
SPEAKING WITH MANAGERS ABOUT THE IMPLICATION OF MORALITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN TAKING DECISION

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(Received 5 August 2018, revised 20 August 2018)

Abstract

This paper aims to present manager's perspective about the implication of morality and psychological processes in decisions they make in the organizations. The article also shows a practical perspective of the theory presented in a past work. The implication of the morality and of the psychological factor in managerial decision represents a desideratum that must be followed, from the perspective of managerial decision research, and also from its complexity. In fact, such a research highlights the unseen side of managerial decision, explaining the processes and the behaviours occurring before, during and after taking the decision.

Keywords: managerial, decision, moral, psychological, process

1. Introduction

The most certain thing is that people make decisions at every step, in different situations, from childhood till old age. Sometimes they are forced by circumstances, some other times there are decisions that they meditate on and those decisions are analysed for a long time. Often, the decisions are important for their lives, but people focus on decisions that do not deeply affect them as well. In fact, we can state, without being wrong, that a person's life is a decisional one, and the decision is a fundamental part of human life, being a complex process [1].

Moreover, the way we know how to make a good decision is mostly dictated by us and our personality, but it is also affected by the environment and other less important factors. The managerial decision represents the main activity of a manager within an organization, but at the same time, it represents a manager's way to express himself or herself, to respond to the problems that may appear and, most importantly, to run the organization. That's why, some of

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authors have seen in managerial decision nothing but an art [2]. The involvement of the psychological and moral factors in the process of taking a decision is a reality that once studied, it offers a remarkable perspective concerning the decision itself, and it explains the distinguished role that those decisions have in the most important activity of a manager. This is the reason why this article aims to present a practical perspective of managers regarding this topic, while being a continuation to a past article [3].

2. Main part

At first sight, we are tempted to argue that a decision only involves the logical part, firstly, from the point of view that finding rational ways for improving the efficiency of a situation it's what it is sought after through decision, and secondly, this happens because thinking is the only process, or the most important one that an efficient and well formulated decision can rely on. Even though the majority of the definitions that have been assigned to the decision itself highlight this thing and grant thinking a definitive role in making a decision, people actually use their entire being, and this is possible because, in reality, there are multiple processes involved and more factors can impact that specific moment [4]. This can also be attributed to the fact that people themselves are complex beings.

Any managerial decision involves projecting and looking for solutions for the current problem, and then steering the situation towards what it is about to happen. In fact, a decision involves the past [5] (analysis a similar decision, or the desire to prevent a similar event as well as learning from the previous mistakes), the present (through the resolution that needs to be taken right now) and the future [6] (the decision's effects, owning the decision, the evaluation, etc.).

3. The method used in present research

In order to obtain the results in our qualitative research, we used an analytical instrument, the so-called **Thematic Networks instrument**, as it is presented in the specialty literature by Jennifer Attride-Stirling [7]. The Thematic Networks Technique is a sensitive instrument for the systematization and presentation of the qualitative analysis – a showcase model for the qualitative analysis of the theme that has been researched.

The Thematic Networks technique evolves starting from the primary themes and advances towards the global themes. Once a collection of primary themes has been established, they can be classified in terms of the story highlighted and can become organizational themes. Then, these organizational themes are reinterpreted based on the primary themes and then, they are brought together to highlight a single conclusion or a superior theme that becomes a global theme. The thematic themes are presented as a web network for the

purpose of removing any hierarchy, giving the themes fluidity and accentuating the connectivity within the network.

These networks are only an instrument in analysis; they do not represent the analysis itself. Once a thematic network is constructed, it will be used as an organizational principle and an illustrative instrument for interpreting the text and facilitating the openness between the reader and researcher. The role of the thematic networks is to illustrate the obvious themes at every level of the three available and to present the relationships between them.

Base themes – they derive from textual data. They may represent a support, the affirmation of a belief that revolves around a central meaning and which contributes towards the meaning of a superior theme. The base themes are simple premises that characterize data, and they tell little about the text on their own. For a base theme to have any meaning beyond the immediate understanding, they need to be read contextually with the other themes. Together, they represent an organizational theme.

