on the person being treated. This applies in particular to people who tend to have a stronger position than the patient (Beauchamp 2010, p. 37). Positive freedom means that people can make decisions as independently as possible. In order to do this, it is necessary to provide them with comprehensive information about their current situation and upcoming treatment. This includes, for example, realistic information about the opportunities and risks. In addition, no important information should be withheld, even if it could negatively affect the success of the treatment and the person (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 37–38). There are two important prerequisites for this. The first is an intensive relationship of trust between the patient and the treating staff (Quasdorf/Diel 2016, p. 7). In addition, the people should always protect the privacy of the person and allow them a highly personal decision-making space (Beauchamp 2010, p. 44). In practice, the so-called “informed consent” (Quasdorf/Diel 2016, p. 8) is used in this regard. This means that both the attitudes and the norms, values and interests of the patients are taken into account. They are asked about decisions for situations that could potentially arise during a medical intervention. This information can then be used to make a decision for the patient in the event that a situation arises in which they can no longer do this independently. An important prerequisite is comprehensive information. Active consent is necessary if the person is able to do this independently (Beauchamp 2010, p. 37).

Second principle: principle of non-maleficency

This principle is also known in English as “nonmaleficence” (Beauchamp 2010, p. 8). Another example is the measures that deprive the patient of their freedom that have already been mentioned. For example, no violence may be used and no neglect may occur. The harm may not just be accepted passively. However, this cannot always be avoided in individual cases. This is sometimes difficult in practice. Among other things, it may be necessary to perform an operation that saves the patient's life, even if this requires injury (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 38–39).

Third principle: principle of doing good

The third principle is called “beneficence” (Beauchamp 2010, p. 39). It is thus in a way an antipode to the principle of non-maleficence. There is a passive and active component. The main aim is to avert and avoid harm to the patient. In particular, impairments should not be caused to the patient, either consciously or unconsciously. This applies to both the psychological and the mental level (Beauchamp 2010, p. 39). In the active orientation, the treating persons should act in such a way that the patient's well-being is promoted (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 39–40).

Fourth principle: principle of justice

Finally, there is the principle of justice, which primarily addresses questions of fairness. This is primarily about questions of the distribution of questions and resources. For example, the treatment of patients should be based exclusively on their medical and nursing needs - and on what is optimal for their recovery. The income and behavior of patients should not be used as a yardstick (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 41–42). Accordingly, the principle of equality also plays an important role. The principle is therefore also opposed to treatment based on two classes, for example the preferential treatment of patients who have private health insurance over those with statutory insurance. As a result, questions of arbitrage are also addressed here (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 41–42). The principles can only be considered separately in theory. In reality, they are closely interrelated and influence each other (Gerhard 2015, pp. 151–152). Both conflicting goals and homogeneous goals are conceivable. In each individual case, the principles

must be weighed up against each other for the specific case, taking all details into account and with a particular focus on the patient's well-being. For example, it can be problematic to fully preserve a person's autonomy if they tend to harm themselves and pose a danger to caregivers and other patients. In this case, the use of measures that restrict freedom may be necessary. This involves balancing the principle of preserving autonomy with that of preserving and promoting the patient's well-being.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES TO PATIENTS WITH PTSD

Now the principles of Beauchamp and Childress should be applied to the context of patients with PTSD.

First principle: respect for the autonomy of patients

The first important reference point is the education of PTSD patients. Here, care should be taken to educate and inform them comprehensively. This can help to reduce existing uncertainties and fears. They should be given enough time and support so that they can make an informed and conscious decision on this basis. The communication of risks should always be transparent and comprehensible, but also requires a special degree of sensitivity (Beauchamp 2010, p. 37; Yule et al., 2013, pp. 451–452). It is also useful to involve patients intensively in the planning of further treatment after the education. Their preferences, but also norms and values, should be taken into special consideration. This can, for example, affect the choice of therapy, but also decisions that may need to be made for them if they are unresponsive (Beauchamp 2010, p. 37; Cahill/Anderson, 2013, pp. 364–365). In addition, particular importance must be attached to respecting the wishes of the patient. This applies in particular to the choice of therapy and the question of whether or not treatment should be carried out. If a person refuses treatment, wants to carry it out in a modified form or wants to stop it, this should be respected in every case. This also applies if there is a risk of significant health risks. However, particular attention must be paid to ensuring that the person makes their decision consciously in a calm state and not out of emotion. In this context, it can also be helpful to record the central norms, values and decisions, for example in the context of a living will, the preparation of which is also recommended beyond this specific context (Beauchamp 2010, p. 37; Cahill/Anderson, 2013, pp. 364–365).

Second principle: principle of non-maleficence

With regard to the second principle of nonmaleficence, care should be taken to structure treatment and communication with patients in such a way that the risks of retraumatization are kept as low as possible. This can be done, for example, by using trauma-informed approaches and sensitive communication and interaction techniques (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 38–39; Cahill/Anderson, 2013, pp. 363–364). It is also important to choose safe and evidence-based treatment approaches. In this way, the patient can be given a sense of security, and potential risks can potentially be better assessed based on previous experience. This makes it possible to anticipate possible outcomes and consider alternative courses of action in advance of the intervention. The communication of safety and evidence-based treatment also plays an important role here (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 38–39; Cahill/Anderson, 2013, pp. 363–364).

Third principle: principle of doing good

The principle of beneficence is also important. When working with PTSD patients, the main aim is to increase the patient's psychological and physical well-being. On the one hand, this includes treating the PTSD symptoms in a targeted manner, and on the other hand, the general quality of life or promoting the conditions for this. Furthermore, a holistic approach should be chosen in which the individual interventions are coordinated with one another in a meaningful way. This includes in particular the targeted coordination of measures with regard to their effects on the psychological, physical and social levels. Spirituality can also play an important role for some patients (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 38–39; Cahill/Anderson 2013, pp. 363–364). It is also useful to promote people's belief in their own efficacy. Appropriate measures on a psychological level should also aim to give patients the opportunity to use their own resources and to become aware of their individual strengths when it comes to dealing with

challenging situations. In addition, patients should be able to learn and train intensively to deal with challenging situations and the associated stressors and to shape their lives in this context with increasing self-determination (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 38–39; Cahill/Anderson 2013, pp. 363–364).

Fourth principle: Principle of justice

The last principle can also be used effectively with patients with PTSD. Care should be taken during treatment to act regardless of their socioeconomic status and place of residence. This includes not giving preference to privately insured patients. Differences in treatment should be made solely on the basis of medical and psychotherapeutic circumstances. Freedom from discrimination is a central principle in this context. Resources should be distributed in such a way that patients with PTSD have access to all necessary therapies and support options (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 41–42; Cahill/Anderson 2013, pp. 365–366). If barriers exist, for example related to mobility and financial possibilities, a solution should always be designed or cooperation should be sought with suitable bodies, such as the psychosocial counseling center of a municipality (Beauchamp 2010, pp. 41–42; Cahill/Anderson 2013, pp. 365–366). By applying these principles, ethically sound, patient-oriented, centered, goal-oriented care can be guaranteed. Attention must be paid to maintaining and promoting individual well-being as well as respecting the rights and dignity of the individual, in every situation and at all times.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

There are important limitations that must be taken into account. Beauchamp and Childress' model is only accessible to a limited extent to empirical testing. This is especially true given that it was created as principles of common sense. In addition, it is not a conclusive presentation of important principles. The critical discussion by Tschoetschel (2022) can be used here. For example, there are different principles with regard to the weighting of autonomy depending on the cultural region in which the patient care takes place. He distinguishes, for example, between liberal and rights-oriented states, the welfare-oriented Scandinavian ones and the traditionalist ones in southern and eastern Europe. This means that the meaning and weighting of autonomy also plays an important role. In traditionalistic cultures, a paternalistic solution is tended to be sought, in which the doctor makes the decision. Corresponding different weightings also relate to cultural factors (Birnbacher 2022, pp. 329–330). In addition, the criteria are not formulated concretely enough to offer concrete recommendations for action and applications in a specific case constellation. This is especially true for the necessary applications that a doctor, nurse or psychotherapist must make here. They therefore only offer indications that would also be partly taken into consideration without the model (Birnbacher 2022, pp. 330–331).

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ПРИНЦИПНО ОРИЕНТИРАНАТА МЕДИЦИНСКА ЕТИКА СПОРЕД БОШАМ И ЧАЙЛДРЕС – ПРИЛОЖЕНИЕ КЪМ НУЖДИТЕ НА ПАЦИЕНТИТЕ С ПТСР

Резюме: Статията дискутира прилагането на четирите медицински етични принципа на Бошам и Чайлдрес при пациенти с посттравматично стресово разстройство (ПТСР). Като се имат предвид многобройните предизвикателства, пред които са изправени страдащите от посттравматично стресово разстройство в ежедневието, деликатната комуникация между медицинския, сестринския и терапевтичния персонал е от основно значение особено в животозастрашаващи ситуации като сепсис. Принципите на автономия, невредимост, благодеяние и справедливост са в основата на етичните грижи за тези пациенти. Първият принцип набляга на зачитането на автономността на пациентите чрез изчерпателна информация и участие в планирането на лечението. Вторият принцип – принципът на милосърдие, цели да се избегне ретравматизирането и да се изберат безопасни, основани на доказателства подходи за лечение. Третият принцип на благодеяние насърчава психологическото и физическото благополучие на пациентите чрез целенасочено лечение и насърчаване на самооценката. И накрая, четвъртият принцип на справедливостта набляга на недискриминационното лечение, независимо от социално-икономическия статус. Прилагането на тези принципи гарантира етично обосновани и ориентирани към пациента грижи, които зачитат и насърчават индивидуалното благосъстояние на пациентите. Статията показва как тези принципи могат да бъдат конкретно приложени към нуждите на пациентите с посттравматично стресово разстройство и обсъжда свързаните с това предизвикателства и ограничения.

Ключови думи: посттравматично стресово разстройство, комуникация, чувствителна към травмата комуникация, ориентация към ресурсите, ориентираност към клиента, етика

Райнер Цайц, докторант

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

E-mail: rainer-zeitz@t-online.de

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ **PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES**

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION – ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTORS OF TODAY’S COMPANIES

Christian Conrad

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *In addition to product quality, employee satisfaction, meaning contentment both with the job itself and with the work environment, is a quality measure of employer-employee relationship which has become of major importance for today’s companies. This report therefore examines the connection between psychological perception and employee satisfaction on the basis of a “target-actual comparison”. The analysed dimensions of perception focus on work environment, sense of justice, assessment of personal development, satisfaction with income and psychological well-being. Based on an employee survey within a service company in the telecommunications sector, it is shown that various dimensions of these perceptions explain employee satisfaction and that the same play a role both concurrently and independently. The results also illustrate the importance of management skills, which largely account for generating satisfaction. In addition, an employer should be able to identify satisfaction deficiency among his or her employees and counteract them with appropriate measures.*

Keywords: *employee satisfaction, incentives, motivation, content factors, context factors*

INTRODUCTION

Product quality, a strong brand, or the use of latest technology alone have long ceased to guarantee a company’s success in achieving a leading position on the market (Fischer 1991, 1). While many companies were able to define themselves for decades through the products they manufactured, circumstances have now changed drastically. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence and big data, as well as the increased competition arising from them, present companies with a situation of permanent change (Träger 2021, 1). The US scientist Lee Iacocca sums it up quite accurately: Ultimately, all economic processes can be reduced to three words: people, products and profit, in that order. People are increasingly becoming of top priority to companies. If you don’t have good personnel, you will hardly be able to compete with your products on the market and will generate little profit, if at all (Kuhl et al. 2010, 10). However, employees are a resource with a mind of their own and a will of their own. They cannot be unconditionally “purchased” or “replaced” as “staff” (Träger 2021, 1). It has long been known how difficult it is not only to recruit, manage and motivate good employees, but also to keep them permanently in a company, following the principle “retain the best” (Maihöfner 2013, 1). Therefore, human resource management has been increasingly focusing its attention in recent years on ensuring that key employees remain in the company, since the prevailing ‘war for talents’, the increasing shortage of skilled workers, as well as demographic factors make it more necessary than ever to keep employees satisfied and thus bind them to an organization (Vom Hofe 2005, 1). Employee satisfaction has a strong impact on motivation. Satisfied employees are more committed, which in turn is reflected in a higher willingness to perform. In addition, satisfied employees are less likely to resign and more likely to remain loyal to their employer (Vogel 2017, 34). To get an idea of their personnel’s level of satisfaction and to identify the factors that influence it, many companies use regular employee surveys, on the basis of which they select suitable measures for promoting it. The goal of increasing satisfaction by improving working conditions, for example, is also reflected in the research: Numerous studies deal with the question of how the work environment can have a positive effect on employee satisfaction (Ganserer et al. 2021, 12). The most common effects are shown in Figure 1 below.

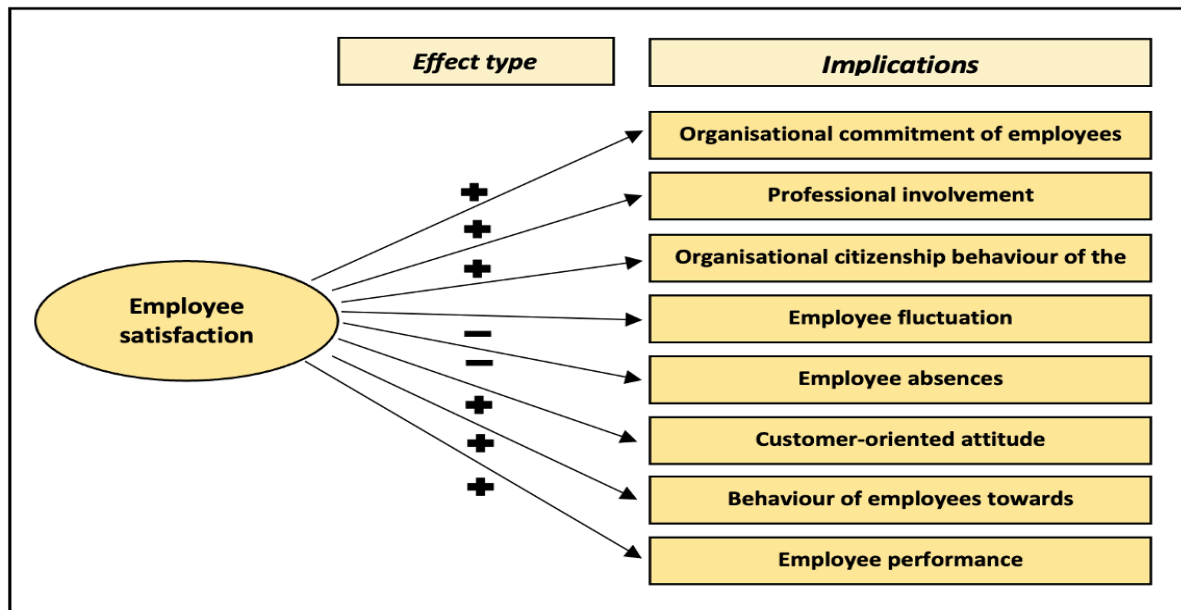


Fig. 1. Frequently studied effects of employee satisfaction

In academic literature, employee satisfaction is defined as the interaction of one's own "attitude" in relation to the work environment, which results from a careful comparison between the expected work environment (target) and the actually perceived work environment (actual) (Stock-Homburg 2012, 18). Various organizational aspects play a decisive role here:

- Working conditions,
- Colleagues,
- Management culture,
- Work content,
- Remuneration,
- Promotion and development opportunities,
- Work-life balance.

These factors can be weighed differently for each individual and vary depending on the industry, company size and corporate culture (Nerdinger et al. 2011, 396).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the **research question**: *Which measures are effective from today's perspective to maintain or even increase employee satisfaction in the company* is carried out by implementing an employee survey within a telecommunications company. On the one hand, the "target level of satisfaction" (expectation) and on the other hand, the "actual level of satisfaction" (perception) are to be analyzed from the employees' point of view. The questionnaire catalogue consists of a total of 34 items, with 18 items being used specifically for measurement. A modified form of the *Scale for Recording Working Conditions* by Felfe & Liepmann and the *8-Item Model* by Fischer & Lück were used.

The survey was carried out between June 9 and June 16, 2018, using the survey tool www.erhebung.de. The sample of the survey consists of 89 subjects, which corresponds to a partial survey (the total amount of people in the company being 93). Due to the high return rate of 80 questionnaire sheets (90%), the author classified the results as representative of the entire company. To ensure the quality of the method, several preliminary studies (pre-tests) were conducted, which were evaluated using Microsoft Excel software and the graphics contained therein. Due to some limitations within the Microsoft Excel software, the main study was evaluated using the IBM SPSS Statistics evaluation software.

The course of the research was clearly structured in advance. All employees of the company were contacted by the management via email, containing the relevant survey link. In addition, all participants were informed again about the objectives and content, as well as the guaranteed anonymity of their answers before the survey began.

RESULTS

The following analysis was created on the basis of a five-level monopolar scale. The respective answers are ordinally scaled, which means that the characteristics can be ranked similarly to the school grading system 1 to 5. For a differentiated and precise evaluation, specific location parameters such as the arithmetic mean (average value) and the mode (closest value) were used (Wölflé 2014, 78). Due to the ordinal scaling of the items, the Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used to show relationships.

Taking the socio-demographic representation into account, it can be seen that the distribution in the respective regions is almost equal (see Table 1) with 41 employees participating in the North-East region and 39 in the East.

Table 1. Cross-tabulation of socio-demographic distribution

	Employee distribution			Total
	< 1 year	1 - 3 years	> 3 years	
Regional distribution North-East (Berlin / BB)	12	13	16	41
East (Cottbus / Sachsen)	5	9	25	39
Total	17	22	41	80

At the same time, it can be seen that more than half of all respondents have been working for the company for far longer than 3 years. The result thus reflects current findings in the everyday life of employees. In the metropolitan region of the federal capital (Berlin), employees are much more willing to change employers, whereas employees in Saxony tend to strive for long-term cooperation and place particular value on a more familiar atmosphere.

As described at the beginning, employee satisfaction is a component of the target-actual comparison. Incentive factors (motivators) have a strong influence on employee satisfaction. The delta between the “expectation” (target state) and the “perception” (actual state) of the different motivators (incentives) must not deviate too much from one another. In order to form the basis for this cross-comparison, the motivating factors were first approached in order of their importance (see Table 2).

Table 2. Average mean value of incentive factors for employee satisfaction

Items Incentive factors for employee satisfaction	Incentive factors for employee satisfaction (target state)							Total
	Importance of work environment (in general)	Importance of work environment (in relation to co-workers)	Importance of work environment (in relation to superiors)	Importance of career advancement and promotion	Importance of further training and qualification opportunities	Importance of performance- related pay	Importance of the corporate image	
Mean value	1,29	1,28	1,46	1,54	1,53	1,74	1,64	1,50

Mean values were calculated to allow a closer examination and comparison of the individual items. The closer a mean value is to the value “1” (very important), the more important this aspect is for the employees. The following is the result analysis of the incentive factors for employee satisfaction (target state):

- **Work environment (in general, in relation to colleagues, in relation to superiors):** The overall result clearly shows that the first 3 components are of similar importance for the staff. For all 3 items, the mean value is very close to the value “1”, which means that a clear majority of respondents consider the work environment overall as “very important”.
- **Career advancement & training opportunities:** The situation in the two following items is similar. For the majority of the respondents, these two areas are also “very important”.
- **Pay & corporate image:** These two areas are somewhat less important compared to their predecessors. Nevertheless, they are still ranked mainly as “important”. At the same time, it can be seen that remuneration is not the highest incentive factor for motivation, as is often assumed. In comparison with the company’s public image, the value stands even lower.

In addition to the determination of the expected incentive factors (target state), an analysis of the perceived motivation factors (actual state) is required in the next step. In order to compare both incentive constructs, care was taken that the items and their hypotheses relate to each other analogously (see Table 3).

Table 3. Average mean value of general employee satisfaction

	General Employee (actual state)											
	Content factors (intrinsic)						Context factors (extrinsic)					
Items general employee satisfaction	Work gives me the opportunity to take on respon- sibility.	Work gives me the opportunity to use my own abilities.	I am happy with the oppor- tunities for advance- ment.	My work is not valued enough.	I really enjoy my work.	I would choose the same company again.	I get far too little money.	I am happy with the working enviroment.	I am satisfied with the structural processes.	I am satisfied with how superios praise and criticise.	There is too much sales pressure.	Total
Mean values	1,84	1,95	2,64	3,05	1,80	1,99	3,40	1,89	2,60	2,29	2,98	2,40

Context factors (extrinsic) address experiences that are connected to the work environment, i.e. extrinsic to the work – outside of the activity. Content factors (motivators) are predominantly intrinsic aspects, i.e. factors inherent in the work (Rosenstiel 2015, 79). The results of general employee satisfaction (actual state) are shown below:

- **Responsibility & skills:** The first two items clearly show that employees are “satisfied” with the various nature of the work tasks they are asked to perform.
- **Promotion opportunities:** With a mean value of $\chi = 2.64$, the staff are more neutral about their personal promotion opportunities, which should be considered unsatisfactory.
- **Recognition:** This area is characterized by the group of undecided “neither / nor”. In addition,

the result is negative as the majority of the staff are rather dissatisfied. The company should also act in this area.

- **Work satisfaction & company re-election:** These two items again clearly show that employees enjoy their work and would “surely” choose the same company again.
- **Remuneration:** With a mean value of $\chi = 3.40$, the trend is also negative. Measures should be taken here immediately.
- **Work environment & process structure:** The area of the work environment reflects a clear level of satisfaction. The structural processes, on the other hand, tend towards a neutral, less than optimal view.
- **Management & work pressure:** One of the most important elements is how employees perceive their superiors. This area can still be rated as satisfactory with a value of $\chi = 2.29$. In contrast, the sense of work pressure is perceived as too high with a value of $\chi = 2.98$.

The delta of both constructs in the target-actual comparison of $\chi = 0.90$ can be considered as still acceptable. As a result, the company in the survey is already on the right track in terms of employee satisfaction. Nevertheless, some areas should be improved immediately with targeted measures in order to make survival in today’s competitive business world possible and to prevent the emergence of any negative effects (see Figure 1).

In view of the **research question** outlined at the beginning, this analysis also shows that companies today have many possibilities to increase their employees’ motivation and satisfaction with targeted incentive concepts. The size of the organisation and its financial resources are of particular importance.

CONCLUSION

The success of a company is essentially due to the performance of its employees. This performance behaviour is considered as the result of respective working conditions (Volk 2004, 1). Therefore, the fundamental question of the present research work, namely the effect and importance of the most important influencing factors in employee satisfaction, is in the focus of many companies. The *content factors* (intrinsic motivators) emerge as the most important components. As a result, the non-material incentives prove to be those that are gaining on importance among employees. In contrast, the financial incentive aspects and the context factors (extrinsic motivators) have a smaller influence on satisfaction in a company. Nevertheless, the material incentive parameters must not be neglected and require constant evaluation.

In summary, some measures and recommendations for action are presented below, which help increase employee satisfaction and employee loyalty in the long term. It follows from there that the construct of satisfaction is the basic prerequisite for sustainable employee loyalty (Maihöfner 2013, 22):

1. Conducting regular employee surveys,
2. Promoting intrinsic motivators (content factors), i.e. factors inherent in the work (performance, recognition, responsibility, career and development opportunities),
3. Avoiding extrinsic dissatisfaction parameters (context factors), that is to say those related to work environment (payment, status assignments, relationship with colleagues and superiors, leadership behaviour, company image/policy),
4. Interaction management (interplay) of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators,
5. Promotion and development of non-material incentive systems (leadership behaviour, personnel development),
6. Strategic and appropriate use of material incentive systems (e.g. additional payment options for individual performance).

Finally, it should be noted that the empirical study and its results were largely supported by the theoretical concepts of the literature on the subject. It is ultimately the internal factors and incentives that are responsible for a lasting and sustainable development of job satisfaction. External incentives, on the other hand, form the framework of work activity but should only be used to a lesser extent, since they are more cost intensive and the incentive effect is only temporary. In this sense, the main goal of human resource management should be to promote intrinsic motivators which in turn would create a bond with

the organization and maintain the corresponding satisfaction of employees.

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УДОВЛЕТВОРЕНОСТТА НА СЛУЖИТЕЛИТЕ – ЕДИН ОТ НАЙ-ВАЖНИТЕ ФАКТОРИ ЗА УСПЕХ НА СЪВРЕМЕННИТЕ КОМПАНИИ

Резюме: В допълнение към качеството на продукта, удовлетвореността на служителите от тяхната работа и работна среда е качествен показател за отношенията между работодател и служител, който е в центъра на вниманието на съвременните компании. Ето защо в настоящия доклад се анализира връзката между психологическите състояния на преживяванията и удовлетвореността на служителите въз основа на „сравнението цел – производителност“. Измеренията на анализирани състояния на преживяване се фокусират върху работната среда, възприятията за справедливост, оценките за личностно развитие, удовлетвореността от доходите и психологическото благополучие. Въз основа на проучване на служителите в компания за услуги в сектора на телекомуникациите е показано, че различни измерения на състоянията на преживяване обясняват удовлетвореността на служителите и че тези измерения играят едновременно и независима роля. Резултатите също така подчертават значението на качеството на ръководството, което в голяма степен е отговорно за генерирането на удовлетвореност. Освен това работодателят трябва да е в състояние да идентифицира дефицитите на удовлетвореност сред своите служители и да предприеме подходящи мерки за противодействие.

Ключови думи: удовлетвореност на служителите, стимули, мотивация, фактори на съдържанието, фактори на контекста

Кристиан Конрад, докторант
Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии
E-mail: christian.conrad@vodafone.de

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ **PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES**

“SMART” – A STRATEGY TO MEASURE ITS OWN GOALS

Diana Lea Reißmann

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *The “SMART” method is often associated with goal-oriented leadership. When a company needs to implement certain changes, then it is necessary to first set the goals leading to the desired changes. Criteria for defining the goal are initially introduced and subsequently adhered to, so that the employees can go through self-monitoring and eventually, find out whether they are on track with the implementation of their target planning. One method of implementing the above strategy is “SMART”, it is an acronym describing the sub-topics that need to be discussed in the planning of a goal. The acronym is made up of the words “Specific Measurable Achievable Reasonable Time-bound”. “Specific” stands for the condition that a goal be clearly defined. “Measurable” refers to the requirement to present the goal as measurable by examining criteria for measurability. “Achievable” brings to mind the participants’ motivation by addressing the fact that a goal should be worth achieving for every employee in the company. “Reasonable” indicates feasibility and “time-bound” stands for setting a fixed date by which the goal should be achieved. The definition of the method and the extent to which it can help in the self-monitoring process are discussed in more detail below. The main focus here is on self-employed people who can improve their self-management with the help of SMART.*

Keywords: *SMART method, goal planning, self-control, measurability, self-management*

INTRODUCTION

According to the Gabler Business Dictionary, a goal is a “target value with which an actual state is compared, and which must be worked on until it corresponds to the target state”. (Berwanger 2024). The Duden dictionary adds to this definition ‘a deadline’ for the achievement of the goal in order to enable better planning (Duden 2024). Thus, a goal differs from an intention or a wish in terms of its measurability and the possibility of a structured planning. The meaning of an activity becomes clearer and more realistic when it is bound to a goal. Goals “direct people’s efforts, abilities and skills in the tasks they perform and align their ideas and knowledge with the desired end results” (Kleinbeck 2006). In business, companies use goals to achieve improvements and to direct the entrepreneurial endeavours of all employees in the same direction. However, in order for every employee to direct their skills towards the same target state, it is important to present the latter in as much detail as possible, so that the motivation of everyone involved is aroused and individual skills are used in a targeted manner. The more tangible, measurable and meaningful a goal is, the more motivated each employee of a company is to work towards it. The same applies to self-employed people. The more motivated they feel, the more disciplined they are in pursuing a certain goal. The more measurable a goal is, the easier it is to reach it and to exercise self-control in achieving it. A company or an entrepreneur can therefore achieve their goals more quickly if they are defined as precisely as possible.

To arrive at such a definition, goal-finding models are used. One of the models that has established itself on the market is the so-called “SMART” model.

The present paper is intended to present a solution proposal as to how companies can first define their goals in detail and then communicate them in a replicable manner to the lower levels of the company. The “SMART” model has advantages and disadvantages that need to be analyzed before applying the model. These will be outlined in the paper in order to provide a better insight. The methodology should then show possibilities for using the aforementioned model by explaining practical examples and briefly

discussing them.

The theoretical foundation presented in the following chapter provides a basic level of knowledge so that the methodological approach introduced subsequently can be understood.

Like any brief abstract, the present paper can only illuminate certain aspects, does not, however, provide any guarantees of success. For this reason, the final consideration in the last chapter provides not only a summary, but also a critique of the own elaboration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The basic information for understanding the SMART goal-setting model is explained in the second chapter. It is based on theoretical foundations from internet sources and coaching lectures. Sub-topics are consulted by current newspapers and magazines to ensure their up-to-day status. The example sentences that are intended to illustrate the definitions of the SMART sub-items are based on examples from the scientific reading by Isabelle Pfister (2016) but designed by the author herself.

DEFINITION OF THE “SMART” METHOD

The acronym S.M.A.R.T. stands for empirically well-supported results of the goal-setting theory (target-setting theory), which was developed by the industrial psychologists Locke and Latham (1990) (Storch 2009, 2). The acronym represents the measures by which a goal should be constructed in order to achieve the greatest possible success.

The respective letters stand for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable and Time-bound.

If we look at the individual letters of the “SMART” method, the following definitions of the individual elements emerge:

Specific: The objective is described concretely and unambiguously. It leaves no room for negotiation and gives everyone, expected to pursue the goal, the same notion of how to accomplish it. Multi-word expressions, containing words such as “more”, “less”, or “often” can leave a person wondering what tasks exactly they should perform or what the extent of the desired increase is. The statement “increase customer satisfaction” may leave the employee too much room for interpretation, so that the desired increase may not be pursued to the extent expected. To represent the goal specifically, achievable success parameters should be specified (Pfister 2016, 46). If we refer to the first definition of the SMART method, even the correction of the term “customers” to “new customers” would be more specific. However, since there are still too many open questions related to this statement, the next element will now be examined in more detail: *Measurable:* The incorporation of a measurable number enables a regular comparison to be made on the way to the goal. The more precisely the target is measured, the easier it will be to compare the target with the current prevailing actual state. The simplest way to do this is by naming numbers (Pfister 2016, 46). If we include a measure in the target agreement, the above example sentence would then be as follows: “We are increasing the new customer rate, compared to the current 20% to a total of 30%.” Thus, it is understandable to the employee who is conducting the change that there are still ten percent missing from the target. If an agreement is made between an employer and an employee by way of conversation, the employee is now aware of the goal s/he should pursue. Yet, prior to the two SMART sub-points discussed above, the employee lacks the motivation to achieve the goal. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors have different effect on the speed at which the goal is achieved. Likewise, a motivated employee can perform better, which has a positive effect on planning. Regardless of the manager’s leadership style, motivators can improve the employee morale. With regard to this, Frederick Herzberg developed in the 1960s a theory including additional factors and it is still valid and accepted today (Becker 2019, 57). Hence, the next sub-point incorporated into SMART goal planning is:

Achievable: Increasing motivation is an important element of goal setting and it helps ensure that a goal is not only manageable but also achievable. If every employee knows why the target state is beneficial for the entire company, it is easier for the individual employees to work towards it (Pfister 2016, 46). The word “must” in the example sentence can thus be replaced with the word “should” and the reason for the desired target state can be explained: “In order to ensure long-term stability of the company and to be able to promise further financial benefits in the future, it is important to increase the

new customer rate to 30% compared to the previous year.” In the case where the employees’ motivation is consistent and the goal has been clearly defined, two further sub-points still need to be clarified:

Reasonable: To ascertain that a certain goal can be reached, its feasibility must be checked first using the available means (Pfister 2016, 46). For example, communication between two states can only be guaranteed if both can communicate with each other. If the goal were an exchange between the two nations, this would only be realistic if communication was guaranteed through language. Otherwise, the goal would not be tangible. The last sub-point after confirmation of feasibility is *time-bound*: A desired goal needs a time reference that should be defined as precisely as possible. If a specific end date is set, it can easily be estimated whether the results have been achieved or not. Operational goals are usually measured over a period of one calendar year, while tactical goals have a longer period of three to five years. Strategic goals are in a period beyond the five-year mark (Burth/ Gnädinger 2024). In the example sentence, we would therefore change the objective from “We need to increase customer satisfaction” to “In order to receive more orders through referral marketing and to relieve the burden on the marketing and support departments, we will increase new customers’ satisfaction rate from 80% to 90% by January 1, 2020” (Pfister 2016, 47). (Fig. 1; Summary of the SMART Method 2024).

S	Specific	How to: Describe your goal in detail, e.g. “I want more profit than last year”, instead of “I want more profit”
M	Measurable	How to: Explaining the goal by defining its numbers, e.g. “I want 10% more profit than last year”
A	Achievable	How to: The goal has to motivate, e.g. “If we reach 10% more profit than last year, everyone will get a raise”
R	Reasonable	The goal has to be reached by relying on the company’s own resources, e.g. “Everyone will make one more phone call a day for selling the products to raise the profit.”
T	Time-Out	The goal should have a deadline, e.g. “We will raise profit up to 10% by 31 Dec., 2023.”

Fig. 1. Summary of the SMART-Method, own creation

PROS AND CONS OF THE “SMART” METHOD

The clear definition of the goal leaves no room for interpretation, so that every employee can understand what target state the company’s aiming at. Measurability means that success can be documented and any challenges that arise during the set time interval are easier to perceive and then eliminate since weak points have been documented in numbers. However, the disadvantages of the model should not be overlooked either, because these can be analyzed and then corrected.

On the one hand, the elements of attractiveness and reality can promote poor results. To explain this disadvantage, we will first use the example of communication between an employer and an employee: If the employer regards an employee’s satisfaction as top priority, the latter will never leave his comfort zone. In such a case, the employee would most likely be presented with only small goals that make him feel comfortable, but do not challenge him. Therefore it is important to set larger goals to find out whether more can be achieved than initially assumed. This assumption also applies to the self-employed: If a self-employed person sets his own goals in the knowledge that he can achieve them, he will opt

for fewer challenges, since he can only determine the feasibility of a goal based on his own perception and here the only factor that plays a role is one's motivation. Because the self-employed can only base his decision on his own experience, it is more difficult to assess whether a goal can be achieved or not. Consequently, for lack of previous experience in a given area, the goals set may be too small. At the same time, studies by Koestner et al. (2002) proved that “easy” goals can inhibit motivation, whereas solving major challenges can boost self-esteem. However, overcoming the inhibition to tackle ambitious goals, especially as a self-employed entrepreneur, can itself become a challenge. Ambitious targets concerning new products and innovations would not be well received using the “SMART” model, as innovations can never guarantee feasibility. If goals were set only within the framework of this model, there would be no more innovations. Furthermore, one should bear in mind that, despite the clear goal set at the beginning, the model does not offer an actual action plan. So once the goal has been set, you are first “left alone” (Rittershaus 2021).

HOW TO POSSIBLY OVERCOME THE CONS OF THE “SMART” METHOD

Not just one department is responsible for developing goals for a company, so overlaps are often possible. This means that projects are examined from different angles. While the end customer has the finished product in mind and aligns it with his demands, product development must start from the beginning, relying only on background knowledge. The customer cannot understand the feasibility factor since he is not familiar with the processes and components leading to a product and so some unrealistic demands on his part may not be met. Meanwhile, a department can also encounter limitations in its creativity imposed by its own position. To solve such a dilemma, a customer survey, in which customers write down their demands based on measurable goals, could be useful for a company. If the elements of the “SMART” model are presented in the form of a questionnaire and then examined together with the test subjects, a demand can become a goal for the company and later can be checked for feasibility. In this way, suggestions for innovations can come from the end customer and the product development department can eventually turn them into a goal. In this way, poor results could also be avoided.

RESULTS

All in all, the “SMART” model can be useful in goal finding and goal setting. However, it is important that a goal should not be simply assigned by the upper structures of a company, but is defined and worked out as a joint endeavour. Thus, the attractiveness of a target can be increased. In order to transform the goal into a future actual state, however, the employee must not be left alone after the goal has been set. Joint development of strategy and interim targets could support its achievement and maintain motivation.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides only a brief summary of an extensive topic and does not allow comparisons between individual models. It is therefore important to consult other models in order to find the right goal-setting model for your own company. In addition, theories are no guarantee of success, so empirical studies within a company help to increase chances of success.

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„SMART“ – СТРАТЕГИЯ ЗА ИЗМЕРВАНЕ НА ЦЕЛИ

Резюме: Когато се говори за управление, ориентирано към целите, с него често се свързва „методът SMART“. За да се реализират процесите на промяна, в компанията се обсъждат целите, които трябва да бъдат постигнати. Обсъждат се критериите за определяне на целта, така че след това служителите да могат да проверят дали са на прав път с изпълнението на планираните цели. Един от методите е „SMART“ – акроним, който описва подтемите, които трябва да се вземат предвид при планирането на намерението. Съкращението е съставено от думите „*Specific Measurable Achievable Reasonable Time-Out*“ („Специфичен, измерим, постижим, разумен, срок“). „Специфичен“ означава условието, че целта трябва да бъде ясно дефинирана. „Измеримо“ се отнася до задължението да се демонстрира измеримостта на целта чрез обсъждане на критериите за измеримост. „Постижимо“ има за цел да ни напомни за мотивацията на участващите лица, тъй като тази подточка се отнася до факта, че целта трябва да е желана за всички. „Разумен“ се отнася до реалистичността, а „Срок“ означава определяне на фиксирана дата, до която целта трябва да бъде постигната. Определението на метода и степента, в която той може да помогне за самонаблюдението, са разгледани по-подробно по-долу. Фокусът тук е върху самостоятелно заетите лица, които могат да използват SMART за подпомагане на самоуправлението.

Ключови думи: метод SMART, планиране на цели, самоконтрол, измеримост, самоуправление

Диана Леа Рисман, докторант

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

E-mail: diana.rissmann@arcor.de

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ **PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES**

COMPETENCIES FOR THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Arno Onnen

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *The digital transformation, triggered by a dynamic development of new technologies and systems, such as the Internet of Things, Big Data and Cloud, has caused significant changes in the professional world, as well as in the nature of the tasks and job roles in the workplace, which in turn is a prerequisite for new managerial and specialist competencies. Companies are faced with the challenge of implementing digital innovations in order to remain competitive and at the same time to prepare their staff for the new digital change and the competencies that go with it. The spectrum of required new competencies ranges from basic knowledge of technological and digital developments to competencies for introducing digital change in the organization and communication with employees. Due to the dynamic development, particularly in the area of artificial intelligence, there is a need to identify, categorize and develop new competencies. The aim of this work is to identify relevant competencies for specialists and managers that are required due to the implementation and application of artificial intelligence. In this way, appropriate competency models can be expanded for the target group and used for competency development, personnel selection or performance assessment.*

Keywords: *competence, artificial intelligence, competence development, digital transformation, leadership development*

INTRODUCTION

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has made a significant impact on the modern professional world. AI technologies such as machine learning and neural networks are already transforming numerous jobs today and will play an even greater role in the future (Hasenbein 2023, 3). Not only large technology companies, but also organizations of all sizes and lines of business are facing the challenges and opportunities of using AI. A study by Fraunhofer IAO predicts that AI will become more important in all areas of business, especially in activities that deal with data analysis, which will require new roles and skills (Dukino et al. 2019, 30–31). According to the World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Survey, almost 75% of the companies surveyed plan to introduce AI in the next five years (World Economic Forum 2023, 24).