Organizational themes – they organize the base themes in clusters/groups of the same type; they summarize the main hypotheses of one group of base themes, being more abstract and more relevant in relation to the meaning of the text. Their role is to also consolidate the meaning of a bigger theme that unifies multiple organizational themes. A group of organizational themes forms a global theme.

Global themes – they are higher ordered themes that comprehend the principal metaphors of the whole dates. A global theme is close to an affirmation, as a rule/final teaching/some kind of conclusion. The global themes combine the multitude of the organizational themes in a way that they start to represent an argument, a thesis, a hypothesis about a certain thing or about a reality, when they are represented together. They represent a summary of the principal themes and a revelatory interpretation of text.

3.1. The method of analysing thematic networks

The whole analysis process comprises 3 stages:

- the reduction and partition of the text,
- the research of the text,
- the integration of the research.

All of them involve interpretation, but on every stage, a more abstract level of analysis is being done.

1) Reduction and partition of the text (the steps that need to be followed)

- a) Coding the material – a reduction of information by organizing the text in fragments that make sense with the help of a coding structure. This can be based on pre-established criteria (specific words, repetitive expressions) depending on the objectives that are being pursued.
- b) A division of the text using the coding structure- in paragraphs, in citing, singular words, etc.

- 2) **Identifying the themes -after the text has been coded, the themes are abstracted from the coded text fragments**
 - a) Abstract themes - from the text pieces that have been coded, the most obvious themes are extracted. This is achieved by reading the text segments using the codes under which have been classified and abstracted from the original (whole) text.
 - b) The revision of the themes - the selected themes are further improved into specific themes non-repetitive and compelling enough to contain sets of ideas that appear in multiple paragraphs in the text.
- 3) **The construction of the network (involves the following steps)**
 - a) Arranging the themes – the themes that derive from the text are taken and assembled in similar and coherent groups. These groups will become thematic networks. The method that controls how the themes are grouped together will be decided taking into consideration the content and the theoretical grounds. Every group will lead to a global theme sustained by organizational themes and base themes.
 - b) Selection of the base themes – The themes that have been derived from the text and have been assembled in groups as well are used as base themes; this is a rebranding of the original set of themes.
 - c) Rearranging in organizational themes – In this stage, clusters that contain base themes are created. These base themes are centred on broader things, common as well in order to create organizational themes. The problems are identified and named.
 - d) The deduction of the global theme/themes – In the spotlight of the base themes, the argument/hypothesis/principal assertion is being summarized. The global theme is the core, the main metaphor that comprises the main points of the text. In the case that multiple theme groups have been formed at 3a), then this procedure is repeated for every group and distinctive global themes will result.
 - e) Illustration as thematic networks – the themes that have been identified are illustrated as non-hierarchical, web representations
 - f) Verification and refinement of the network/networks – Text paragraphs that correspond to each base theme are selected. The global themes, organizational themes and the base themes are checked to validate whether they reflect the information and the text paragraphs are checked to validate whether they support the base, organizational and global themes or not.
- 4) **Description and research on thematic networks** – The themes that have been found at the previous points must be researched, in order to identify specific patterns that highlight them. Once the network has been built, the network is used to interpret the initial text. The text is read now with the base, organizational and global themes in mind. The networks are read clockwise for in order to facilitate the presentation and understanding of the material.

- 5) **The summary of the thematic network** – The objective is summarizing the main themes that appeared when the network was described and the research based patterns have been found.
- 6) **Explaining the patterns** – The deductions from the previous summaries of all the networks are brought together with the relevant theories for exploring the significant themes, the concepts and the structures that emerge from the text. The purpose of this last step is to send the researcher back to the initial research questions and to the theoretical interests, substantiating and addressing them with sensitive arguments closely linked with the patterns that emerged from researching the text.

4. Experimental

The instrument used for this research is semi-structured interview, a personal conception, constructed in accordance with the main objective and aims. Some of questions refer to psychological implication in making decisions, others relate to moral impact on the main activity of manager in organization.