In 2023, around 12% of German companies used AI, with large companies using these technologies more frequently than small and medium-sized companies. The most common applications include accounting, IT security and the automation of the work process (Destatis 2023, 1).

The main reasons for hesitant adoption of AI systems are a lack of knowledge, incompatibility with existing hardware and software, data protection and cost concerns (Destatis 2023, 1). These hurdles highlight the need to qualify employees at an early stage and develop the skills required to deal with AI technologies (Stowasser/Suchy et al. 2020, 2). Studies show that the demand for technology-related and social skills will increase significantly by 2030 (McKinsey 2018, 1–4).

To meet the demands of digital transformation and the integration of AI, companies should modernize their technological infrastructure and ensure that their employees have the necessary skills. Competency models are crucial here, as they systematically record existing competencies and enable targeted development measures. These models not only support personnel development, but also recruitment, performance assessment and career planning (North et al. 2018, 21–23).

Overall, the introduction of AI technologies requires a comprehensive transformation of the professional world, which includes both technological and social dimensions. Companies and employees must continuously develop in order to keep pace with the changes and make the most of the potential of AI.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach for this publication is a comprehensive literature analysis of competency requirements for specialists and managers in the context of the use of artificial intelligence in companies and organizations. The literature research includes books, specialist journals, research papers and online articles, as well as websites that were used in the analysis of recent developments. The sources examined consist of studies on digital skills and skills development, as well as sources on specific leadership skills in the context of digitalization or digital transformation and specific skills for the application of artificial intelligence. On the basis of the analysed literature sources, the first step was to examine the requirements for specialists and managers that arise as a result of the digital transformation and in particular the use of AI, and then to identify the corresponding competency requirements. The focus here is on competencies for management tasks; role-specific specialist competencies have not been taken into account.

RESULTS

AI IN THE CORPORATE CONTEXT

In the course of digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI) is used to automate processes based on collected data and to promote data-driven decisions. This transformation permeates all areas of a company – from strategy and business procedures to corporate culture. Companies are required to redesign their business models in order to meet the changing demands of society and to ensure their competitiveness (Hasenbein 2023, 36–38).

The combination of AI and digital transformation offers a promising future for business and society. Companies that use these technologies skillfully can strengthen their competitive position, drive innovation and promote long-term growth (see table 1) (Platform Industry 4.0 2021, 3–5).

Table 1. Possible scripts for AI application (Dukino et al. 2020, 16, 17)

Business area	Possible Application (forecast)	Possible Application (classification)	Possible Application (recommendation)	Possible Application (decision)	Possible Application (implementation)
Marketing	-	Brand-safe delivery of digital advertising, customer segmentation, new customer approach	Up and cross selling content optimization and content recommendation	Creation of decision templates/reports	More easily accessible website information, content translation
Sales and Distribution	Demand forecast, Product sales forecast, business opportunities	Know and classify customers, recognize customer annoyance	Sales through individual needs recommendation to the customer, personalization of the purchase offer	Optimal pricing, extended B2B customer analysis	Optimized visitor routes for new and existing customers
Procurement und Purchasing	Demand forecast, Detection of supply bottlenecks	Document classification by products, supplier evaluation	Optimization of purchase decisions, selecting the best offer	Fraud detection during the ordering process, procurement support	Invoice processing contract review

Customer Service	-	Classification of incoming e-mails, pre-classification of callers in the call center	Procurement consultant, unique, relevant offers in real time	Intelligent customer support	Mixed customer dialogue using virtual and human agents, finding appointments
Human Resources	Prediction of future resignations	-	Finding skilled personnel, building strong project teams, skill-based capacity planning	-	Intelligent shift planning, making pre-selection of job interviews, further training: sales trainer

Table 1, based on a study by the Fraunhofer IAO by Dukino et al. among German companies, shows examples of possible application scenarios of artificial intelligence in the processing of business processes (Dukino et al. 2020, 16, 17).

SUCCESS FACTORS AND BARRIERS TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In a study, Hofmann et al. identified the role, attitude and mindset of higher management levels as being of central importance for a successful digital transformation. Success factors for a digital transformation in companies were identified. The management levels can set the framework required for the transformation through their attitude and by setting an example of the digital work culture.

- Digitalization affects all areas of the company, from customer interaction to internal processes, structures and roles. Traditional project management, for example, is being replaced by agile working methods. Existing legal frameworks may no longer be appropriate in a digital working world.

- A willingness to experiment, transparent communication at eye level and a constructive approach to resistance are decisive factors. A high level of willingness to change and adapt must be established, with employee involvement being a key prerequisite for success (Braun et al. 2023, 17).

- The most important success factor is the willingness to engage in lifelong learning at all levels and the creation of an open and innovative organizational culture (Hofmann et al. 2020, 7–9).

Figure 1, based on a survey by Metternich et al. among large companies in Germany, shows the perceived barriers to the use of AI in the company (1 = barrier perceived as low, 4 = barrier perceived as high). The high demand for know-how and experts in the companies surveyed is clear (Metternich et al. 2021, 14–15).



Fig. 1. Obstacles to the use of AI in companies (own illustration based on Metternich et al. 2021, 14-15)

In the future, almost all professional groups will cooperate with AI systems to complement and enhance human capabilities. AI systems will provide relevant information, support informed decisions and provide orientation in an increasingly complex digital environment. As a result, intelligent machines will expand the sphere of influence of humans. (Franken et al. 2022, 2).

Figure 2, based on a survey by Dukino et al., describes the expected change in the division of labour between humans and technology due to artificial intelligence in the next five years. Particularly strong effects are predicted for activities in the field of data analysis, with an average rating of 4.3 on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). A high average value of 4.0 is also found for operational activities, such as routine tasks in administrative processing. (Dukino 2019, 35).

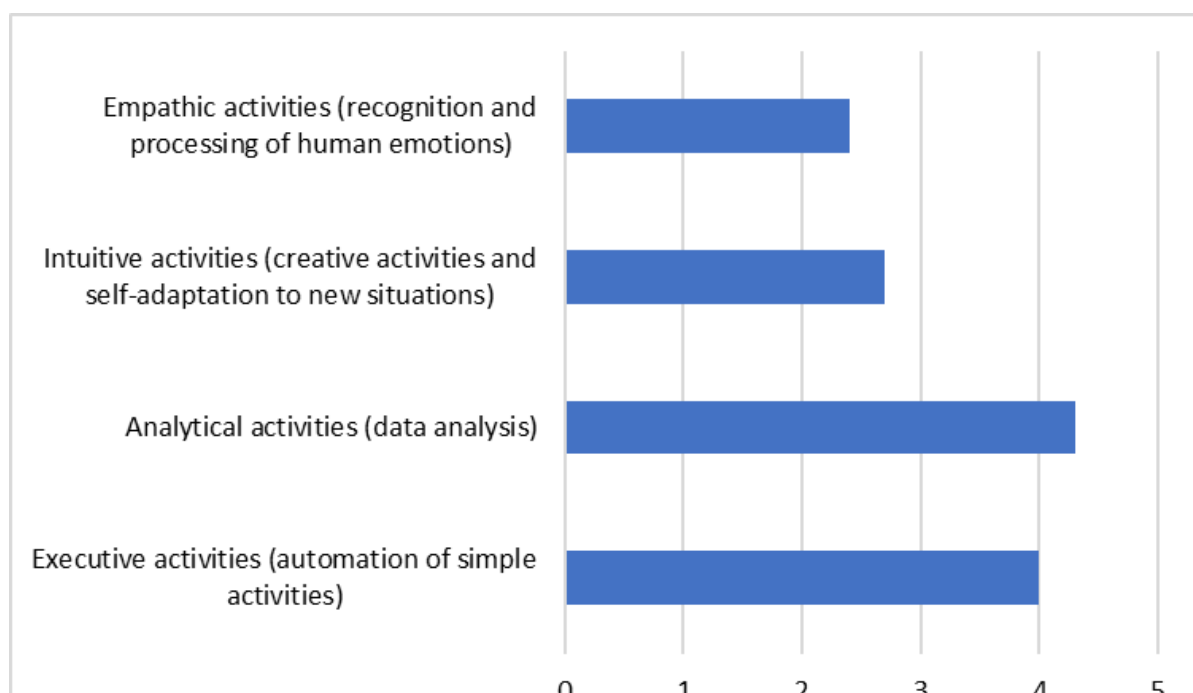


Fig. 2. Assessment of the labour division between humans and AI (Dukino 2019, 35)

KEY COMPETENCIES FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The comprehensive and accelerated changes in the professional world brought about by digital transformation are creating a wide range of new requirements for employees and, in particular, for specialists and managers. Specialists and managers play a special role in digital transformation. They are the designers and catalysts of digital change. Therefore, there is a great need for new skills and competencies for this group of people, to which companies and organisations can respond proactively through targeted development programs.

Table 2. Key digital competences (own representation based on André et al. 2021, 18, 19)

Digital literacy	Mastering basic digital skills, e.g. careful handling of digital personal data, understanding basic security rules on the Internet, using common software
Digital Ethics	Critical questioning of digital information and the impact of one's own digital actions as well as corresponding ethical decision-making
Digital Collaboration	Use of online channels to efficiently interact, collaborate and communicate with others; effective and efficient collaboration regardless of geographical proximity; appropriate etiquette in digital communication
Digital Learning	Understanding and classifying digital information; interpreting information from different digital sources; building knowledge in selected subject areas; using learning software
Agile Working	User-oriented, self-responsible and iterative collaboration in teams using agile working methods

Table 2 shows that in addition to the basic skills for dealing with digital technology, ethics and agile working are also part of the competency requirements in the context of digital transformation (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft e.V. 2021, 6).

This also corresponds to the results of Thordsen et al., based on an expert survey on competency requirements in companies. The following competencies for employees were identified:

- Agility
- Digital communication
- Technology affinity
- Solution orientation
- Data literacy
- Data protection
- Error culture
- Customer orientation (Thordsen et al. 2020, 38).

Buschmeyer et al. have developed 9 fields of competence (cf. Figure 3) that enable employees to constructively manage and actively shape the digital change in the world of work. In this model, too, the diversity of competencies, from basic technical knowledge to self-competencies to cooperation skills, illustrates the complexity and high demands on companies and their employees in the context of digital transformation (Buschmeyer et al. 2024).

Self	Technology	Organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possibilities and boundaries of digital technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Locating one's own work activities in the context of the overall work process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (Self-) Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of digital technology ▪ Creation of digital content ▪ Use of information and data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication and collaboration ▪ Security and data protection

Fig. 3. 9 competence fields in three dimensions: technology, self and organization by Buschmeyer et al. (Buschmeyer et al. 2024)

AI-SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

The introduction and now widespread use of AI in society and companies, especially through LLMs such as ChatGPT, is accelerating digital transformation. AI is creating new opportunities, for example for automation and analytical tasks. AI can make autonomous decisions based on large amounts of data or support people in decision-making.

The new technical possibilities also bring with them new requirements, especially for specialists and managers. New skills are needed to successfully meet the demands of the changing professional world. These new competency requirements go beyond the need for classic digital competencies.

Table 3. Competence areas in a digitalized professional world (Buschmeyer et al. 2024)

Professional skills

Employees have the technical knowledge and skills required to perform the daily tasks corresponding to their position. Depending on the role, this may also include manual skills.

Basic digital skill

Employees use conventional digital media and technologies safely and confidently. They are proficient in common office programs and tools for digital collaboration. They are also sufficiently informed about digital security aspects.

AI awareness

Employees are familiar with the AI systems used in the company and their basic features. They also know which tasks these systems cannot handle. In addition, they are aware of the type of data processed by the AI systems, including possible personal data.

Reflective skills

Employees are able to critically interpret and evaluate the information and results of AI systems. They can independently and competently assess when trust in AI systems and in the data generated by AI systems is justified.

Self-competencies

Employees have a sufficient degree of personal responsibility and self-organization. They bring with them the curiosity and willingness to learn how to use and work with machine learning and AI technologies.

Social and communication skills

Employees can work in teams of different compositions. They can work with colleagues with different professional backgrounds and different levels of experience and competence. When in contact with customers and users of AI systems, employees can explain the special features of using AI systems in a way that is appropriate for their respective areas of responsibility.

(Personnel) management, leadership skills, change management

Employees with management responsibility can organize a team, coordinate and delegate tasks. They can communicate the possibilities and limitations of AI, allay fears and activate training potential. When integrating AI systems into company processes, they can formulate reasonable goals and thus help shape the change process.

Decision-making skills

Employees know their responsibilities and are able to make reliable, well-considered decisions within the scope of their responsibilities.

Adaptability, transfer

Employees are able to adapt to the opportunities and challenges implied by AI and adjust their working methods accordingly.

Table 3 presents some AI-specific competencies according to André et al. It becomes clear that a broad application of AI requires a wide range of different competencies (own presentation based on André et al. 2021, 18, 19).

CONCLUSIONS/DISCUSSION

The analysis of the literature reveals a broad spectrum of relevant skills for digital transformation. In addition to technological skills, collaborative and communicative skills, as well as skills for applying agile working methods play a particularly important role in the future tasks of specialists and managers.

In relation to artificial intelligence, the requirements for social and collaborative skills are increasing. Basic digital skills remain relevant and are being expanded to include AI-specific basic knowledge. For managers in particular, the focus is on change management skills, which include the ability to communicate changes but also the development of digital strategies for the company. In addition, skills for self-reflection and self-organization play an increasingly important role.

In the course of further research, it will be necessary to determine which skills are relevant from the perspective of the target group – specialists and managers – and which priorities are set for the (further) development of the skilled workers. On the basis of the findings collected, role- and task-specific competency models can then be adapted and further developed.

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КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ ЗА ДИГИТАЛНАТА ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ

Резюме: Дигиталната трансформация, задвижвана от технологии като IoT, Big Data и Cloud, оказва значително влияние върху професионалния свят, като променя задачите и ролите в работата. Тази промяна изисква нови управленски и специализирани компетенции. Компаниите трябва не само да приемат дигитални иновации, за да останат конкурентоспособни, но и да подготвят работната си сила за тези промени. Необходимите компетенции варират от основни познания за технологичните постижения до умения за прилагане на цифрови промени и комуникация със служителите. С бързото разрастване на изкуствения интелект съществува спешна необходимост от идентифициране и развиване на нови компетенции. Целта на тази работа е да се идентифицират ключовите компетенции за специалисти и мениджъри поради внедряването на ИИ, като се подобрят компетентностните модели за развитие на персонала, подбор и оценка на изпълнението.

Ключови думи: компетентност, изкуствен интелект, развитие на компетентността, дигитална трансформация, развитие на лидерството, изкуствен интелект

Арно Онен, докторант

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

E-mail: arno.onnen@gmail.com

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

КОНКУРЕНТОСПОСОБНОСТТА НА ЕС В КОНТЕКСТА НА ИКОНОМИЧЕСКАТА СИГУРНОСТ И ИКОНОМИЧЕСКАТА ДИПЛОМАЦИЯ

Иван Цанов

Университет за национално и световно стопанство

Иван Соколов

Варненски свободен университет „Черноризец Храбър“

Резюме: Целта на изследването е да проучи в най-общ план проблематиката за конкурентоспособността на ЕС в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация. Изпълняват се две изследователски задачи. Първата задача е свързана с проучването на конкурентоспособността на ЕС, икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация, разбирани като система, а не като раздробени елементи. Втората задача е описанието и интерпретирането на връзките и отношенията, които съществуват между конкурентоспособността на ЕС, икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация. Методите, които се използват, са описателен, исторически и аналитичен. Направен е анализ на ключовите фактори, които определят конкурентоспособността на ЕС в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация. Приносите на авторите са ситуирани преди всичко в полето на теоретичното поставяне и осмисляне на синтетичния научен проблем за конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация.

Ключови думи: конкурентоспособност на ЕС, Европейски съюз, икономическа сигурност, икономическа дипломация

ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ

Академичният дискурс за конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз (ЕС) в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация не е особено интензивен и може да се поддържа твърдението, че във визираното проблемно поле няма голям брой научни публикации. Прави впечатление обаче едно друго обективно обстоятелство, а именно, че в трикомпонентната структура на този научен проблем отделните елементи са в неравностойно положение във връзка с тяхното изследване. Най-добре е изследван въпросът за конкурентоспособността на ЕС (The future of European Competitiveness 2024. Part A.; The future of European Competitiveness 2024. Part B.), по-слабо е проучен проблемът за икономическата сигурност (Цанов 2024), а най-малко е анализирана темата, свързана с икономическата дипломация (The new economic diplomacy: decision-making and negotiation in international economic relations 2017).

Ние смятаме, че между конкурентоспособността на ЕС, икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация съществува силна връзка, която може да бъде проучена с научен инструментариум, ето защо насочваме собствения си изследователски интерес точно в тази посока. Трябва да се отбележи, че разглежданото от нас проблемно поле е твърде обширно и многомерно, но ние нямаме възможност да го опишем и анализираме в цялата негова дълбочина и пространно измерение, като проучваме само някои от най-важните негови аспекти.

МЕТОДОЛОГИЯ НА ИЗСЛЕДВАНЕТО

Основната цел на нашата публикация е да проучи в най-общ план проблематиката за конкурентоспособността на ЕС в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация. За реализирането на основната цел се изпълняват две изследователски задачи. Първата задача е свързана с проучването на конкурентоспособността на ЕС, икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация, разбирани като система, а не като раздробени елементи. Втората задача е описанието и интерпретирането на връзките и отношенията, които съществуват между конкурентоспособността на ЕС, икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация.

Предметът на изследване е конкурентоспособността на ЕС в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация.

Методите, които използваме за реализиране на поставената изследователска цел и за осъществяване на двете изследователски задачи, са описателен, исторически и аналитичен.

РЕЗУЛТАТИ

Конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз, разглеждан като общ икономически блок, е актуална и централна тема в академичните изследвания поради нейната важност за глобалното стопанство. Европейският съюз представлява един от най-големите икономически пазари в света (има противоречиви данни дали този пазар е първи, втори или трети по величина в планетарен мащаб), но през последните десетилетия е изправен пред редица трудности, които включват радикални технологични промени, сериозни демографски проблеми, силен миграционен натиск и глобалната конкуренция от бързо развиващите се икономики на Китай, Индия и Индонезия и традиционно мощната икономика на САЩ.

Конкурентоспособността е определяна като способността на дадена икономика да осигури стабилно ниво на растеж и просперитет на своето население, докато е изправена пред международна конкуренция (Porter 1990). Според Европейската комисия конкурентоспособността на ЕС се основава на комбинация от фактори като иновации, технологии, ефективност на пазара на труда и капитал, както и устойчивост на бизнес средата (European Commission 2019).

Според доклада „Бъдещето на европейската конкурентоспособност“, изготвен под ръководството на Марио Драги (председател на Европейската централна банка за периода 2011–2019), Част А, Европа (Европейският съюз) не достига до това, което би могла да постигне, тъй като не действа като организирана общност (The future of European Competitiveness 2024. Part A.). Във тази връзка пред конкурентоспособността на ЕС стоят три прегради.

Първо, на Европа ѝ липсва фокус. Ние формулираме общи цели, но не ги подкрепяме чрез определяне на ясни приоритети или последващи действия с обединени политически действия.

Например ние твърдим, че подкрепяме иновациите, но продължаваме да добавяме регулаторни тежести върху европейските компании, които са особено скъпи за малките и средните предприятия (МСП) и самоунищожителни за тези в цифровите сектори. Повече от половината от МСП в Европа отбелязват регулаторните пречки и административната тежест като най-голямото си предизвикателство.

Освен това оставихме нашия единен пазар фрагментиран в продължение на десетилетия, което има каскаден ефект върху нашата конкурентоспособност. Той движи компании с висок растеж в чужбина, като на свой ред намалява набора от проекти за финансиране и възпрепятства развитието на европейските капиталови пазари. А без проекти с висок растеж, в които да инвестират, и капиталови пазари, които да ги финансират, европейците губят възможности да станат по-богати. Въпреки че домакинствата в ЕС спестяват повече от домакинствата в САЩ, тяхното богатство е нараснало само с една трета от 2009 г. до наши дни.

Второ, Европа пилее общите си ресурси. Имаме голяма колективна разходна способност, но я разреждаме в множество различни национални и европейски инструменти.

Например ние все още не обединяваме сили в отбранителната индустрия, за да помогнем на нашите компании да се интегрират и да постигнат мащаб. Европейските съвместни поръчки

представляват по-малко от една пета от разходите за закупуване на отбранително оборудване през 2022 г. Ние също така не облагодетелстваме конкурентоспособните европейски отбранителни компании. Между средата на 2022 г. и средата на 2023 г. 78% от общите разходи за обществени поръчки са отишли за доставчици извън ЕС, от които 63% са предназначени за САЩ.

По същия начин ние не си сътрудничим достатъчно по отношение на иновациите, въпреки че публичните инвестиции в революционни технологии изискват големи капиталови пулове и ефектите за всички са значителни. Публичният сектор в ЕС харчи приблизително толкова за изследвания и иновации, колкото САЩ като дял от брутния вътрешен продукт (БВП), но само една десета от тези разходи се извършват на ниво ЕС.

Трето, Европа не се координира там, където това има голямо значение. Индустриалните стратегии днес – както се вижда в САЩ и Китай – комбинират множество политики, вариращи от фискални политики за насърчаване на вътрешното производство, през търговски политики за санкциониране на антиконкурентно поведение, до външноикономически политики за осигуряване на веригите за доставки.

В контекста на ЕС свързването на политиките по този начин изисква висока степен на координация между националните усилия на държавите членки и усилията на ЕС. Но поради бавния си и дезагрегиран процес на създаване на политики ЕС е по-малко способен да даде такъв адекватен отговор.

Правилата за вземане на решения в Европа не са еволюирали съществено, тъй като ЕС се разшири и глобалната среда, пред която сме изправени, стана по-враждебна и по-сложна. Решенията обикновено се вземат въпрос по въпрос и с множество играчи по пътя на същите тези решения, като всеки играч има право на вето.

Резултатът е законодателен процес със средно време от 19 месеца за съгласуване на нови закони, от предложението на Комисията до подписването на приетия акт – и преди новите закони дори да бъдат приложени в държавите членки.

За да увеличи своята конкурентоспособност, Европейският съюз трябва да извърши три главни трансформации.

Първа трансформация – необходимост от ускоряване на иновациите и намиране на нови двигатели за растеж. Конкурентоспособността на ЕС в момента се притиска от две страни. От една страна, компаниите от ЕС са изправени пред по-слабо външно търсене – особено от Китай – и нарастващ конкурентен натиск от страна на китайски компании. От друга страна, позицията на Европа в напредналите технологии, които ще стимулират бъдещия растеж, намалява. Само четири от 50-те най-големи технологични компании в света са европейски и европейската глобална позиция в областта на технологиите се влошава: от 2013 г. до 2023 г. дялът на ЕС в глобалните приходи от технологии спадна от 22% на 18%, докато дялът на САЩ нарасна от 30% на 38%. Европа спешно трябва да ускори скоростта си на иновации, като запази лидерството си в производството и разработи нови революционни технологии. По-бързите иновации ще помогнат за увеличаване на растежа на производителността в ЕС, което води до по-силен растеж на доходите на домакинствата и по-силен вътрешен доход и търсене. Европа все още има възможност да промени пътя. Сега светът е на прага на друга цифрова революция, предизвикана от разпространението на изкуствения интелект (ИИ). В случая се отвори възможност за Европа да поправи недостатъците си в сферата на иновациите и производителността, както и да възстанови своя производствен потенциал.

Втора трансформация – ЕС трябва да намали високите цени на енергията, като същевременно продължи декарбонизацията и преминаването към кръгова икономика. Енергийният пейзаж се промени необратимо с руската инвазия в Украйна и произтичащата от нея загуба на природен газ, доставян по тръбопроводи от Русия. Въпреки че цените на енергията са паднали значително от своите върхови стойности, компаниите от ЕС все още са изправени пред цени на електроенергия, които са 2–3 пъти по-високи от тези в САЩ, а плащаните цени на природния газ са 4–5 пъти по-високи от тези в САЩ. Декарбонизацията може да бъде възможност за Европа както да поеме водеща роля в новите чисти технологии, а така също да пренасочи производството на електроенергия към сигурни и евтини чисти енергийни източници. Енергийният

преход ще бъде постепенен и изкопаемите горива ще продължат да играят централна роля в ценообразуването на енергията до края на това десетилетие (2030), заплашвайки с продължаваща нестабилност на цените за крайните потребители.

Трета трансформация – ЕС трябва да реагира на свят с по-малко стабилна геополитика, където зависимостите се превръщат в уязвимост и ЕС вече не може да разчита на други за своята сигурност. Десетилетията на глобализация доведоха до високо ниво на „стратегическа взаимозависимост“ между големите икономики в световен мащаб, което повишава разходите за всяка бърза промяна. Например докато ЕС до голяма степен зависи от Китай за доставката на важни минерали, Китай зависи от ЕС, за да реализира собствения си индустриален свръхкапацитет. Но това глобално равновесие се променя: всички големи икономики активно се стремят към намаляване на тяхната зависимост и увеличават обхвата си от независими действия. САЩ инвестират в местни мощности за производство на полупроводници и чисти технологии, като същевременно се стремят да пренасочат критичните вериги за доставки през своите съюзници. Китай демонстрира стремеж към технологична автаркия (самодостатъчност) и вертикална интеграция на веригата за доставки – от добива на суровини до преработката и от производството до доставката. ЕС трябва също да отговори на радикално променената среда на сигурност. Общите разходи за отбрана на ЕС в момента са една трета от нивата на САЩ и европейската отбранителна индустрия страда от десетилетия от недостатъчно инвестиране и изчерпани запаси. За постигане на истинска стратегическа независимост и за да увеличи глобалното си геополитическо влияние, ЕС се нуждае от план за инвестиции в отбраната.

Икономическата сигурност е сложен теоретичен конструкт с множество разнородни практически измерения (Цанов 2023). Несъмнено е, че икономическата сигурност се включва в крайно обширното теоретично и практическо поле на сигурността. За същността на сигурността Стоян Денчев пише дословно:

„Сигурността е всеобща същност и начин на съществуване на материалния и духовния свят и на всички форми на тяхното проявление. Няма явление, отношение, процес или дейност, които да не съдържат в себе си, като свой същностен или градивен елемент в себе си, сигурността. Сигурността може да се отнесе към системата от категории като движение, пространство, време, енергия и информация. Сигурността е всеобщо и системно състояние на всичко съществуващо“ (Денчев 2019, 153).

Най-общо можем да открием следните пет характеристики на икономическата сигурност:

1. Налични са разнообразни и даже понякога несъвместими гледища относно същността на икономическата сигурност и нейните основни елементи и особености. Така сложилото се положение на нещата според нас обаче не е особено смущаващо, понеже икономическата сигурност е сложен и хетерогенен феномен. Терминологичен хаос все пак не се наблюдава.

2. Икономическата сигурност в преобладаващите случаи се описва, анализира и интерпретира в обсега на икономиката и икономическото изобщо. Това по наше мнение не е съвсем прецизно. Икономическата сигурност обхваща различни теоретични и практически полета и е мултидисциплинарна научна област по своята същност. В случая не трябва обаче да се изпада в другата крайност – да тълкуваме икономическата сигурност като универсална научна проблематика. Тя си притежава собствена *differentia specifica*.

3. Много важен е въпросът: кое преобладава в икономическата сигурност – икономиката или сигурността? Този въпрос е от фундаментален характер. При положение, че в икономическата сигурност преобладава икономиката, то това е наука в обсега на икономическите дисциплини. Обратно – ако икономическата сигурност се включва в рамките на науките за сигурността, то тя е дисциплина от проблемния кръг на сигурността. По наше мнение в икономическата сигурност двете съставни части – икономика и сигурност – трябва да бъдат представени по равно, доколкото това е възможно. Защиатаваме тезата, че икономическата сигурност е научна дисциплина, в която все пак преобладава сигурността.

4. Поддържаеме твърдението, че теориите, концепциите и моделите в рамките на икономическата сигурност се разделят на две магистрални направления – тясно разбиране за

икономическа сигурност (тук нещата не излизат извън рамките на икономиката и сигурността) и широко разбиране за икономическа сигурност (в случая тази научна дисциплина се описва и интерпретира не само в границите на икономиката и сигурността, но и извън тези научни синори). Привърженици сме на широкото разбиране за икономическа сигурност.

5. Наблюдава се непрекъснато нарастване на количеството академични публикации по икономическа сигурност, които освен това териториално се разпростират по целия свят. Вероятно за в бъдеще научният интерес към тази действително комплицирана научна сфера със силни практически измерения все повече ще се разраства и задълбочава.

Икономическата дипломация е многопластова и сложна дисциплина, която комбинира икономически и политически подходи за постигане на външнополитически, национални и корпоративни цели (Соколов 2024). Тя включва многостранни и двустранни преговори, използване на различни икономически инструменти, стратегическо планиране, взаимодействие с частния сектор и необходимост от гъвкавост и адаптивност. Разбирането на тези характеристики е от съществено значение за ефективното управление на международните икономически отношения, които в началото на XXI в. се отличават с голяма динамика, турбулентност и непредсказуемост.

От глобална перспектива, според Яна Маркова (Markova 2019), могат да се проследят три основни модела на икономическа дипломация. Тези модели съществуват поради значителните различия между икономиките на страните в световен мащаб, както и поради нееднаквото историческо развитие и специфичния икономически фокус на държавите. Тази изследователка твърди, че прилагането и използването на инструменти на икономическата дипломация е изцяло от компетентността на националните държави. В същото време нито един от трите модела не се използва в напълно чист вид, като винаги се включват различни специфики на националните държави и икономики.

Първи модел – организационно-компетентностен. Тук се изгражда единен подход за справяне с проблемите на икономическата дипломация. В този случай всички компетенции, свързани с осигуряването и прилагането на икономическа дипломация на правителствено ниво, се концентрират върху едно министерство, което в повечето случаи сътрудничи много тясно с правителствени агенции и други структури, специализирани в икономическия дневен ред. Най-често това министерство е на външните работи. Министерството на външните работи като правило има много широки правомощия в сферата на икономическата дипломация. Пример за това как се използва първият модел е Канада. В тази страна Министерството на външните работи и външната търговия изцяло се занимава с проблематиката на икономическата дипломация.

Втори модел – двоен. Двойният модел може да бъде описан и като конкурентен поради естеството на конкуриращите се институции. В този случай компетенциите в областта на икономическата дипломация се разпределят в две основни министерства: Министерство на външните работи и Министерство на икономиката. Такъв модел се използва в Чехия и Словакия.

Трети модел – на споделената агенция. Това е третият тип разделение на компетенциите в областта на икономическата дипломация. Точните компетенции са делегирани в относително широката рамка на националното правителство. Понякога компетенциите са делегирани към друга публична институция в рамките на същия този модел. Като типичен пример за този модел може да се посочи Сингапур. Модифицирана форма (в известна степен) на този модел се открива в Германия. Подобен модел също така се прилага във Великобритания.

ИЗВОДИ/ДИСКУСИЯ

Основният извод, който можем да направим въз основа на резултатите от анализа, е, че конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз е тясно свързана с неговата икономическа сигурност и ролята му в икономическата дипломация на глобално ниво. Анализът на ключовите фактори, които определят конкурентоспособността на ЕС, показва, че съюзът действително има силни страни, но също така е изправен пред значителни предизвикателства в бързо променящата се глобална икономика – често не в негова полза.

Първи ключов фактор – интеграцията като инструмент за икономическа сигурност. Единният пазар и икономическата интеграция на ЕС предоставят важни механизми за засилване на икономическата сигурност на държавите членки. Чрез премахването на търговските бариери и насърчаването на свободното движение на стоки, услуги, капитали и хора ЕС създава вътрешна икономическа стабилност и устойчивост срещу външни икономически кризи и шокове. Тази интеграция не само повишава конкурентоспособността на отделните държави членки, но и позволява на ЕС като цяло да функционира като единен икономически субект в международната търговия. В случай, че ЕС не действа в бъдещето като общ стопански организъм (доколкото това е допустимо), то е възможно да се превърне във второстепенен икономически актьор на глобалната сцена, без големи възможности за икономическо развитие и маневриране.

Втори ключов фактор – икономическа дипломация и глобална конкурентоспособност. Ролята на ЕС в икономическата дипломация е решаваща за укрепването на неговата глобална конкурентоспособност. Като един от най-големите търговски блокове в света, ЕС има капацитета и възможностите да преговаря ефективно и да създава благоприятни условия за своите компании на международната сцена, но това не е постоянна даденост. Споразуменията за свободна търговия, които ЕС сключва с други страни и региони, са не само инструмент за разширяване на търговските възможности, но и за защита на икономическите интереси на съюза, което допринася за неговата икономическа сигурност.

Трети ключов фактор – технологични иновации и стратегическа автономия. Конкурентоспособността на ЕС е до голяма степен зависима от способността му да стимулира технологични иновации и да поддържа стратегическа автономия в ключови сектори като информационните технологии, енергетиката, търговията и здравеопазването. В контекста на глобалната икономическа дипломация ЕС трябва да работи върху намаляване на технологичната си зависимост от трети страни, каквато вече се забелязва, както и да инвестира в развиването на свои собствени технологични и промишлени капацитети. По този начин ЕС ще може да засили своята икономическа сигурност и да поддържа конкурентоспособността си в дългосрочен план.

Четвърти ключов фактор – устойчиво развитие като конкурентно предимство. Усилията на ЕС за насърчаване на устойчивото развитие чрез различни инициативи могат да бъдат интерпретирани като негово конкурентно предимство в световен мащаб. Позиционирайки се като лидер в устойчивите практики, ЕС не само допринася за икономическата си сигурност, като се приспособява към глобалните тенденции, но и създава нови възможности за икономически растеж чрез развиване на зелени технологии и услуги.

Пети ключов фактор – необходимост от преодоляване на вътрешните дисбаланси. В рамките на ЕС съществуват значителни дисбаланси и неравенства между държавите членки по отношение на конкурентоспособността. Тези различия представляват заплахата за икономическата сигурност на съюза, тъй като могат да доведат и действително довеждат до икономическа и политическа нестабилност и конфликти с най-различен характер. За да поддържа своята конкурентоспособност и икономическа сигурност, ЕС трябва да предприеме координирани политики, насочени към подобряване на икономическата конвергенция и устойчивостта на по-слабите икономики в съюза, към които се числи и българската икономика.

Конкурентоспособността на ЕС е много тясно преплетена с неговата икономическа сигурност и способността му да действа като единен субект в икономическата дипломация. Докато ЕС разполага със значителен икономически потенциал, неговата дългосрочна конкурентоспособност ще зависи от способността му да стимулира иновации, да укрепва вътрешната си интеграция и да действа като глобален лидер в устойчивото развитие. Справянето с вътрешните дисбаланси и засилването на стратегическата автономия на съюза ще бъдат ключови за поддържането на неговата икономическа сигурност в динамичната глобална икономика.

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ

В статията очертахме, анализирахме и разтълкувахме проблема за конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация. Във връзка с това изпълнихме две изследователски задачи. В резултат на първата проучихме конкурентоспособността на ЕС, икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация като своеобразна и специфична система, а не като отделни елементи. В рамките на втората задача описахме и интерпретирахме връзките и отношенията, които съществуват между конкурентоспособността на ЕС, икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация.

Основното заключение, което можем да направим, е, че конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз пряко и косвено се влияе от икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация. В хода на анализа се натъкнахме на обективното обстоятелство, че поради усложнената и почти непредсказуема геополитическа и геоикономическа обстановка в началото на XXI в. Европейският съюз трябва да подобри и да модифицира своята икономическа сигурност, както и да изведе на нови хоризонти собствената си икономическа дипломация. Триадата „конкурентоспособност – икономическа сигурност – икономическа дипломация“ трябва да стане обект на интензивни и задълбочени научни изследвания, което поне към настоящия момент не се наблюдава.

Приносителите на авторите в това изследване са скромни и са преди всичко в полето на теоретичното поставяне и осмисляне на синтетичния научен проблем за конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация. Не може да не отбележим, че визирият научен проблем се отличава с много голяма сложност, което обстоятелство е в състояние да затрудни и действително затруднява всеки един изследовател.

Насоките за бъдещата изследователска работа по проблематиката за конкурентоспособността на Европейския съюз в контекста на икономическата сигурност и икономическата дипломация виждаме преди всичко в обединяването на усилията на мултидисциплинарни научни екипи, съставени от различни специалисти – икономисти, управленци, експерти по сигурност, дипломати, психолози, политолози, специалисти по информационни и комуникационни технологии и други. Несъмнено е, че има необходимост да бъде извършена много голяма по обем изследователска работа, като пробивът в това важно от теоретична и практическа гледна точка изследователско поле тепърва предстои.

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EU COMPETITIVENESS IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY AND ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Abstract: *The aim of the study is to examine in general the issues of EU competitiveness in the context of economic security and economic diplomacy. Two research tasks are carried out. The first task is related to the study of EU competitiveness, economic security and economic diplomacy understood as a system and not as fragmented elements. The second task is the description and interpretation of the connections and relationships that exist between EU competitiveness, economic security and economic diplomacy. The methods used are descriptive, historical and analytical. An analysis of the key factors that determine the competitiveness of the EU in the context of economic security and economic diplomacy has been made. The contributions of the authors are primarily situated in the field of theoretical setting and understanding of the synthetic scientific problem of the competitiveness of the European Union in the context of economic security and economic diplomacy.*

Keywords: *EU competitiveness, European Union, economic security, economic diplomacy*

Prof. Ivan Tsanov, PhD

University of National and World Economy

E-mail: ivan.tsanov@unwe.bg

Assist. Prof. Ivan Sokolov, PhD

Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”

E-mail: ivan.sokolov@vfu.bg

НАЦИОНАЛНА СИГУРНОСТ NATIONAL SECURITY

НЯКОИ РАЗСЪЖДЕНИЯ ЗА УПРАВЛЕНИЕ НА КРИЗИ И КОНФЛИКТИ

Нено Димов

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

Резюме: Конфликтът е състояние на противопоставяне на две или повече страни. Те могат да имат противоположна или несъвместима ценностна система, базова култура, интереси и/или действия. Конфликтите не започват неочаквано. Те минават през различни етапи, през които могат да се развият в една или друга посока. В началото се появява криза, която обикновено е неочаквана и може да е политическа, военна, икономическа, природна, хуманитарна и прочее. Различните участници в конфликта имат и различни цели, но всяка от тях иска да постигне краен резултат, който е с конкретни параметри – политически, териториални, икономически, социални, културни, религиозни и прочее. Най-явна е разликата между атакуващата и отбраняващата се страна. Първата иска да наложи приемането на нейните условия, а втората точно обратното.

Трябва да си даваме ясна сметка, че конфликтите, войната в частност, са част от човешката история. Затова трябва да ги изучаваме и да развиваме все повече инструментите за тяхното управляване. Това няма да ги елиминира от живота ни, но може да удължи периодите на мир и да намали напреженията за по-дълги интервали от време.

Ключови думи: криза, конфликт, управление на конфликт, дипломация

ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ

Международните конфликти, особено въоръжените, предизвикват все по-голям информационен интерес, а оттам и социален отзвук. Това е следствие от факта, че обществото ни живее в информационна ера, част от която е и самата военна система (Bizau, Stanciulescu 2022).

Конфликтът е състояние на противопоставяне на две или повече страни. Те могат да имат противоположна или несъвместима ценностна система, базова култура, интереси и/или действия. Във философията конфликтът се разглежда като борба на противоположни тенденции в една система (биотична¹, психична и социална).