4.1. The interview

- 1) What does it mean for you, the act of taking a decision in the position that you currently hold within the company? What do you involve in taking a decision?
- 2) How do you see the mutual relation between the psychological factor and the moral factor in taking a decision? Please detail.
- 3) What does it motivate you to take a strategic decision?
- 4) What do you take into consideration in the exact moment when you need to take a decision?
- 5) How do you live/experiment the moment you need to transmit to the other employees the decision taken by you?
- 6) How do you live the moment of taking a decision? What does this involve in terms of the mental and moral processes?
- 7) How do you manage to take a decision more efficiently: with your heart or with your mind? Argue your answer.
- 8) What does it mean to make a moral managerial decision? What does it involve to be moral in taking that decision?
- 9) What is your vision regarding the possible relation between the following mental processes (thinking, language, memory, imagination, affectivity) and morality?

4.2. Target group

Target group consisted of eight middle and top managers that activate in different areas of activity, such as: sales field, human resources, education, where the work is mostly done with people.

5. Results

Steps taken in analysing interviews and obtaining results, and constructing thematic networks:

- listening the records of interviews;
- identifying the principal themes;
- extraction from material first of all, base themes, derived from textual data. These are some quotes extracted form manager's answers. These themes can be found in first step.
- basic themes were grouped in organizational themes, penultimate step at the research. In this way, were consolidated the significance of a larger and global theme.
- organizational themes were grouped in global themes, which can come in the form of a theory, or an illustrative summary;
- Building the thematic networks.

5.1. Thematic network no. 1

5.1.1. Base themes

The managers' answers offered different points of view, which may be grouped in sequence, in different themes, according to next paragraphs. For example, some of managers talked about psychological processes involved in managerial decision:

„For a good decision, these processes must be closely linked” (D.D)

„A decision involves a causal chain and can be influenced by this processes” (C.A.)

„Where appropriate, I'm using a mixed of processes” (C.S.)

„The decision is a complex process, so it needs a complex cooperation.” (M.C.)

All of these affirmations (which make up the base themes) may be compressed in organizational theme which we have entitled - ***The cooperation of psychological processes in taking decisions***

There was a tendency of managers to speak, also, about involvement of rational and affective in making decision:

„There must be cooperation between those two in taking decisions.” (G.C.)

„In decision-making process, both are important.” (C.A.)

„For a good decision, they shall be synchronized.” (C.I.)

„I believe it is difficult to separate those two. You must forget you are human. In addition, they will be co-workers for decision.” (M.C.)

„Somehow, even the affective is involved in decision-making.” (D.D.)

„These two must be closely linked to taking good decisions so you can work with employees.” (C.I.)

These answers were compressed in organizational theme named - ***Cooperation between rational and affective.***

Some of managers' answers were focused on a single process, a principal one:

„A decision is taking rationally, because it is needed to obtain a good result.” (D.D.)

„Effective decision shall be taken with the mind” (C.A.)

„Taking a decision is the result of thinking things through” (M.C.)

„Deciding which involves judgment, pragmatism.” (G.C.)

These answers were compressed in organizational theme called ***The primacy of judgment.***

In the end, some answers refer to use of memory in making decisions:

„All the decisions are based on practice and experiences gained in the past.” (G.C.)

„I report myself to previous decisions, especially those having positive results.” (C.S.)

„The similar successful decisions could be examples for the next ones.”(C.A.)

These answers were compressed in organizational theme called ***Accessing the previous decisions.***

These four organizational themes form the global theme ***The presence of psychological processes in making decisions*** (Figure 1).