В изказване пред семинара „Руската конфликтологична наука и конфликтологията в България“² проф. Николай Слатински казва: „Понятието „конфликт“ е аксиоматично, вградено в самата основа на теорията на международната сигурност. Конфликтът е другото име на международните отношения. Във, със и чрез него държавите отстояват своите интереси. Конфликтът е сблъсъкът на интереси на различните държави. По-скоро – взаимодействието между интересите на държавите“ (Слатински 2006). Дали понятието „конфликт“ трябва да се ограничи само с „другото име на международните отношения“, или би могло да се отнесе към човешките взаимоотношения по принцип? Думата е натоварена с негативно значение, поради което вероятно избягваме нейната по-широка употреба, но конфликтите могат да носят и положителен, градивен заряд.

СЪЩНОСТ

Връщайки се към общоприетото значение на конфликта, може да кажем, че неговата поява не е непредвидима (поне в повечето случаи) и че преди нея има белези, по които може да бъде

разпознат, тоест имаме състояние на потенциален конфликт. Това е времето, в което сблъсъкът все още не е започнал, но съществуват предпоставки за неговото възникване. Доброто управление на кризи и конфликти трябва да предвижда механизми, които да се задействат на този етап и да предотвратят предстоящия сблъсък. Това предполага система, позволяваща определена комуникация, директна или чрез посредник, за намиране на решение, удовлетворяващо страните. С други думи казано, намиране на компромис, който е един от най-мощните инструменти за преодоляване на конфликтите. Пречка представлява негативната конотация, която това понятие крие в себе си. „Безкомпромисната“ личност предизвиква възхищение! Всъщност, както в повечето случаи, компромисът може да се разглежда и като положителен, и като негативен. Границата се определя от отговора на въпроса кога той е допустим и кога не е. За хората, които вярват в съществуването на трансцендентален морален ред, това е относително ясно. Етични категории, определящи достойнството, честта, добродетелта, честността, лоялността, почтеността, доброто и злото и прочее, дават ясна рамка на онова, с което компромисът е недопустим. Извън тази рамка той е не просто допустим, но и препоръчителен.

КРИЗА И КОНФЛИКТ

В исторически план има примери, показващи, че войната не е неизбежна, но избягването ѝ изисква съществени усилия и определени характеристики както на лидерството, така и на нацията като цяло (Bizau, Stanciulescu 2022). За съжаление, тези случаи по-скоро са изключение.

Както вече отбелязах, конфликтите не започват неочаквано. Те минават през различни етапи, през които могат да се развият в една или друга посока. В началото се появява криза, която обикновено е неочаквана и може да е политическа, военна, икономическа, природна, хуманитарна и прочее. Етапите на развитие на кризата са предкризисен период, следван от възникване и развитие на кризата. Във всеки един от тези моменти кризата може да бъде овладяна или да ескалира. Последното би довело до конфликт. Неговото разрешаване е възможно или без прилагане на сила, или с такава. Когато конфликтът протича без прилагане на сила, е възможно да бъде скрит или проявен. При първия случай едната страна поставя исканията си, а другата ги приема, във втория разбирателство няма, но са включени всички средства за решаване преди прилагане на (въоръжена) сила. Когато прилагането на сила е факт, конфликтите могат да са въоръжени (поне едната страна е въоръжена, но не използва редовна армия) или военни (действията се водят от редовните армии). Последните могат да бъдат с различна интензивност – ниска (предимно заплахи и спорадична употреба на сила), средна (периодично и организирано използване на сила) и висока (непрекъснато и организирано използване на сила). Въоръжените конфликти могат да са: международни (участват армиите на две или повече държави) или граждански (между правителствени и неправителствени групи) (Ангелов 2023).

Както казахме, конфликтът възниква вследствие на противоречие между две или повече страни. Различните участници в него имат и различни цели, но всеки от тях иска да постигне краен резултат, който е с конкретни параметри – политически, териториални, икономически, социални, културни, религиозни и прочее. Най-явна е разликата между атакуващата и отбраняващата се страна. Първата иска да наложи приемането на нейните условия, а втората точно обратното (Ангелов 2023).

ОВЛАДЯВАНЕ НА КРИЗА И КОНФЛИКТИ ДИПЛОМАЦИЯ

Основната задача при управлението на кризите и конфликтите е тяхното овладяване и приключване. Този процес може да включва широк набор инструменти и действия. Такива са дипломатическите, политическите, икономическите, хуманитарните и ако те не се окажат в състояние да приключат кризата или конфликта, се стига до прилагане на военна сила. Всички тези канали и действия имат за цел да наложат контрол, а впоследствие и да преустановят кризата.

Решаването на конфликти с военни средства е крайна мярка. Войните се считат за опасни и поради това дипломатическите усилия са особено важен инструмент (Стефанов 2008).

Дипломатията може да се използва на всеки един етап от развитието на конфликта. Тя може да се разглежда като превантивна в предкризисния период или при възникването на кризата. Ако не успее в тези първи моменти, нейното място остава изключително важно в етапа на развитие на кризата, преди да се достигне до военен конфликт. Макар да не е лишена от смисъл по време на въоръжения етап на конфликта, дипломатията ще е отново важен инструмент след прекратяване на военните действия (Budugan 2023).

Всъщност именно дипломатията е в състояние да осигури едно от най-съществените условия за решаването на конфликт, а именно то, решаването, да започне на възможно най-ранен етап. Колкото повече се задълбочава дадена криза или конфликт, толкова по-трудно става овладяването му. За ранното предотвратяване от ключово значение е да се определят точно естеството и причините за конфликта. Особено в международните отношения – но не само – често се случва да имаме сложно наслагване на противоречия по начин, при който основното противоречие да се окаже завоалирано (Kegley, Blanton 2010). Подобно положение може не просто да затруднява управлението на конфликта, но дори да го задълбочи. Управлението на конфликтите се затруднява допълнително от факта, че началото им обикновено е поставено от едната страна, но за прекратяването му трябва да са съгласни и двете. Трудността тук идва от необходимостта за намиране на компромисно за двете страни решение, което те очевидно не са могли да намерят преди избухването на конфликта. Тоест необходимо е сътрудничество в силно неблагоприятна среда. Именно поради тази причина дипломатическите усилия преди разразяването на конфликта са от огромно значение. В тяхна подкрепа могат да се използват други инструменти, било политически, било икономически или определена демонстрация на военна сила (учения, блокади...). Последното трябва да покаже по категоричен начин както готовността, така и решимостта за предприемане на силови мерки. С демонстрацията на сила не трябва да се избързва.

Както вече отбелязах, дипломатията е първата стъпка в разрешаването на конфликти. Това включва преговори, диалог и компромис между конфликтни страни, често подпомагани от неутрални трети страни. Дипломатията може да приеме много форми – от официални преговори и договори, през секретна дипломатия до неофициални разговори и дискусии по неформални канали. Целта е да се намери мирно решение, за което всички страни да могат да се споразумеят. Тази стратегия често се използва в международни спорове и конфликти.

САНКЦИИ И МЕЖДУНАРОДНО ПРАВО

Следваща стъпка е втвърдяване на дипломатията, а именно експулсиране на дипломати или прекъсване на дипломатически отношения. Това вече може да се разглежда като определен вид санкция. Те, санкциите, са друга стратегия, използвана в глобалната политика. Това са наказателни мерки, наложени от една или повече държави срещу дадено лице или лица, целева държава или група от държави. Санкциите могат да бъдат както дипломатически, така и икономически, като търговско ембарго или замразяване на активи. Целта на санкциите е да се окаже натиск върху набеязаната страна или група страни да променят своето поведение или политика.

Друг инструмент за разрешаване на конфликти е международното правоприлагане. То включва прилагане на международни закони и норми, като например закони за правата на човека или закони срещу агресията (Gurr 1995). Международното правоприлагане може да се извършва от международни съдилища, като Международния наказателен съд, или от международни организации, като Организацията на обединените нации. Целта е хората или държавите да бъдат държани отговорни за техните действия и да се възпират бъдещи нарушения. Проблем на международното право е, че законите, на които се позовава, трудно могат да отразят съществените различия в културата на различните цивилизации, че дори и в разбиранията на различни държави от една и съща цивилизация. Поради това международното правоприлагане често е възпрепятствано от въпроси, свързани със суверенитета и политическата воля. Поради това от особено значение е да не се налагат културни стандарти или политически програми на други хора (Gurr 1995).

ВЪОРЪЖЕНА СИЛА, СЪВЕТ ЗА СИГУРНОСТ НА ООН

Военната намеса е крайна стратегия за разрешаване на конфликти. Това може да включва набор от действия, от изпращане на мироопазващи войски до пълномащабна война. Военната намеса често се използва като последна мярка, когато други стратегии са се провалили или когато има непосредствена заплаха за международния мир и сигурност. Военната намеса обаче е противоречива и може да доведе до допълнителен конфликт и нестабилност.

Различните стратегии за разрешаване на конфликти в глобалната политика имат своите силни и слаби страни. Изборът им зависи от естеството на конфликта, участващите страни и по-широкия международен контекст.

В международен план мироопазването е поверено на Съвета за сигурност към ООН, който е единственият орган на организацията, който може да приема обвързващи държавите членки решения. Когато всички инструменти и стратегии за опазване на мира са се провалили, разговорите са насочени към това как да се „установи мир“ и/или „наложи на мир“, което обикновено е следвано от етап на „изграждане на мир“. В етапите на „установяване“ или на „налагане“ на мир, въпреки че не разполага със собствен контингент, под егидата на ООН могат да се изпращат мироопазващи войски (сини каски) в райони, в които има сериозно напрежение или са непосредствено след война. В етапа на „изграждане“ на мир трябва да се възстанови нормалното функциониране на държавата.

ЕТАПИ ЗА ПРЕДОТВРЯВАНЕ НА КОНФЛИКТА

Нека да отделим повече внимание на отделните етапи, като започнем с предотвратяването на конфликта. Във фазата на зараждане на конфликта е най-добрият момент да се предприемат превантивни мерки, целящи да намерят решение на най-ранния възможен етап. От особено значение тук е правилното и навременно идентифициране на противоречието, което е необходимо, но не и достатъчно условие за успех. Достатъчното условие за предотвратяването на конфликта на този етап ще е намирането на компромисно решение. И двете задачи – идентифициране на противоречието и намирането на компромис, са изключително сложни. Обикновено мотивацията на потенциален агресор е комплексна и основана на много променливи, чието взаимодействие е трудно да се предвиди. Решаващата променлива се крие в мотивацията на агресора. Тя осигурява основата за резултата от възпирането. Сред най-силните мотиви за агресия е нивото на заплаха, която усеща самият агресор. Слабо мотивираните са лесни за възпиране, а силно мотивираните, чието ниво на възприемане на заплаха може да граничи с параноя, може да бъде невъзможно да бъдат възпрени.

Яснотата и последователността на възпиращите съобщения са от съществено значение. Половинчатите ангажименти рискуват да бъдат възприети погрешно. Принципът „твърд, но гъвкав“ (Mazarr 2018) е много важен, защото ако противникът бъде оставен без изход, е малко вероятно да се постигне възпиране. Компромисът и отстъпката са част от всеки успешен опит за възпиране на конфликт.

Първата стъпка към укрепване на възпирането е да се управляват мотивите на потенциалния агресор. Това често изисква отстъпки, както и стъпки за оформяне на заобикалящия геополитически контекст, за да се облекчат неговите опасения и също така да се повишат политическите разходи за агресия. Гаранция за успех не може да се дава, но определени действия по посока на необходими отстъпки могат да повишат шанса за успех. Сред тях е необходимостта правилно да се оценят мотивите на потенциалния агресор и да се намалят опасенията му за сигурност, да се работи за създаване на враждебен към агресията геополитически контекст и не на последно място, да се разгърнат и поддържат военни способности, които сигнализират за сериозността на ангажимента, ако компромис не бъде постигнат.

Както вече казахме, в международен план мироопазването е поверено на Съвета за сигурност към ООН. Когато дипломатията не е успяла и конфликтът вече е започнал, идва фазата „установяване“ на мир.

На този етап могат да се използват както мирни, така и военни средства. Мирните средства

включват преговори, посредничество (на трети страни и/или международни организации), консултации или помиряване. Възможно е да се използват и инструменти като арбитраж или съдебно решаване на спора. Ако тези „по-меки“ мерки не постигнат резултат, следват „по-твърди“ като икономически санкции, прекъсване на дипломатически отношения или прекъсване на всякакви комуникации. Ако се стигне до прилагане на военни средства, обикновено се започва с военни демонстрации и блокади преди да се достигне до реални бойни действия, които могат да са всякакви комбинации от типа „по въздух“, „по суша“ и „по вода“. Тази крайна мярка създава проблем поради факта, че няма армия, която да не е на дадена държава. ООН не разполага със своя собствена, а се обръща към държавите членки за войски. Въпреки че те действат от името на организацията, все пак са под командването на конкретна държава(и) и при липсата на консенсус за тези действия конфликтът има потенциал да се пренесе и между други държави. В първите десетилетия от създаването си Съветът за сигурност е изцяло блокиран от противопоставянето на САЩ и СССР именно поради противоречащите им принципи и интереси, от една страна, и нежеланието определен регионален конфликт да се пренесе на глобално ниво, от друга.

Когато мирът се постига с военна сила, говорим за налагане на мир. Характерното тук е, че тази фаза се осъществява без съгласието на поне една от страните в конфликта. След края на военните действия идва фазата на мироопазването. Обикновено то е със съгласието на страните и включва присъствието на външни за района военни наблюдатели и/или подразделение (сини каски). Възможно е до възстановяване функционирането на институциите да присъстват полицейски части, хуманитарни организации и прочее. Тази фаза преминава в последната – изграждане на мира, която има две основни цели: 1) да не се допусне ново зараждане и ескалация на конфликта и 2) да помогне на участниците да възстановят нормалното функциониране на държавите си, в случай че имат нужда от това. Тук се включват връщане на бежанци, провеждане на избори, възстановяване на работата на институциите, евентуално изграждане на нови такива и прочее.

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ

Конфликтът и сътрудничеството са взаимно свързани по своята същност. Всъщност конфликтът се появява, когато целите, нуждите или ценностите на конкуриращи се групи се сблъскват.

В исторически план неведнъж са правени опити да се установи международна система за сигурност и винаги при създаването ѝ се е твърдяло, че войната може да бъде заменена от система, основаваща се на мира. До известна степен това твърдение има някакво основание, особено при наличието на военен хегемон. Но историята показва също така, че да си военен хегемон, изисква огромни разходи, най-вече защото това положение е свързано и с много отговорности, в повечето случаи по-големи от реалните възможности. Това неминуемо води до нарастване на заплахата за господството. От друга страна, задължително се появява сила, която да предизвика властващата до момента. Така рано или късно се стига до конфликт, който почти задължително прераства в пълномащабна война.

Трябва да си даваме ясна сметка, че конфликтите, войната в частност, са част от човешката история. Затова трябва да ги изучаваме и да развиваме все повече инструментите за тяхното управляване. Това няма да ги елиминира от живота ни, но може да удължи периодите на мир и да намали напреженията за по-дълги интервали от време.

Ключова остава способността за идентифициране на конфликтите в зародиш. Днес вероятността за конфликти на база идеология, национална принадлежност или междудържавни противоречия е по-малка отколкото сблъсък, основан на културни и цивилизационни различия.

БЕЛЕЖКИ

¹ Конкуренция; взаимопомощ; хищничество.

² Международната академия по информатизация – Българско регионално отделение и Българската асоциация на конфликтолозите в Руски културно-информационен център – София, 24.02.2006 г.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON CRISIS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Abstract: Conflict is a state of opposition between two or more parties. They may have opposing or incompatible value systems, underlying culture, interests and/or actions. Conflicts do not start unexpectedly. They go through different stages through which they can develop in one direction or another. At the beginning, a crisis emerges, which is usually unexpected and may be political, military, economic, natural, humanitarian, and so on. The different participants in the conflict also have different goals, but each of them wants to achieve a final result that has specific parameters – political, territorial, economic, social, cultural, religious and so on. The most obvious difference is between the attacking and defending sides. The former wants to force acceptance of its terms, the latter just the opposite. We should make it clear that conflicts, war in particular, are part of human history. Therefore, we must study them and develop more and more the tools for their management. This will not eliminate them from our lives, but it can prolong periods of peace and reduce tensions for longer periods of time.

Keywords: crisis, conflict, conflict management, diplomacy

Neno Dimov, PhD

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

E-mail: dimov.neno@gmail.com

BIODIVERSITY – OPPORTUNITES AND RISKS FOR CREDIT INSTITUTIONS**Moritz Tobias Stompfe***University of Library Studies and Information Technologies*

Abstract: Sustainability and the implementation of ESG aspects are not only becoming increasingly important in general, but in particular – due to the public interest and corporate responsibility of companies – in the economy. In addition to climate/climate change, which is currently by far the most important issue, the topic of biodiversity, or the progressive loss of biodiversity, is gradually moving into the focus of economic players. The implementation of sustainability aspects and the associated transformation of companies' business models require sufficient time and financial resources. To ensure that the economic transformation not only progresses on the topic of climate, but that the topic of biodiversity is also given sufficient consideration, credit institutions, as financiers of the economic transformation, have a key role to play. So, on the one hand, credit institutions are influenced by the decline in biodiversity and its effects and, on the other hand, can play an influential role in the direction of a biodiversity-positive economy. Based on scientific research, the fundamentals of biodiversity and the status quo of the topic of biodiversity, including its economic implications, are presented. The scientific findings are then used, among other things, to identify the opportunities arising from the consideration of biodiversity and the biodiversity risks for credit institutions, including the formulation of practical recommendations for action.

Keywords: Biodiversity, Credit Institutions, Opportunity and Risk Management, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity is one of the most valuable assets on our planet. Its conservation is of central importance for securing our future, as biodiversity is the basis for all vital resources and processes (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung 2022). Compared to the great importance of climate protection aspects, the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity continues to play a subordinate role in the economy. Nevertheless, credit institutions are addressing the issue of biodiversity for various reasons. On the one hand, they contribute to sustainable transformation through their investment and financing activities by providing capital for environmentally friendly economic activities. On the other hand, credit institutions are also directly affected by biodiversity risks. Similar to climate risks, biodiversity risks can have a negative impact on individual companies, sectors and entire economies, which ultimately also affects financial institutions. However, it is important to consider the opportunities as well as the risks. Companies and especially financial institutions that have a positive impact on nature or whose activities do not harm the environment can benefit from additional opportunities (Bankenverband 2023).

It turns out that credit institutions are highly dependent on the effects of biodiversity loss, as their borrowers are mostly dependent on the ecosystem services provided by nature. This paper aims to present the current state of scientific knowledge on the risks for credit institutions from the progressive loss of biodiversity on the one hand and the opportunities arising from a proactive approach to the topic of biodiversity, including a biodiversity-positive orientation of the business activities of credit institutions, on the other.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology comprises several steps. In the first step, the scientific, general principles of biodiversity are presented. Afterwards, the economic implications of the topic of biodiversity and the progressive loss of biodiversity for credit institutions are then outlined on the basis of scientific literature and relevant e-resources. The scientific findings will then be used to highlight the opportunities arising from the consideration of biodiversity and the biodiversity risks for credit institutions on the basis of existing scientific literature and relevant e-resources on the one hand and, on the other hand, to determine perspectives and make recommendations. The “Results” section is divided into several sub-chapters: Fundamentals of biodiversity, Economic implications of biodiversity, Biodiversity risks for credit institutions, Opportunities for credit institutions from the consideration of biodiversity.

The scientific findings are thus supplemented by the practical experience of the author (a long-standing employee in the sustainability management at a globally active credit institution, located in Germany, “*Norddeutsche Landesbank*” [NORD/LB]) and provided with recommendations for the practical implementation of biodiversity aspects in credit institutions.

RESULTS

Fundamentals of biodiversity

Biodiversity fits into the general sustainability context of the three sustainability dimensions (Kropp 2018, 5). Biodiversity is categorised in the ecological sustainability dimension (alongside the economic and social sustainability dimension), as the preservation of nature is to be achieved through climate protection and the preservation of biodiversity, among other things (Wittig/Niekisch 2014, 535-536).