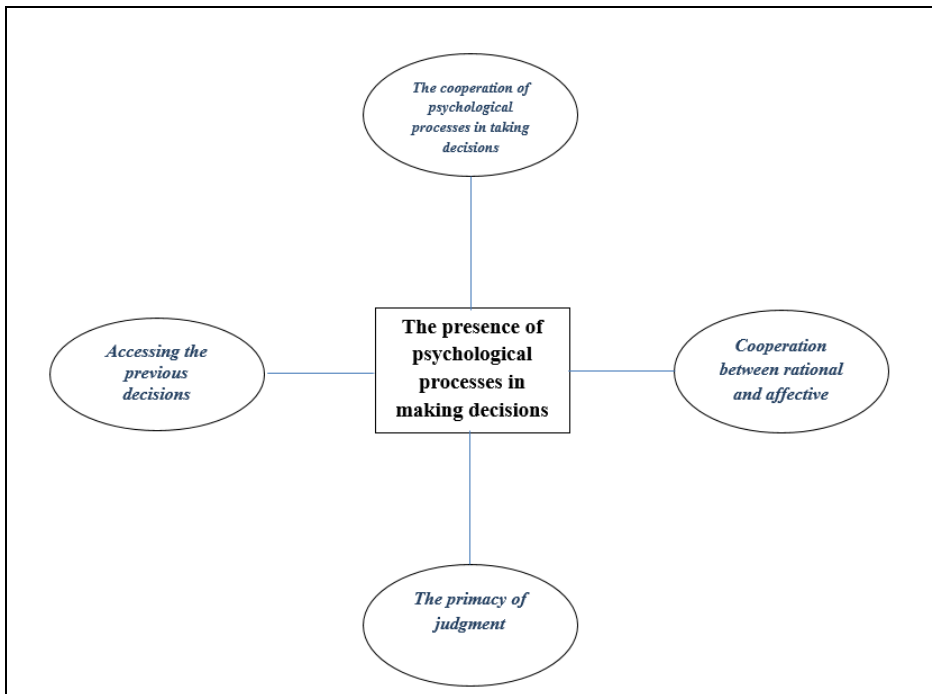


Figure 1. The presence of psychological processes in making decisions.

5.2. Thematic network no. 2

5.2.1. Base themes

In taking decisions, some of managers spoke about the importance of thinking to others, especially to employees:

„It is impossible for me not to think at those affected by the decision I make.” (D.D.)

„Sometimes, it matters more those who execute decisions, than decision itself.” (G.C.)

„Every decision I make at some point can change something for at least one employee. That’s why, I can’t decide at random, but reported to employee.” (C.A.)

„Being human in the decision regarding the other.” (C.S.)

These answers were tightened in organizational theme - **Reporting to the other.**

Taking decisions, means, for managers, to respect some moral rules:

„The decision I make, must follow some of moral rules.” (C.I.)

„I only take notice what’s moral in everything I decide.” (C.R.)

„I can’t imagine a moral decision without respecting certain rules.” (C.A.)

These answers were compressed in organizational theme - **Compliance of some moral rules in taking decisions.**

Morality refers to the whole person:

„The morality and the ethics of manager is seen in decisions he makes” (D.D.)

„What motivated me in taking a moral decision is that part of me that dictated me to be moral for the other. I do not perceive myself in taking decisions, than I am now – moral. That’s why, my decisions reflect morality.” (C.S.)

„When deciding, I don’t want to consider myself a moral person, but in the decisions I make, I want morality to be reflected.” (C.S.)

These answers were compressed in organizational theme called **Moral manager - moral decision.**

As we can conclude from managers’ answers, morality in taking decisions is associated with different qualities of manager:

„You can’t be just moral in taking decisions, if you are not empathic.” (C.R.)

„Morality means, in the end, to be a good decision-maker, and, also, a good manager.” (D.D.)

„To be moral in your decisions means to take into account everything that concerns the organization.” (G.C.)

„Considering all the aspects that can affect human resource sooner or later.” (G.C.)

These answers were compressed in organizational theme called **Wherein morality is associated in taking decisions.**

These four organizational themes form the global theme ***Moral perspective on the managerial decision*** (Figure 2).

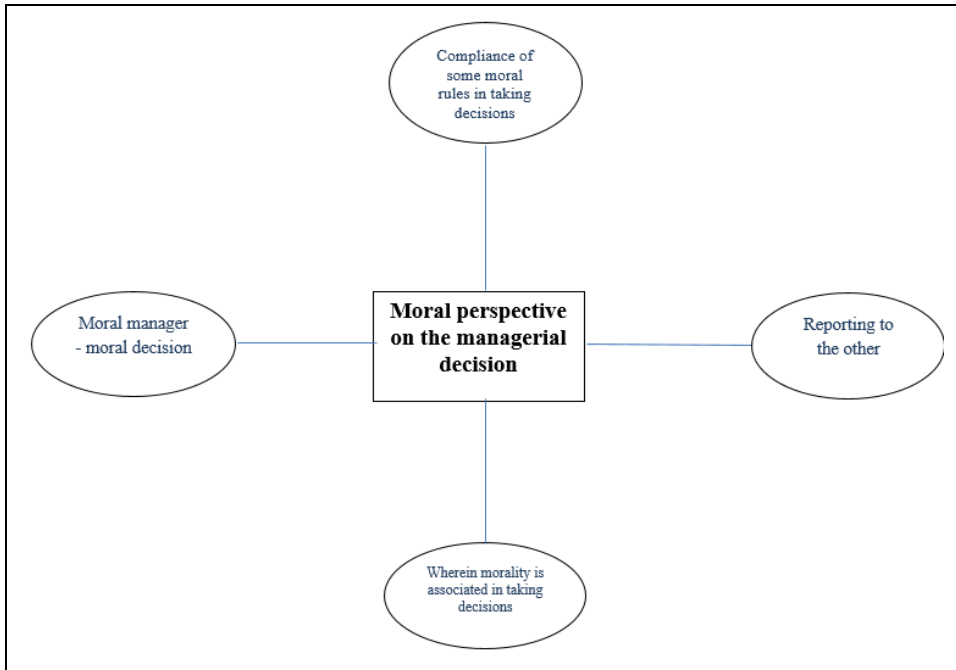


Figure 2. Moral perspective on the managerial decision.

5.3. Thematic network no. 3

5.3.1. Base themes

Managers talked, also, in addition to those presented, about the combination between the principal psychological process and morality:

„Thinking can darken morality sometimes, when you have to take a decision.” (C.R.)

„Being rational in taking decisions is absolutely necessary. The other things, such as moral part, come after.” (C.I.)

„All these psychological processes must have priority. But thinking is first, then the other are following, including morality.” (D.D.)

These answers are forming the organizational theme ***Rationality and morality in taking decisions***.

There were other responses which pointed out the relation between affective processes and morality in taking decisions:

„The decisions involved organization’s interests are taken with thinking. Those regarding employees are taken with the heart, the affective side. Here we can talk about morality.” (M.C.)

„I am thinking that, many times, the affective leads you to morality, when you decide.” (G.C.)

„I often think at the affective side when I decide. I also consider that affective stands by morality in taking decisions.” (C.S.)

These answers form the organizational theme *Emotional and morality in taking decisions*

These two organizational themes compile the global theme *The relationship psychological processes – morality in taking decision* (Figure 3).

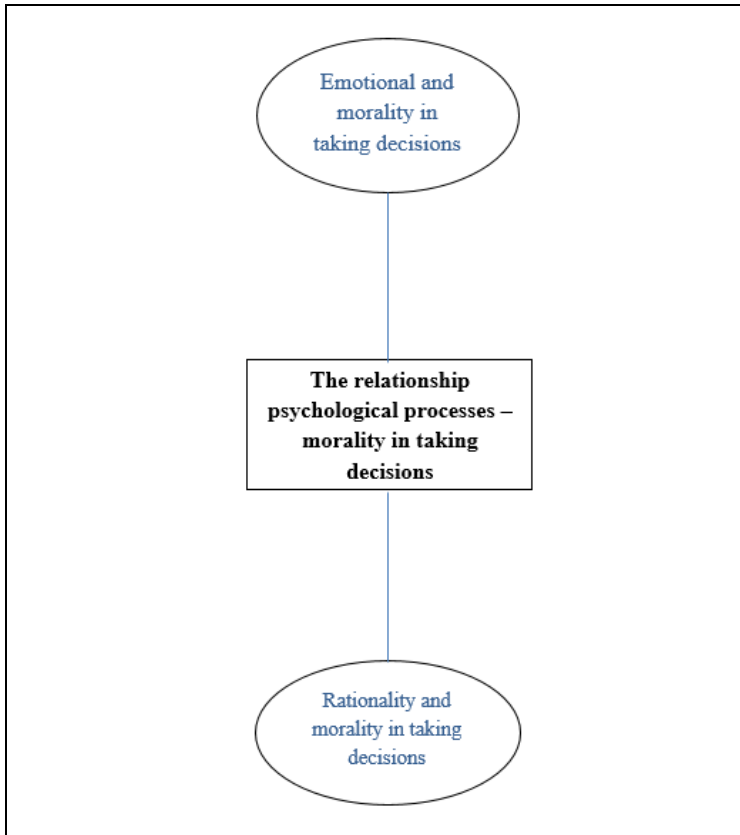


Figure 3. The relationship psychological processes – morality in taking decision.