Biodiversity as a term was initially created as an artificial word by combining the two terms “biological diversity” and has a dual meaning. On the one hand, biodiversity describes the variety of life forms on earth; on the other hand, biodiversity is an asset worth protecting that is threatened by progressive loss. In the meantime, the protection, preservation and positive influence of biodiversity has become more present than it was a few years ago (Weber 2018, 6-8). The Convention on Biodiversity was adopted at the “United Nations Conference on Environment and Development” in 1992, and since then the concept of biodiversity has been scientifically consolidated and the frequency with which it is mentioned has increased significantly (Wittig/Niekisch 2014, 4).

Biodiversity thus describes the variability of all living organisms and the ecological complexes to which they belong. Biodiversity is divided into three levels: the diversity of ecosystems (e.g., habitats), the diversity of species and the genetic variability within these species (Stinglwagner/Haseder/Erlbeck 2016, 102).

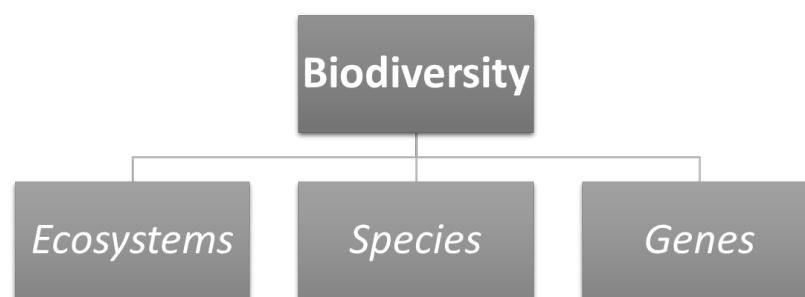


Fig. 1. The three sub-areas of biodiversity.

Furthermore, biodiversity is directly linked to climate change, as the two issues are mutually complementary and interdependent. The preservation of biodiversity is a fundamental prerequisite for the success of both climate protection and adaptation to the effects of climate change. Healthy ecosystems act as important carbon sinks and reduce the impact of extreme weather events. They also ensure the continuous provision of essential ecosystem services such as clean water and fresh air for the entire population. Biodiversity increases the likelihood that a sufficient number of species will find suitable

habitats even under changing climatic conditions. Thereby, healthy ecosystems are less vulnerable to the already present effects of climate change (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung 2022). Thus, the impacts of climate change have particularly strong effects on biodiversity conservation (Gies 2018,178).

Economic implications of biodiversity

Biodiversity is not only an ecological factor besides many others, but it also has far-reaching economic implications. The continuing loss of biological diversity has diverse impacts on the global economy. In fact, each loss of biodiversity is also accompanied by an economic loss, seen on a global scale. Although climate change has been by far the most prominent issue in the media and society for more than a decade and remains at the top of the global agenda for economic actors, the rising threat posed by the increasing loss of biodiversity is gaining more attention in the media, society and economy. According to the latest numbers of the World Economic Forum, more than half of the global gross domestic product depends on functioning ecosystems (Boston Consulting Group 2021, 3).

The monetary value of biodiversity significantly exceeds that of the global gross domestic product. Ecosystem services provided by intact biodiversity are estimated to have an annual value of 170 to 190 trillion US dollars. Economic activities are the primary drivers of biodiversity loss. The decline in biological diversity results in annual losses of up to 30 trillion US dollars. Particularly significant contributors to this loss, accounting for about 60 percent, include agriculture, forestry, infrastructure expansion, resource extraction, and industrial production. The value creation in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, which amounts to approximately 3.5 trillion US dollars globally, is critically dependent on functioning biodiversity for soil fertility, pollination, and resource provision (Naturschutzbund Deutschland 2020).

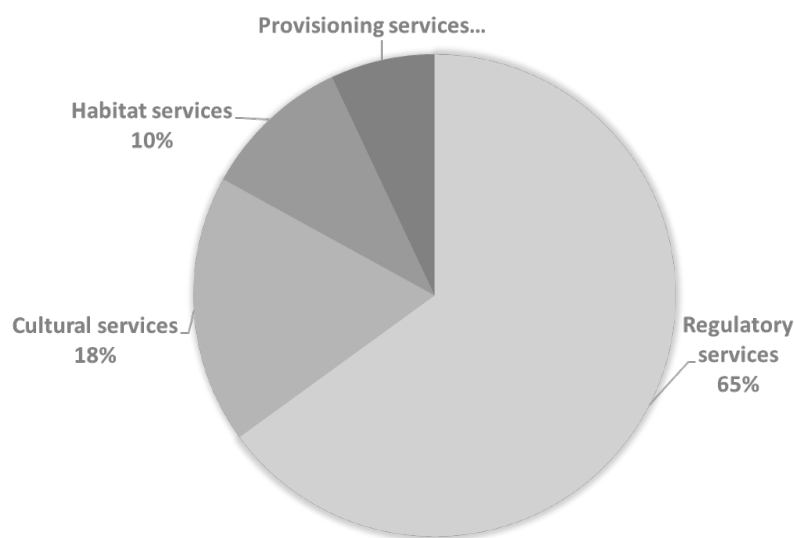


Fig. 2. Monetary value of ecosystem services.

Additionally, it is not only sustainability factors such as biodiversity that have an impact on the economy, but also vice versa companies can influence sustainability in the form of their corporate social responsibility. At the centre of corporate social responsibility is the sustainable action of economic players to solve social problems, as the implementation of sustainability also has positive economic implications (Schmidpeter 2012, 1). Thereby, especially financial institutions are exposed to risks associated with biodiversity loss through their investments, financing, and insurance activities. Any reduction in biodiversity, and consequently the ability of nature to provide ecosystem services, negatively impacts these institutions financially. This can manifest as increased insurance claims, investment losses, or loan

defaults (World Wide Fund for Nature 2023).

Biodiversity risks for credit institutions

As shown in the previous section, the progressive loss of biodiversity is leading to increasing risks for credit institutions. Thus, the worsening biodiversity crisis is making banks aware of their high dependence on ecosystem services. However, this has so far hardly been reflected in the risk banks, however, has so far hardly or mostly insufficiently recognised. Biodiversity risks can have an impact on existing risk types and cause financial losses. Nevertheless, the level of knowledge and implementation on the topic of biodiversity at financial companies in Germany still has considerable room for improvement.

The risks associated with an increasing loss of biodiversity for financial institutions can be categorized as follows (Price Waterhouse Coopers/World Wide Fund for Nature 2022, 8–39).

Table 1. Biodiversity risks for financial institutions

Biodiversity Risk Categories			
<u>Physical Risks:</u> These involve damage to assets and infrastructure, as well as negative impacts on supply chains and business processes	<u>Transition Risks:</u> These arise from changes at the regulatory, legal, technological, or market level due to the loss of biodiversity, leading to legal and reputational risks	<u>Systemic Risks:</u> The decline in biodiversity and associated ecosystem services can pose a threat to the stability of the entire financial system	Legal Risks: Legal disputes relating to biodiversity loss and violations of the underlying legal framework and, among other things, potential greenwashing risks

Biodiversity risks are at least as important as climate risks in terms of their potential impact on financial stability. Therefore, it is essential to address these risks within the internal risk management of financial institutions. A significant challenge is that, unlike climate risks, which are often measured by CO₂ emissions, there is no dominant metric for measuring and managing biodiversity risks. Instead, multiple factors, such as nitrogen or phosphorus pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, play similarly important roles. For regulatory authorities, biodiversity risks currently play a less significant role compared to climate risks. However, the European Central Bank and the Network for Greening the Financial System have indicated that these risks will be treated with similar importance to climate risks in the future, with the ECB aiming for this by the end of 2024 (Dietz 2023, 216).

In the future, regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations will require greater consideration of biodiversity aspects unavoidable for financial companies (Price Waterhouse Coopers/World Wide Fund for Nature 2022, 8)

In addition to the risks, it is also important to present the potential opportunities of biodiversity-positive change for credit institutions.

Opportunities for credit institutions from taking biodiversity into account

Insofar as credit institutions consistently take biodiversity aspects into account, there are various opportunities to align financial flows with biodiversity objectives and thus exert a positive influence on the protection and restoration of biodiversity. Financial opportunities exist, among other things, in the context of realigning the biodiversity impact of credit institutions by increasing efficiency and reducing costs if transitory opportunities are utilised. Credit institutions can and must finance the necessary economic transformation and channel cash flows in a targeted manner in order to achieve a nature-positive

economy. In addition, credit institutions have opportunities in product development that strategically incorporate biodiversity (Naturschutzbund Deutschland 2022, 50–55).

In order to utilise opportunities, biodiversity aspects generally require biodiversity management that formulates and addresses the opportunities based on the risks. In exemplary biodiversity management, the risks from biodiversity must first be recognised and then the effects on biodiversity must be evaluated and compensatory measures taken. Not only the company's own operations, but all business activities are included in the scope of the measures. Formulating biodiversity targets from the perspective of what needs to be done to avoid risks allows opportunities to be seized from the implementation of biodiversity aspects (Imboden/Moczek 2015, 10).

When dealing positively with biodiversity aspects in credit institutions in order to generate opportunities, it is important to mention that offsetting measures and mitigation should not be the means of choice for credit institutions. Rather, it is about the biodiversity-positive alignment of their own business model and business activities as well as minimising the negative effects of these on biodiversity. The biodiversity-positive business operations of credit institutions should be embedded in a generally fully ecologically sustainable business operation (Carroll/Bayon/Fox 2008, 223).

In general, the realisation of a nature-positive economy opens up various opportunities for banks. However, banks are lagging behind when it comes to corresponding initiatives and product developments. Ten trillion US dollars in annual market volume is associated with the transformation to a nature-positive economy, according to the World Economic Forum. One focus is on more sustainable agriculture. In addition, also biodiversity-focussed financial products (e.g., funds, bonds, insurance solutions) are being created (Price Waterhouse Coopers/World Wide Fund for Nature 2022, 8).

FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

It can be seen that biodiversity and the ongoing loss of biodiversity have arrived in the economy, even though climate change continues to be the dominant topic in the implementation in the economy and in credit institutions. The impact of biodiversity loss on credit institutions and the influence of credit institutions on a biodiversity-positive economy can be high, although implementation in credit institutions could be faster and more consistent than is currently the case. Focusing solely on the issue of climate change leads to significantly higher risks in the long term than would be/is the case if biodiversity were taken into account at an early stage. Thereby, the measures implemented by the credit institutions can have a mostly positive influence on climate change and thus vice versa on the progressive loss of biodiversity or reduce it. Nevertheless, some measures implemented by banks that have a positive impact on climate change also have a negative impact on biodiversity (e.g., the large-scale construction of onshore and offshore wind farms and the associated land-use change).

Furthermore, it can be seen that the coverage of biodiversity on the risk side is significantly more advanced than the coverage and consideration on the opportunity side in the credit institutions. One of the reasons for this is that regulation always plays a formative and influential role for credit institutions at an early stage and the opportunities arising from the proactive implementation of biodiversity aspects in credit institutions have not yet been highlighted to the same extent as the risks. One reason for this is that the business and use cases for biodiversity are not yet available in the same form as for the topic of climate. If the topic of biodiversity is to be implemented in credit institutions in an opportunity-orientated manner, targets and metrics are required, as are already available for the topic of climate.

CONCLUSION

Biodiversity is an issue that is gradually taking on added importance in the shadow of climate change – in society, in the economy and in general, whereby the significance and consequences of the ongoing loss of biodiversity must be clearly emphasised. The economic implications of biodiversity loss are enormous, as the economy is highly dependent on ecosystem services. This dependence in turn has an impact on the financing portfolio of credit institutions, which finance customers dependent on ecosystem services. Credit institutions can and must have a steering effect in the direction of a biodiversity-positive economy through their lending in the form of transformation financing. The risks of biodiversity loss

manifest themselves directly in the form of various types of risk in the portfolios of credit institutions, whereby it is foreseeable that the regulatory requirements for credit institutions will also increase in this context. In addition to the risks, the opportunities arising from a proactive approach to biodiversity must be emphasised for credit institutions, although these must be more clearly highlighted and addressed in the future.

In addition, it is clear that it is not only the regulator or the supervisory authority that is required to monitor the topic of biodiversity in general and in particular in credit institutions more closely and to support it through appropriate regulation, but that politicians must also send a clear signal in the direction of a biodiversity-positive economy (e.g., through subsidies or support programmes), which supports credit institutions in financing the biodiversity-positive transformation of the economy in order to emphasise the potential opportunities of implementing biodiversity aspects at the outset.

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БИОРАЗНООБРАЗИЕ – ВЪЗМОЖНОСТИ И РИСКОВЕ ЗА КРЕДИТНИТЕ ИНСТИТУЦИИ

Резюме: Устойчивостта и прилагането на аспектите на ESG придобиват все по-голямо значение не само като цяло, но и в частност – поради обществен интерес и корпоративната отговорност на дружествата – в икономиката. В допълнение към темата за климата/климатичните промени, която в момента е безспорно най-важната, темата за биоразнообразието или за постепенната му загуба постепенно преминава във фокуса на икономическите участници. Прилагането на аспектите на устойчивото развитие и свързаната с тях трансформация на бизнес моделите на компаниите изискват достатъчно време и финансови ресурси. За да се гарантира, че икономическата трансформация напредва не само по темата за климата, но и че темата за биоразнообразието също се разглежда в достатъчна степен, кредитните институции, в качеството си на финансисти на икономическата трансформация, трябва да играят ключова роля. Така че, от една страна, кредитните институции са повлияни от намаляването на биоразнообразието и последиците от него, а от друга страна, могат да играят влиятелна роля в посока на икономика, която е положителна за биоразнообразието. Въз основа на научни изследвания са представени основите на биоразнообразието и статуквото на темата за биоразнообразието, включително икономическите последици от него. След това научните открития се използват, наред с другото, за определяне на възможностите, произтичащи от отчитането на биологичното разнообразие, и на рисковете, свързани с биологичното разнообразие, за кредитните институции, включително за формулиране на практически препоръки за действие.

Ключови думи: биоразнообразие, кредитни институции, управление на възможностите и риска, устойчивост

Мориц Тобиас Щомпфе, докторант
Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии
E-mail: mstompfe@gmail.com

TINY HOUSE: THE SOLUTION TO THE HOUSING PROBLEM?

Marc Fischer

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *Housing is a difficult issue in Germany at the moment. Rising interest rates on loans, the refugee crisis and rising commodity prices have already led to a shortage of thousands of homes, hardly any of which are being built or are affordable. To address some of the problems, there are alternatives in the housing sector, such as tiny houses or container houses. Designed to meet only the most basic, almost minimalist requirements, these can be a cheaper alternative for individuals who either want to fulfil their dream of owning their own home or who cannot find affordable housing in areas close to city centres. In fact, these alternatives are now becoming much more attractive, so much so that companies are already recognising the trend and trying to support it. People should not think that they only work for their house or their own four walls and that they have no other way of living.*

Keywords: *Tiny house, alternative, living, minimalist, container house*

INTRODUCTION

The background to the topic of alternative forms of housing is the current situation on the housing market in Germany. However, it is important to distinguish that the housing market was already in crisis years ago. As early as 2012, Eichener (2012: 3–6) published a study stating that Germany was in a housing crisis and that the federal and state governments should react. The figures quoted were alarming. While more than 600,000 dwellings were completed in the 1990s, only 178,000 dwellings were completed in 2011. Since the turn of the millennium, the federal government has increasingly withdrawn from the social housing sector, abolishing tax breaks for the sector. In addition, from 2010 onwards, other consequences began to emerge that consciously or unconsciously affected the situation on the housing market: a strong economy and demographic change. Just a few years later, Hendricks (2016: 27–29) describes the impact and the consequences. Of course, construction continues in Germany and apartments are being built, but the growing economic strength of Germany is prompting investors and private companies to act. As a result, rent increases of up to 11% are not uncommon, even though demand is higher. This demand is further fuelled by the refugee crisis, which was already underway at the time. Support was provided by Hahmann (2014: 1–2), for example. Together with her homelessness charity, she launched an additional appeal to the federal and state governments to intervene more strongly in housing construction. Not just to get a grip on immigration and social rents. The housing shortage created another problem: many people were left without a home. For example, the evaluation at the time predicted that up to 360,000 people would be without a home in 2016, and this in a welfare state.

It should be noted that all this information and warning signals were available before the coronavirus pandemic, before the Ukraine-Russia conflict and its consequences. However, it was not until 2022 that the German government developed a first concept, the “Housing First” concept. This strategic plan calls for systems and processes to be in place by 2030 to help homeless people find accommodation. However, the measures do not only cover issues such as political persecution, anti-discrimination or forced evictions. The aim is also to ensure that people who need shelter or protection receive it (2024: 1–2). But even this is only an approach and does not yet mention housing alternatives. However, the clock is already 5 minutes to 12 when Sagner and Voigtländer (2024: 6–7) examine the housing and property market. They

show that rents will rise annually, on average by more than 5% between 2023 and 2024. And this is only the median, which means that in industrialised regions there could be significantly higher increases. They also show that rent increases will be significantly higher and faster from 2020 onwards.

Even if all this information seems frightening at first, there are already some approaches that can provide a remedy. Tiny houses or container houses are one alternative. The container house had its origins in the theater, where minimalist attempts were made to create spaces. Matzke (2008: 6) describes it quite succinctly: A container is primarily location-independent and can be used flexibly. Spatially and flexibly deployable, it offers many possibilities in terms of living space. The whole thing is supported by tiny houses. This form of housing is described as an affordable and ecological alternative for 1-2 people (cf. Pottgiesser 2019: 1).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The starting point for the research is a literature and source review. As outlined in the introduction, the core problem is first briefly outlined with facts and what the Tiny House is actually about. The answer to the question of affordable housing and housing alternatives is considered and examined in terms of container and tiny house approaches. To this end, other sources are analysed and evaluated, and the advantages and disadvantages of the alternative house types are discussed, as well as the extent to which their use can be substantiated by figures.

RESULTS

The origin of the term Tiny House, combined with the background of the container house, can be found in the field of sociology, more specifically behavioural psychology. The Tiny Habits method, colloquially known as the method of small or minimal habits, is crucial to this. The background to this is that this method aims to achieve a big effect with small things (cf. Fogg 2021: 12). This is also the aim of tiny houses and container houses. Minimal effort, but great benefit. In addition to the points already mentioned in the previous section, this step is also due to the general trend in household development. For example, Lehmann and his team (2022: 2) describe the trend towards sustainability, cost savings in energy and heating consumption, and a general increase in household efficiency, which has risen sharply since the 2020s. The core idea behind the container house is currently very much in the social sphere. The social system was set up in 1994 to help people without a permanent home get through the winter. The origin was an association founded by several parties. The businessman Franzke, the church community and the Hamburg Social Welfare Office. More than 350 people in the Altona district found refuge here (cf. Brockes 2003: 3–4). So what makes this concept so interesting? First of all, rapid availability and production are crucial. In their research on the container house, Professors Anagal and Dhongde (2020: 177–179) list both challenges and opportunities. While the container house is simple to construct, there are other problems to contend with: stability when several container houses are stacked, acoustics, and climate and temperature conditions are mentioned. Architects have now found ways to overcome these challenges, but it is still far from optimal, and more research is needed into what is considered optimal in order to establish a container house as an independent place to live in the long term. The issue is currently gaining traction as a form of social support. India, in particular, sees great potential here, as the materials and space are available.

Since the 2000s, the issue of container houses has become increasingly important. Studies show that there are already several institutes and institutions dealing with the possible effects of disasters on container houses. In 2017, Hong (2017: 375–377) already dealt with this analysis. She explained that a distinction is made between types of disaster. These can be of biological, precipitation or general meteorological origin. The type of climate is further subdivided into storms, heat and cold, and other disasters. Diseases or changes in plate tectonics such as earthquakes can also be important. The research facilities mentioned above are located all over the world. In the USA, Turkey, Korea and India, to name but a few. They all share the common goal of preparing for these issues and making life safer.