6. Discussion

As it can be seen, managers claim that mental processes are present in taking decisions, especially rational processes, that is a central point in the decisional process. In terms of affectivity, even if they are aware of its presence in the process of taking decisions, the responses received from the managers are at least interesting, confirming that the emotional part is involved in taking decisions within the organization. Memory is a process that is often tapped into when it comes to taking managerial decisions, knowing that this revolves around the fact that memory contains previous decisions that help with the new one. Moreover, managers are aware of the interactions between the mental processes when it comes to the decision-making process. This aspect is worth taking into

consideration, especially from the point of view of the manager's activity, which can be understood through these processes.

The link between the mental processes involved has been highlighted by all participants at this study: some of them have showed the link between thinking and memory, taking into consideration the previous decisions; others have pointed out the importance that language holds and implicitly, the importance of communication in transmitting the decision to employees. Also, some of the managers that have been interviewed have linked the rational process with the affective process. The primordial trait of the rationality can be explained taking into consideration the responsibility that rests on the managerial position and of which all of them are full aware. It is possible that a good manager is often associated with an intellectual; that is why rationality holds a central place in psychological processes.

The rational factor and logic are the two things that stimulate the decision, and not the emotional factor. The majority of the study subjects state that regardless of the known importance of the emotional-affective factor involved in taking a decision, an effective decision involves the primacy of the rationality. This answer was also supported by the other participants, who see in the affective-emotional factor a thing that can be destructive, which can lead to an impulsive decision with negative impact towards the people involved. In the same time, it is noted that some respondents associate the negative emotional state with an inefficient decision. Interestingly, when they were asked about how to make a decision (rational or emotional), most people responded rationally, but when they were asked about rational and emotional co-operation in making decisions, they have changed their minds, many accepting and arguing for the need of collaboration.

The emotions experienced when making a decision can be diverse: from detachment to strong emotion, from joy to caring for the future of the company. Finally, it is worth mentioning that for some participants in the study, this discussion was a real challenge in the sense of awareness of the presence and involvement of psychic processes in decision-making, being put in a position to define themselves as unique by their approach to managerial decision. If it was a surprise for some to realize that the decision they make within the organization is not a simple written or verbal message, but a very complex act that requires more than thinking. On the other hand, for other managers, the involvement in this study meant opening to the manager's human side, to the emotions that are never realized when they make decisions (or at work), and the acceptance that the manager is no more than a human.

At the same time, when reporting the verbal request at the end of the interview, it was noticed that most managers encountered difficulties responding specifically to the questions regarding the affective and rational involvement in the decision-making process.

Regarding the moral perspective on managerial decision, managers understand it in relation to others. When a decision is made, it respects some norms and moral rules, is associated with different behaviours or actions that the

manager does. Also, the answers given by the manager have allowed the link between the moral manager and managerial decision to be formed. In this aspect, the morality of one manager must be shown in his or her decisions.

The relationship between psychological processes and morality is, as managers say, at a rational and emotional level. The link between morality and rationality seems much weaker than the link between emotional and moral.

7. Conclusion

Morality and psychological processes are realities in the decision-making process, and the manager becomes fully aware of it. The orientation towards using them in the way manager wants represents a complex perspective of the manager on their own decision, and a way to understand from a psychological point of view the processes that take place in decision-making. On the other hand, morality cannot be removed from the decisional process as the manager becomes more aware of its importance in making decisions, and of being moral as a manager. The combination of morality and psychological processes means a decision taken in safety circumstances, and also one that accounts in the same way of organization strategy, and human resource in organization. In fact, using morality and psychological processes in taking decisions, manager can be sure of his whole dedication and implication towards a good and solid decision.

Acknowledgment

The findings presented in this research come from the activity of doctoral studies taken at ‘Gheorghe Asachi’ Technical University, Faculty of Textiles, Leather and Industrial Management.

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