The whole thing is underpinned by the aforementioned tiny houses. The basic movement has its origins in the tiny house movement. Once again you can see the connection with sociological research.

This is because the Tiny House Movement means nothing more than concentrating on the minimum and having no dependencies. This means that you have everything you need to live in a house between 15 and 42 square metres, with multifunctionality as a basic requirement (cf. Kirchhoff 2013). On this basis, the desire to implement this concept in a house initially began in the USA. In the meantime, however, aspects of economy and sustainability have also come to dominate the tiny house sector. Tiny houses are now a popular alternative in the housing sector. At the same time, people are even questioning whether the people who started the movement were aware of its implications. After all, the idea of minimalist living has opened up completely new possibilities for end consumers (cf. Maile 2020: 14–15). The trend is currently being explored to the extent that the idea of a completely self-sufficient tiny house is being floated. Due to the current challenges in the energy sector, Jakob (2020: 186) is exploring the idea of complete independence. He is aware that this is an initial vision and therefore still a dream for the future. In the long term, the idea is to design the tiny house area in such a way that not only energy but also water and food can be supplied on the tiny house site. The idea, however, is to move away from the actual tiny house approach and create a kind of community house, almost like a residential complex. This is still a dream for the future. But current trends show where things are heading. For example, Interhyp, a financing and lending partner for construction, conducted a survey on tiny houses in 2021. The result was that almost 1/4 of the 2100 respondents found the tiny house concept interesting. The article was supplemented with topics such as the energy crisis, the coronavirus pandemic and shortages of building materials. As a result, respondents also mentioned the other benefits of the tiny house: innovation, time saved on cleaning, flexibility. The first question that came up was how they really imagined life in later years and what would be important. Things that all had their origins in the aforementioned movements and research in the field of sociology (cf. Honal 2021).

Tiny houses now come in a wide variety of sizes. The most classic variant is approx. 39 square meters in size. This is enough space for singles or couples to live comfortably. It includes a bathroom of 3.75 square meters, a sleeping area of 7 square meters and a kitchen and living area of just under 18 square meters. The rest of the space is then used for insulation, heating material or hallway and other storage space. Cost factor here, from €90,000 (cf. Fischer 2022: 25). However, Jay Shafer proved that there is another way back in 1999 (cf. Graubner 2019). The Tiny House he developed was on wheels and no larger than 20 square meters, which of course pushed the price down accordingly: from €20,000, you can now fulfill this dream of a mobile Tiny House. However, like all other houses, the mobile Tiny House requires a building permit. If it then needs to be transported, it also requires a road traffic permit as it is on wheels. And even then, the challenges do not subside. If you then want to take this house on a trip, you have to check in advance which parking spaces are suitable. Unfortunately, these hurdles are not uncommon in Germany. This was already examined in 2022, when the housing market situation in Germany was specifically addressed (cf. Vasseur et al. 2022: 19). They describe that the biggest hurdles are in the legal area. In addition to building and licensing regulations, there are the land issues mentioned above. A further complicating factor is that each federal state in Germany has different building laws and may have different or additional road traffic regulations, which can make the construction of Tiny Houses more difficult. In addition to the aforementioned road approval, the mobile tiny house you have examined also requires TÜV approval, which means that it is safe to transport. The complications of building law are the biggest hurdle. In addition to the necessary planning permission, the zoning plan for each development area sets out the exact guidelines according to which a house can be built. There are guidelines on roof pitch, living space and facade colour. However, a recent land-use plan from 2024 for the municipality of Wadern in Saarland shows that people are already aware of all these issues (cf. Huwer et al. 2024: 7). Here, the municipality wants to meet the demand for tiny houses and is integrating their development and use into the relevant landscape plan. This means that the municipality wants to create a long-term residential and nature area where tiny houses can be built as standard.

The Tiny House Association, founded in 2018, shows that the trend is moving towards tiny houses. The association's mission is to bring together interested parties, companies and communities. In Germany, there are now well over 100 companies building tiny houses and more than 60 companies and communities that are open to such projects (cf. Schleyer 2024). Looking at current trends, more than

500 people have searched for opportunities to buy, build or otherwise acquire a tiny house in the last 12 months (cf. Google Trends 2024).

However, there are also downsides to the trend. Housing companies in Hamburg in particular are skeptical about alternatives such as container or tiny houses when it comes to the rent index. Such social housing facilities could create an imbalance in the economic sector (see Grubbauer et al. 2023: 204). If one remains in the urban area, one could be confronted with the problem of stacking. Finkenberger (2022: 32–34) points out that the available space in cities can be misused to build several containers or tiny houses in such a way that the overall picture is simply destroyed and is seen as a remedy for the housing shortage in cities. This creates a feeling of mass instead of class. In order to counteract this, appropriate contemporary ideas based on ecological conditions are needed. She also mentions another potential problem: desocialization. Tiny houses are designed for minimalism. This means that they offer little space for social contact. Kilmann (2016: 7–8) already addressed this problem in 2016. However, he also saw it as an opportunity to improve the social component in the long term. Although he agrees with the basic points of desocialisation, he sees minimalism as an opportunity to be forced to meet other people, as many things are simply not available in a tiny house. He describes one possible outcome as having to work less in the long term because of the lower cost of living and therefore having more time for socialising and leisure, which would sometimes be more difficult with a full-time job.

A trend is emerging. This can be seen in a statistical analysis from 2021, but published in 2024, which calculated a market potential of 3.9 billion euros for tiny houses in Germany (cf. Statista 2024). The latest studies also show that the demand for tiny houses has increased by around 32% (cf. Schwald 2022). Ms Sütterlin-Waack (2023) also describes a study on the current trend, highlighting the challenges as well as the benefits.

CONCLUSIONS/DISCUSSION

The explanations have shown that the housing alternatives of containers and tiny houses are becoming increasingly relevant. Research on alternative forms of housing is becoming more widespread, while studies on the demand for tiny houses are difficult to understand. One disadvantage is that there is no baseline to build on. This makes it impossible to compare and difficult to take into account for research purposes. Only the demand tools on Google provide some relief, but they are still far from the research values. The container house model is already being used for refugee accommodation, while tiny houses still face more resistance from local authorities and the legal framework in Germany. The legal obstacles are currently too great for the concept to take hold in the short term. However, some municipalities are beginning to incorporate the concept into their urban development plans due to increasing demand. It remains to be seen whether the tiny house is the solution to the housing problem.

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МАЛКИТЕ КЪЩИ: РЕШЕНИЕТО НА ЖИЛИЩНИЯ ПРОБЛЕМ?

Резюме: Жилищното настаняване е проблем в Германия в наши дни. Нарастващите лихвени проценти по кредитите, бежанската криза и повишаващите се цени на суровините вече доведоха до недостиг на хиляди жилища, каквито почти не се строят и не са достъпни. За да се решат някои от проблемите, в жилищния сектор има алтернативи, като например малки къщи или къщи от контейнери. Проектирани така, че да отговарят само на най-основните, почти минималистични изисквания, те могат да бъдат по-евтина алтернатива за хората, които искат да сбъднат мечтата си да притежават собствен дом или които не могат да намерят достъпни жилища в райони, близки до градските центрове. Всъщност тези алтернативи сега стават много по-привлекателни – дотолкова, че компаниите вече признават тази тенденция и се опитват да я подкрепят. Хората не бива да мислят, че работят само за дома си или за собствените си четири стени и че нямат друг вариант за живот.

Ключови думи: миниатюрна къща, алтернативен живот, минималистичен, къща контейнер

Марк Фишер, докторант

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

E-mail: marc-zur.ostsee@gmx.de

MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH

Jirom Dawit

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *The systematic review examines the health status of migrant populations, with a specific focus on Eritreans, as documented in international academic literature. The studies reviewed reveal that the health outcomes of migrants vary significantly depending on geographical origin, socioeconomic status, and the nature of their migration experiences. Migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, as well as South and Southeast Asia are frequently the focus of research. However, the health status of Eritrean migrants—a group often underrepresented in research—remains insufficiently explored. The findings underscore that migration exerts detrimental effects on both mental and physical health, attributed to factors such as socioeconomic instability, traumatic migration experiences, and limited access to culturally competent healthcare services. Barriers related to language, cultural differences, and mistrust of healthcare systems in host countries lead many migrants to rely predominantly on informal support networks within their communities, which are often inadequate in addressing their complex health needs. The “Healthy Migrant Effect”, which posits that migrants initially present with better health than the native population, tends to diminish over time due to stress, substandard living conditions, and restricted healthcare access. This phenomenon emphasizes the necessity for targeted health interventions. The review calls for more nuanced research into the health needs of diverse migrant populations, with particular attention to Eritreans, considering their distinct migration trajectories, health beliefs, and sociocultural contexts. Such insights are critical for informing the development of inclusive health policies and interventions that promote equitable healthcare outcomes for all migrant groups.*

Keywords: *Migration, Health, Psychosocial*

INTRODUCTION

From 2005 to 2019, the number of people with a migration background in Germany increased by 47% (Statistisches Bundesamt 2021a). Migrants vary in terms of country of origin, migration experience, refugee status, length of stay, and social integration (Statistisches Bundesamt 2021b). The WHO defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being” and considers the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental human right (WHO 1948 cited in WHO 2020). Migration can lead to psychosocial stress (Borde & Blümel 2020). The “Healthy Migrant Effect” suggests that younger and healthier individuals migrate; these advantages often diminish over time due to barriers in the healthcare system of the receiving country (Weitof et al. 1999; Metzing et al. 2020). In older age, the health deteriorates, and their mental health is below the average (Metzing et al. 2020). The “Migration Stress Hypothesis” posits that migration can be pathogenic depending on individual resources (Schenk & Peppler 2018). The theory of unfulfilled status aspirations, unmet migration goals lead to increased psychological and psychosomatic complaints (Schenk 2007). Social disadvantage poses health risks for migrants. High prevalences of depression, anxiety disorders, and PTSD among refugees and labor migrants arise (Lindert et al. 2009; Winkler et al., 2019; Hassan et al. 2021; Mesa-Vieira et al. 2022). Schizophrenia is more frequently diagnosed in migrants than substance use disorders (Koch et al. 2007).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic review condenses current research on interventions, diagnostic tests, and prognostic factors, despite the expanding volume of healthcare literature (Posadzki & Ernst 2019).

The central question posed was: “What is known about the health of migrants, particularly Eritreans, in international literature?” Due to limited research, there was no time constraint on the literature search, conducted from December 2022 to July 2023. PICO criteria was used: Population (Eritreans/migrants in Germany), Intervention (information brochure), Comparison (psychosocial care of Eritreans/migrants), Outcome (evaluation of psychosocial support). Synonyms such as emigration, immigration, health care, public health care, treatment, migrants, refugee, immigrants, psychosocial care, psychosocial support, and mental health care were used. Study selection was based on title and abstract screening, followed by full-text screening. As the health of Eritreans has been researched to a limited extent, the effects of migration on health in general were examined.

RESULTS

2000 studies were identified. Titles and abstracts were screened, 1389 studies not-matching studies were excluded. Norway contributed the most studies (n=8), followed by Germany (n=4), the USA (n=3), and other countries. The studies focus mainly on migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Eritreans are represented in three of the 43 studies. Themes included physical (n=2) and mental well-being (n=12), combined physical and mental well-being (n=13), health service utilization (n=1), and access barriers (n=1). Most studies have examined the impact of various risk factors, such as stress, discrimination, language barriers, and asylum procedures, on the development of mental disorders or illnesses among migrants. The studies also addressed the coping strategies utilized by migrants, the application of culturally sensitive diagnostic instruments, and the aspects of psychiatric care tailored to migrants.

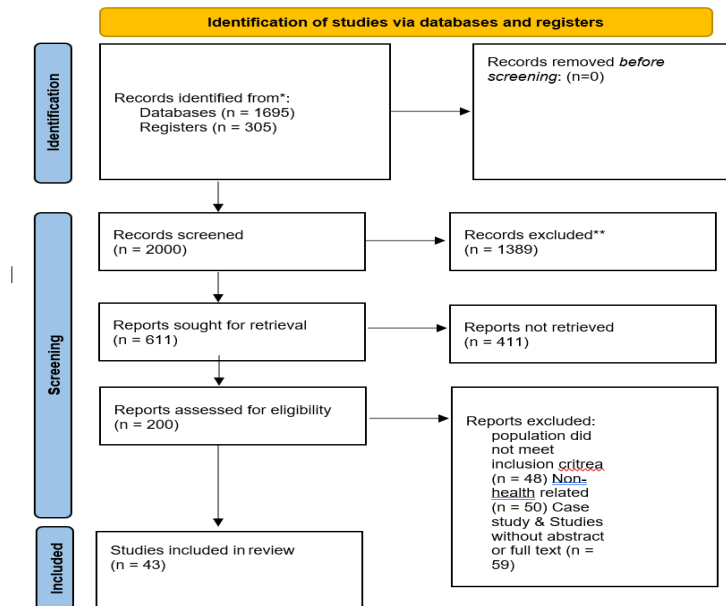


Fig. 1. PRISMA-Diagramm

Migration exerts a profound influence on health, primarily through stress, discrimination, language barriers, and the challenges associated with asylum procedures. These factors significantly contribute to the development of mental disorders among migrant populations. The situation is further complicated by a lack of understanding and disregard for cultural differences within healthcare systems, which pose significant barriers to accessing appropriate care. These barriers are often exacerbated by a lack of intercultural competence among healthcare providers, as highlighted by Palmer and Ward (2007). Several

studies have pointed out that migrants tend to use emergency care services more frequently than other forms of treatment. This trend may be attributed to a lack of understanding of mental health issues within migrant communities, which remains a persistent problem (Haj-Younes et al. 2021; Akhtar et al. 2022; Devkota et al. 2021). Gender differences in mental health outcomes have also been observed among migrants. Women generally report lower subjective mental health compared to men, although they tend to lead healthier lifestyles. In contrast, men are more likely to suffer from depression but are less inclined to seek treatment for their mental health issues (Igel, Brähler & Grande 2010; Straiton et al. 2014).

Focusing specifically on Eritrean migrants, research reveals that they experience significant mental distress but demonstrate low utilization of professional mental health services. Instead, they often rely on support from within their community. Cultural and religious beliefs play a crucial role in shaping their perceptions of health and illness, as discussed by Torensma et al. (2018). For instance, Eritrean migrants have reported that preventive health measures that conflict with their faith and cultural practices are particularly challenging for them to follow. Furthermore, the poor living conditions that many migrants encounter in host countries can exacerbate existing mental health issues, including psychotic symptoms (Tarricone et al. 2009).

The attitudes of migrants toward healthcare and mental health services can change over time. Weigl and Gaiswinkler (2019) illustrate this by examining how perceptions of psychotherapy among Turkish-origin migrants in Austria have evolved, reflecting a broader shift in attitudes toward mental health care in migrant communities.

The “Healthy Migrant Effect”, which posits that migrants often arrive in a new country with better health outcomes than the native population, has been substantiated by a longitudinal study conducted by Bacong et al. (2022). However, the mental health of migrant workers remains a topic of debate. While some research, such as the study by Sawa et al. (2021), suggests that migrant workers experience similar levels of mental stress as native-born workers and are not at a higher risk for mental health issues, this assumption is contested by other studies. For instance, research by Devkota, Bhandari, and Adhikary (2021) challenges this notion, indicating that the mental health of migrant workers may indeed be more precarious than previously assumed.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the review was to identify the impact of migration on health. The results indicate that migration has long-term consequences on physical and mental well-being, supported by the “Migration Stress Hypothesis” which emphasizes that migration plays a significant role in the development of mental and physical illnesses (Ghimire & Bhandari 2020; Schenk & Peppler 2018). One study within the review critically examines the notion that refugees experience an improvement in mental health after resettlement, often referred to as the “honeymoon phase”. However, this study raises concerns regarding the sustainability of this improvement, noting that there is insufficient evidence to determine how long this phase lasts (Strømme et al. 2020a). This finding suggests that the initial relief and optimism following resettlement may diminish over time, potentially giving way to more severe mental health challenges as the reality of long-term adaptation sets in. In comparison to non-migrants, migrants face an increased risk of various diseases, including diabetes, ulcers, abdominal pain, headaches, obesity, and hypertension (Gualdi-Russo et al. 2009; Devkota et al. 2021). Additionally, migrants often report a range of somatic complaints, further complicating their health profile (Strømme et al. 2020a & 2020b; Strømme et al. 2021). The heightened susceptibility of migrants to mental health disorders is particularly concerning, with higher incidences of depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) reported among this population, as noted by Fuhr et al. (2020). Furthermore, recent research indicates that migrants are at a greater risk of suicide, adding a critical dimension to the mental health challenges they face (Tham et al. 2023). A particularly alarming finding from the study is that migrants are often discharged from acute psychiatric care without adequate follow-up. This lack of continuity in care can have detrimental effects on their mental health and overall well-being. The authors of this study emphasize the importance of implementing a carefully structured and phased discharge process, which could act as a preventative measure to reduce the risk of relapse and other negative outcomes following

psychiatric treatment. Discrimination and bias from healthcare professionals are significant factors that adversely affect the mental health of migrants and lead to a reduced utilization of healthcare services (Igel et al. 2010; Liu et al. 2014; Nguyen et al. 2021; Gautier et al. 2020). These biases can manifest in various ways, from subtle forms of discrimination to overt prejudice, all of which contribute to an environment where migrants may feel unwelcome or misunderstood within the healthcare system.

One of the notable trends observed in the review is the frequent use of emergency services by migrants, which is significantly higher than their use of specialized treatments. This reliance on emergency care is often attributed to the low referral rates for specialized services, which can be hindered by language barriers and differing expectations of how the healthcare system should function (Haj-Younes et al. 2021). These barriers highlight the critical need for healthcare systems to adapt to the linguistic and cultural needs of migrant populations. To address the high access barriers associated with cultural and linguistic differences, some healthcare organizations have implemented interpreter services to assist migrants in navigating the system. However, despite these efforts, significant challenges persist. Many migrants remain skeptical of interpreters, often due to concerns about the accuracy and confidentiality of the information being conveyed (Salinas et al. 2021; King et al. 2019). Additionally, the asylum status of migrants can further complicate access to healthcare services. Some migrants fear that revealing mental health issues might harm their asylum process. Moreover, the low uptake of healthcare services among migrants living in England has been attributed to their generally better health and younger age compared to the native population, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2021). The authors propose that these factors contribute to a reduced need for medical attention, which in turn leads to lower utilization of healthcare services by migrants. This observation, however, does not negate the significant health challenges that many migrants face, particularly in the context of mental health and chronic conditions.

For psychosocial problems, migrants often rely on support from family and community networks, which are facilitated by shared cultural backgrounds and similar life experiences. Research by King et al. (2019), Abraham et al. (2018), Liu et al. (2014), and Nguyen et al. (2021) highlights the crucial role these social networks play in providing emotional support and practical assistance. These networks help migrants navigate their challenges more effectively by offering guidance that aligns with their cultural values and norms. The familiarity within these networks can also help mitigate feelings of isolation and provide a sense of belonging, which is essential for mental well-being. Additionally, migrants often minimize their physical and psychological burdens as a coping mechanism for dealing with traumatic experiences (Abraham et al. 2018; Fuhr et al. 2020). While this coping strategy can be protective in certain ways, it may also hinder migrants from seeking the necessary care and support. Notably, migrant women perceive their health more negatively than their male counterparts and exhibit higher prevalences of depression and anxiety disorders. This gender disparity in mental health outcomes among migrants is emphasized in the research by Haj-Younes et al. (2020), indicating the need for gender-sensitive approaches in addressing the health needs of migrant populations.

A broad range of studies indicates that migration affects health, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive specialists in psychiatric facilities. Female refugees and migrants generally report poorer health compared to their male counterparts and native populations, suggesting that gender significantly impacts mental health. Migrants overall rate their health more negatively than natives, pointing to widespread health disparities.

To improve access to mental health services, it is essential to address cultural differences between migrants' countries of origin and host countries. Ignoring these differences can hinder effective care. Additionally, migrant workers are particularly focused on maintaining their health due to its direct impact on their employment and financial stability. This connection between health and economic necessity further complicates their access to care.

CONCLUSION

Migration is associated with a higher prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, as well as mental health disorders like depression and anxiety. Migrants frequently depend on community support systems for managing these conditions, which underscores the influence of cultural factors on

health outcomes. To effectively address the health challenges faced by migrant populations, it is imperative to employ culturally competent healthcare strategies. Such strategies are vital for overcoming barriers to healthcare access and utilization. By integrating cultural sensitivity into healthcare practices, systems can reduce health disparities, improve the quality of care, and ensure that migrants receive appropriate and effective medical services. This approach not only enhances healthcare utilization but also contributes to better health outcomes and reduced inequalities within migrant communities.

Acknowledgments: This systematic review is part of a doctoral thesis. A more comprehensive discussion is available in the dissertation.

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List of illustration

Figure 1: Page M. J., McKenzie J. E., Bossuyt P. M., Boutron I, Hoffmann T. C., Mulrow C. D. et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ* 2021, 372:n71. Doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.

МИГРАЦИЯТА И НЕЙНОТО ВЪЗДЕЙСТВИЕ ВЪРХУ ЗДРАВЕТО

Резюме: Систематичният анализ разглежда здравния статус на мигрантите с особен акцент върху еритрейците, както е документирано в международната научна литература. Разгледаните проучвания разкриват, че здравните резултати на мигрантите се различават значително в зависимост от географския произход, социално-икономическия статус и естеството на миграционния им опит. Мигрантите от Африка на юг от Сахара, Близкия изток, както и от Южна и Югоизточна Азия често са във фокуса на изследванията. Въпреки това здравният статус на мигрантите от Еритрея – група, която често е слабо представена в изследванията – остава недостатъчно проучен. Констатациите подчертават, че миграцията оказва вредно въздействие както върху психичното, така и върху физическото здраве, което се дължи на фактори като социално-икономическа нестабилност, травматични миграционни преживявания и ограничен достъп до културно компетентни здравни услуги. Барьерите, свързани с езика, културните различия и недоверието към здравните системи в приемащите страни, карат много мигранти да разчитат предимно на неформални мрежи за подкрепа в рамките на своите общности, които често са неадекватни за посрещане на сложните им здравни нужди. Ефектът на „здравия мигрант“, според който мигрантите първоначално са с по-добро здраве в сравнение с местното население, има тенденция да се влошава с течение на времето поради стреса, нестандартните условия на живот и ограничения достъп до здравни грижи. Това явление подчертава необходимостта от целенасочени здравни интервенции. Прегледът призовава за по-нюансирани изследвания на здравните нужди на различните групи мигранти, като се обръща специално внимание на еритрейците предвид техните различни миграционни тенденции, здравни убеждения и социокултурен контекст. Подобни прозрения са от решаващо значение за разработването на приобщаващи здравни политики и интервенции, които насърчават справедливи здравни резултати за всички групи мигранти.

Ключови думи: миграция, здраве, психосоциални проблеми

Джиром Дауит, докторант

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

E-mail: dawitjirom@gmail.com

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN HEALTH AND PLANETARY HEALTH

Szilvia Fodor

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

Abstract: *In addition to sustainability, planetary health and megatrends have now become some of the most important aspects of global society. Human health is closely linked to the health of our planet and is influenced by the changes caused by different trends. Particularly important are the megatrends that bring about sustainable changes for all of humanity. These changes can have serious consequences both on an individual level and for society as a whole. Megatrends are complicated changes that are mapped onto models to represent the changing world. Megatrends serve as a basis for some research or developments. Megatrends put evaluations, aspects, economic aspects, strategic aspects into context. They arise from developments that change society in the long term. These trends are changing the healthcare industry. Thus, there is greater differentiation, digitalisation, diversity (new economic sectors are developing), individualisation and hygiene in the trend. This paper presents the human influence on planetary health and the resulting changes to our planet and our health.*

Keywords: *health, planetary health, trends, megatrends, society, human influence*

INTRODUCTION

Our lives are influenced by many factors. Through so-called megatrends, certain developments also exert influence on our health. The Institute for Future Research and Future Science (Zukunftsinstitut) has been studying these megatrends intensively and has developed for this purpose a “health trend map”. The latter contains trends which represent different stages and areas of human life. The “health trend map” is developed by futurologists and is under constant monitoring. With connection to this some important questions arise.

Some of the questions that researchers examine are:

- What motivates people to live healthily and consciously?
- How is it possible to better connect the healthcare system and the people? (see Megatrend

Documentation 2023, n. p.).

Megatrends are complex changes that are mapped out in models to represent the changes in the world. They serve as the basis for various research and developments and take into account evaluation aspects, economic aspects and strategic aspects. In order for an influencing factor to be called a megatrend, certain requirements must be met. In addition, there are various ways of categorizing megatrends.

The requirements and categorization options are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Prerequisites and classifications of a megatrend (Source: Own illustration, based on Megatrend Documentation 2023, n. p.)

Prerequisites for a megatrend	Classification options for a megatrend
Duration: at least 50 years All-presence: affects all areas of life Globality: worldwide phenomenon Complexity: affects several dimensions	Natural trends Sociocultural trends Megatrends Technological trends Time trends and fashion Microtrends

Megatrends arise from developments that change society in the long term. In the healthcare sector these include prevention, health management, self-management, psychosocial health and digitalization.

The origins of megatrends include progress, economic change, and innovation. Table 2 lists influencing factors, trends and health trends, which appear to be related (see Megatrend Documentation 2023, n. p.).

Table 2. Relationship between influencing factors, trends and health trends (Source: Own illustration, based on Megatrend Documentation 2023, n. p.)

Influencing factors	Trends	Health Trends
Urbanization Climate changes Scarcity of resources Changes in economic power relations Demographic changes	Globalization Mobility Connectivity Neo-ecology (sustainability) Health Knowledge culture (the world is getting smarter) Individualization Gender shift (change in traditional gender roles) Security Silver society (older people stay fit)	Individuality Knowledge as a Personal responsibility Disease prevention Health as a value Holistic approach Social responsibility Quality of life Self-optimization Nutrition-Fitness Eternal youth Mental strength

Megatrends also serve as an orientation and classification tool to enable a better understanding of our world. Our world is changing. Through megatrends, humanity is experiencing a life-restructuring process. These processes influence health and the quality of life (see Megatrend Documentation 2023, n. p.).

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRENDS ON PLANETARY HEALTH HUMAN IMPACT ON PLANETARY HEALTH

Trends affect our entire lives, as well as our planet. Humans have changed 77% of the land areas and 87% of the oceans, with rivers undergoing artificial straightening to create illustrated areas. In the process, animal species become eradicated, forests are cut down, land is tilled and the air is polluted by the use of fossil fuels. These processes have rendered a large part the earth's surface uninhabitable and have recently led to flood disasters, heat waves and cold waves (cf. Krautwig et al. 2022, n. p.).

The shifting of natural boundaries endangers people's well-being. Hunger and poverty prevail in dozens of regions. Globalization increases the danger of overexploiting the earth's natural resources. Such

factors have a negative impact on the development of the world's population, on health, the environment, the ecosystems and the biodiversity. An estimate of 150 species become extinct every day. This number serves only as an orientation since new species are also discovered on a daily basis. Yet, large areas of the earth with high biodiversity have research gaps, which is where most species become extinct (cf. Rahmstorf et al. 2019, n. p.).

Planetary health means a healthy relationship between man and nature. If people treat nature with respect, instead of changing it entirely, our planet will become stronger. Man should accept nature as it is and live in harmony with it. Nature is self-sufficient. Man wants to exert influence over it through power and his own rules, yet, nature has its own power, its cycles and its own rules, which we should try to adapt to, not change. Society, politics, education and science play an important role in this process (see Megatrend Documentation 2023, n. p.).

CHANGES FOR THE MANKIND

The destruction of biodiversity, the greenhouse effect, the pollution of fertile soils and the use of antibiotics pose a high risk to healthy food production. Chemical substances and fertilizers are used profusely to make arable land fertile. Some economically advanced countries are using these effects to create a food surplus, in other world regions, however, where drought or flooding are the order of the day, there is less and less food. This means that around 800 million people suffer from starvation and 2 billion are malnourished. On the other hand, 2 billion people are overweight, which also leads to significant health problems (lack of important nutrients and diseases of affluence, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, etc.). These changes lead to changes in social developments with the number of people living in poverty continuing to rise. Such people have little opportunity to protect themselves against diseases, becoming not only poor, but also sick (see Megatrend Documentation 2023, n. p.).

Humanity is facing major challenges due to the changes in living space. Most people live in cities, where the dense population causes infrastructure and health problems to arise (e.g. air pollution, asthma, allergies, infectious diseases, lack of exercise, etc.). Infrastructure problems often include housing and rental problems. It is not possible to offer enough housing in a restricted space in state-owned areas. In contrast, rural and village areas are in danger of dying out. Residential areas where perhaps two hundred people live, despite the fact that there is room for several thousand, are not supported and have poor infrastructure, resulting in the loss of residential appeal to people. Lack of jobs and cultural programmes forces people to move to the cities. Mobility and education are also important environmental factors. A sparsely populated area usually has no opportunity to develop a transport system, which is an essential part of daily life. This can cause isolation or the necessity to use combustion vehicles harmful to the environment. Schools are usually a great distance away from rural residential areas, which means that children and young people need to spend a lot of time commuting every day. All these problems make rural and village residential areas unattractive and people move to the cities (see Hurrelmann 2006, p. 99).

The pandemic intensified our awareness of and our attitude to health. Many planned operations or general healthcare aspects were reduced because healthcare services were overburdened by the acute emergency situation. People were sometimes compelled to assess their health situation on their own and make do with limited care infrastructure. But the acute state of things during the pandemic also had a positive effect because people were encouraged in the future to focus more closely on their health and to try to stay fit. Each individual needs to take responsibility for themselves, which leads to a more determined, mindful and prevention- oriented behavior (see Lauterbach 2018, n. p.).

As a result of demographic changes, the population stays fit and healthy longer, which increases life expectancy. Starting with the baby boomer generation, people have become more agile and fitter than previously. However, medical and nursing care are facing a challenge because of the shortage of skilled workers. Nursing staff are often recruited from abroad to ensure basic care. Immediate reform is required in health professions such as nursing and medicine. These professional groups should receive more respect in social terms and better framework conditions in the future. An important aspect is that the population consciously understands the difference between basic needs and luxury. It is important

that people invest more money in their health care and thereby stimulate financially professional groups in such fields of service. A reform of nursing care insurance is long overdue, as is the issue of hospital restructuring (see Lauterbach 2018, n. p.).

Many aspects are also related to the flow of information and knowledge. The Internet makes information, fashions and trends easily accessible. The “full insurance mentality” is changing. People are beginning to realize that health is an expensive and complex process. Some sections of society understand that a healthy lifestyle can help maintain health and thus reduce costs. Investing time and energy in your own health pays off, while an awareness of prevention and care should be the rule, rather than the exception. Many diseases can be handled easily and with success in the early stages, which in the long term can reduce health costs. Expensive treatment, surgery or lifelong drug therapy can sometimes be avoided just by applying preventive measures early enough (cf. Altgeld et al. 2012, pp. 187–197).

Recently, a lot of insecurity, exacerbated by wars, social inequalities and political extremes, becomes noticeable in society. Similar facts are presented in the media at all times. The Bertelsmann Foundation (2024, n. p.) has found out in its latest study that loneliness is the “new pandemic”. Loneliness also affects young people and cannot be limited to the elderly. Due to mass migration and the endless possibilities of digital and virtual contacts, this aspect reveals itself as a contradiction.

THE IMPACT OF HUMAN’S ACTIONS

Our planet’s ecological capacity is currently stretched to the limit. If the earth is not healthy, people cannot be healthy either. Planetary health depends on various factors, including nutrition, consumer behavior, mobility, and more. By consuming less meat, we can save CO₂ and thus have a positive impact on climate change, while environmentally friendly mobility solutions contribute to better air quality. Extensive environmental pollution has led to an increase in cancer illnesses and an increase in psychological stress. The number of allergic and respiratory diseases has also increased many times over. The production of food involves the use of complex technology, as well as chemicals and additives, leading to an increased health risk. Because of global trade possibilities, local and domestic food is driven out of the market by exotic fruits, vegetables or other types of food. Today it is not unusual to buy all kinds of fruits all year long. It is possible to buy cherries or strawberries in December, for example. These varieties are transported to Europe by ship or plane while still unripe and are left to ripen on site with the addition of chemicals. During transportation, CO₂ is emitted, which has a negative impact on the greenhouse effect. Furthermore, the chemicals involved in these processes cause great damage to the human body (see Lauterbach 2018, n. p.).

At demographic level, health is influenced by megatrends, which include security, mobility, digitalization, education, environment, nutrition, exercise, etc.

Individual health can be affected by environmental factors, unhealthy diet, poor hygiene or inadequate medical care. This is evident in countries such as Afghanistan, Libya or in numerous other African or South American countries. Millions of people have no access to clean water or basic food supplies. Hygienic conditions and health care in such places are of great concern. In rich industrial countries, on the other hand, where everything is in abundance, people tend to damage their health through the development of harmful habits, such as alcohol, tobacco and drug consumption.

In our modern society, health is an important factor which provides people with a sense of security, comfort and self-esteem. One of the most essential skills regarding our personal health is to maintain it, boost it and avoid disease. These skills should be nurtured and brought into harmony with nature (cf. Hurrelmann 2006, p. 99).

These above findings lead to a greater awareness and more holistic actions in relation to environmental conditions and influences. In this sense, it is also important to develop a greater understanding of our relationship with planetary health. Altgeld and Kickbusch (2012, pp. 187–197) emphasize the reinforcement of personal and social health competence, as well as the promotion of a systematic, growing connection between people and nature. To this end, strategies, concepts of salutogenesis, empowerment, self-determination and intersectoral connections should be reinforced.

MEGATRENDS IN HEALTH

Megatrends in health emphasize individuality and thereby change the healthcare industry. These trends include greater differentiation and digitalization, as well as the promotion of diversity and hygiene. It is crucial to ensure a good work-life balance, to strengthen the flexibility and self-determination of the individual, to create a solid infrastructure, to promote social interaction and to support leisure activities.

The most important health literacy skills include the ability to maintain and promote one's own health and to prevent disease (cf. Hurrelmann 2006, p. 99).

The European Health Literacy Study (HLS GER2) has shown that 54% of the German population have limited health literacy. Therefore, a national action plan is needed to improve health literacy. What presents a challenge is the fact that people are often unable to make health-related decisions. Thus, it is important to cover the costs of such concepts and to ensure a coordinated approach.

Health literacy can lead to a better competence when dealing with nature and the use of resources, which necessarily give nature and planetary health a higher priority in a possible action plan.

Health literacy is measurable. In 2011, the health literacy of 8,000 people across Europe was examined with the data being evaluated and partly published by the University of Bielefeld.

The study found that health literacy in Germany is strongly influenced by educational level, migration background, age and chronic diseases. 9.7% of the German population show inadequate competence, 44.6% problematic competence, 38.4% sufficient competence and only 7.3% excellent competence (see Lauterbach 2018, n. p.).

These figures make it clear that the responsibility for promoting health literacy lies with society, the economy of a country and its politics. It is a skill that should be built up and maintained from early childhood to old age. Competence development and maintenance is a lifelong learning process and the health and competence aspect must be present in the curriculum of all educational institutions.

A healthy relationship between people and nature and the promotion of planetary health can be achieved through the following measures:

- Promoting health literacy in all areas of life
- High priority of nature and planetary health through general education
- User-friendly design of the health system
- Systematic research into health literacy
- Systematic research into the connections between planetary health and human health
- Sustainability
- Resource-oriented production
- Shorter transport routes
- Wider distribution of local agricultural products on the market
- Barter system of trading
- Mindful handling of nature
- Mindful handling of raw materials
- Abolition of plastic (global and radical)
- Waste disposal (new innovative processes and their research)
- Climate competence
- Fair distribution of resources
- Promoting third countries locally with innovative projects
- Effective use of globalization and information structure (example: online conferences instead of air travel to conference location)
- Higher tax on luxury goods
- Higher tax on consumer products that are harmful to health
- Cautious handling and control of migration and mass migration

These aspects and tasks can help to achieve a functioning ecosystem and a balanced climate, promoting in this way the health of our planet and that of the people.

Further developments in this field make younger generations more aware of the fact that personal health, nature and planetary health, along with the skills and an ethical attitude, which includes justice,

respect and reason, play an essential role in modern world. The above components should be in line with everyday life, whereby the priority of health, nature conservation and a healthy planet should be self-evident on a global level. Health, nature conservation and the health of our planet should be actively incorporated in our lives and not just spoken about. Every day that spent in passive indifference, changes dramatically our security and future. The current generation bears an immense responsibility for the future, it serves as a role model in the establishment of the right attitude and approach that are to be adopted by coming generations. In this way, next generations can have a chance for a better life and a better world.

RESULT/CONCLUSION

In many people, who consciously follow the processes described above, a sense of greater uncertainty and fear arises. Such negatively charged impressions can generate respect for nature and our planet.

These aspects can also create incentives to take care of our own health and the health of our planet. Everything we do today has consequences for the future. We are constructing nature, the world and our planet for future generations. It is possible that our children receive a future that need not undergo any changes.

Numerous aspects can still be reconsidered and developed, and this should happen without delay. The sooner we start conserving resources and preserving nature, the healthier our life and planet will be.

Such aspects include environmentally friendly mobility, sustainability in medicine and care, a minimalist and nature-oriented lifestyle, innovation, individuality and the reduction of consumer behavior, as well as the promotion of robotization and corporate health management.

As an author of the above article, I find that the reflections and the number of problems presented here may have a deeper impact and evoke a need for a change in one's own life.

The article is intended to give all readers the opportunity to deal more intensively with the discussed topics, to provoke them to take action and to encourage them to initiate change.

It is never too late to consciously shape our future.

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ВРЪЗКАТА МЕЖДУ ЧОВЕШКОТО ЗДРАВЕ И ЗДРАВЕТО НА ПЛАНЕТАТА

Резюме: В допълнение към устойчивото развитие здравето на планетата и мегатенденциите се превърнаха в едни от най-важните аспекти на глобалното общество. Човешкото здраве е тясно свързано със здравето на нашата планета и се влияе от промените, причинени от различни тенденции. Особено важни са мегатенденциите, които водят до устойчиви промени за цялото човечество. Тези промени могат да имат сериозни последици както на индивидуално ниво, така и за обществото като цяло. Мегатенденциите са сложни промени, които се нанасят върху модели, за да представят променящия се свят. Мегатенденциите служат като основа за някои изследвания или разработки. Мегатенденциите поставят оценките, аспектите, икономическите аспекти, стратегическите аспекти в контекст. Те възникват в резултат на развития, които променят обществото в дългосрочен план. Тези тенденции променят сектора на здравеопазването. Така в тенденциите се наблюдава по-голяма диференциация, цифровизация, разнообразие (развиват се нови икономически сектори), индивидуализация и хигиена. В настоящия документ е представено влиянието на човека върху здравето на планетата и произтичащите от това промени на нашата планета и нашето здраве.

Ключови думи: здраве, планетарно здраве, тенденции, мегатенденции, общество, човешко влияние

Силвия Фодор, докторант

Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии

E-mail: szilviafodor2@gmail.com

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ДИРЕКТОР

доц. д-р Диана Стоянова
бул. „Цариградско шосе“ № 119,
ет. 2, стая 213
София 1784, България
тел.: +359 879 14 83 85
е-поща: d.stoyanova@unibit.bg

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Assoc. Prof. Diana Stoyanova, PhD
119, Tsarigradsko Shosse Blvd.
fl. 2, room 213
Sofia 1784, Bulgaria
tel.: +359 879 14 83 85
E-mail: d.stoyanova@unibit.bg

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