



Brief analysis of decision-making processes at the level of a forest district (organizational structure regarding forest management in Romania)

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Abstract. This paper analyzes the elaboration and application of the decisions issued by the manager of a forest district, how these decisions are viewed and received by subordinates. The organizations, in our case the forestry districts, are led by one or more persons who, through the adopted and assumed decisions, manage to maintain or add value to the institution. Subordinates are often the first to feel the effects of a carefully thought-out decision compared to those issued without a solid foundation. Questioning them about the impact of these decisions is one of the most commonly used methods in qualifying/calibrating a manager. The present study tries, through semi-closed questions, to place and describe a certain category of managers, hereinafter referred to as "forest managers" in the sphere of some types of leaders (without generalizing the situation).

Key Words: decision makers, decisions, decision making process.

Introduction. In any company or administration, whether state or private, the manager's decisions are guided by an economic interest. In most cases, the chosen decision is carefully thought out and weighed so that the material and economic losses are almost nil (Guthrie & Ash 2003). Achievements are in numbers, transformed into percentages and ultimately translated into "profit". The state forestry administration also aims to make a profit and achieving this profit requires a lot of effort on the part of the employed staff. In addition to the capitalization of the wood products that are the basis of the economic pyramid, the capitalization of berries, medicinal plants, bee products, hunting services, fish farming products, ornamental plants, etc. are added in different percentages.

The important decisions at the level of a forest district are taken by the head of the unit, respectively the head of the forest district who, by his qualities as a manager, mentally goes through different stages until a decision is made:

- Identifying the problem/situation to be solved;
- Identifying all possible solutions;
- SWOT analysis of these solutions;
- Choosing optimal solutions;
- Issuing a decision;
- Tracking the effects and making the decision.

The brainstorming or meeting activity brings an extra idea to the management that can identify an optimal solution from the experience of colleagues or through the vision of each one (Choden et al 2021). The information in the field is gathered like a funnel to the head of the forest district, who should know in detail the activity of the organization he manages. The collection of information is part of the decision-making process; without a correct and complete information on a problem, the issuance of a decision cannot be made (Samar et al 2015).

According to the way of justifying a decision, we meet several models of managers, namely:

(1) Those who act rationally (Iftimescu 2001); in this category we meet the leaders who have the maximum information, analyze a maximum number of optimal solutions and finally choose a solution which is more advantageous for the institution

that runs it. Usually, in this category are involved managers whose time allows such an analysis. The tasks that suffer postponement are usually taken over urgently by a subordinate who performs them until the leader identifies a solution to the in-depth problem. In general, these organizations work very well precisely through the solutions given by the manager and the avoidance of a possible failure (Hejazi 2021)

(2) Managers who act quickly, irrationally, do not analyze the range of optimal solutions very much, but choose any of them by taking a risk. Leaders, due to lack of time or incomplete information, make hasty decisions that do not always have the expected result. These organizations usually have quarterly or half-yearly fluctuations and are most prone to failure (Jackson 2021). Another category of managers are those affiliated or not politically affiliated but whose decision can be directed by a political party according to its interests. A healthy institution is one that succeeds through internal policies and regulations to prevent the appointment of politically affiliated managers. Decision-makers by their statute enjoy credibility and authority over subordinates, and delaying a decision by external influences does nothing but weakens, disorganize and destruct the system.

In most cases, the management of a public or private institution knows the principles and the way of delegating a position, an activity that is used more and more often when it is required to fill a position when the incumbent is absent for a short period of time. The delegation of a certain function, whether of management or of execution, implies certain risks assumed to a certain extent by both parties. The occurrence of delays in the operation of some reports, the appearance of expired deadlines or the creation of blockages in the production activity can create big problems for the institution or company in question. The delegate needs some support and a certain amount of tolerance from the other employees, because no matter how prepared the person may be, unforeseen situations may arise in the decision-making process that the company or institution has not encountered (Yannakoudakis & Yannakoudakis 2021). The staff charts were built pyramidally by creating functions and sub-functions precisely to divide the tasks that were performed by the management. For example, the establishment of the position of district chief, which is under interference between district officials with predominantly office responsibilities and foresters with predominantly land responsibilities. The appearance of the growing volume of documents to be prepared and reported limits the time spent by field office staff with foresters. In addition to this shortcoming was created the position of district chief forestry which creates the link between the two worlds outside and inside.

The responsibility of a position comes with the appearance and signing of a document under the motto "approved", "verified", "good payment" etc., which once sent to the delegate or subordinate, acquits the superior or the management of a possible error. Certain functions should not be delegated, such as that of director (manager of the senior forestry unit) or head of district (manager of the lower forestry subunit) occupations may destroy relationships built over time with various state institutions. If the authority of the delegate limps from the start, he will act reluctantly or postpone making important decisions just to absolve himself of responsibility for a possible mistake. The creation of a subordinate function and the division of a function into a sub-function is done gradually and the process starts from the superior who generally wants help through a subordinate. Basically, in the first phase, the superior gathers many tasks and tasks to solve, draws a line and delimits the actions that can be easily controlled and verified, after which, by delaying the reporting deadlines, he creates blockages and requests support from subordinates. Thus, a new transit function is created, between the manager and the subordinate, occupied even by the employee who offered support in solving a certain problem and who is "promoted" precisely to take over more responsibilities (Yannakoudakis & Yannakoudakis 2021).

A good employee and subordinate should assume that the solution of a problem given by the superior is an act of responsibility and determination; by developing this practice, the time allocated to checking and identifying a solution by the management decreases. It is often considered that it is cheaper to pay a responsible person to check files and documentation, to identify errors produced constantly, to send back for

correction than to introduce a mass of employees who will gradually distort the documentation and reintroduce errors systematic in the production process.

Directing authority downward to subordinates is inversely proportional to directing responsibility from subordinates to superiors. In an administration, whether public or private, these notions must be found everywhere in the staffing scheme, whether the institution is organized into compartments, departments or offices. The random delegation of senior positions to subordinates for short periods of time, but in a closely monitored manner, can create certain benefits for the institution or increase labor productivity by motivating staff to take a management position either in the short term, acquiring new skills that can be used later, by the company (Zohra et al 2018).

Boss, manager or leader? Although this title can be attributed to the same person in the management and apparently it seems the same, in reality it is not. If we interview all the staff of an organization about the appointment of management with one of the three phrases we will notice that the results are different from employee to employee (Northhouse 2016). The use of this appellation also indicates a degree of subjectivism and affectivity towards the superior depending on the support received, the trust granted and the understanding from which he benefited at a certain moment.

In the vision of an employee, the "boss" is the person who has the power to sanction and who apparently seems to be the only one who seeks, for each employee or subordinate to work, to realize his plan regardless of the disturbing factors around. (Friedman & Fireworker 2021).

The notion of manager refers to the person who has the power to manage certain material and human resources, to channel them favorably towards a certain objective and the final result to be the one pursued (Sougui et al 2017). In this case, the manager seems to be the more "heated" version of the boss who seems cold and sharp in any decision he issues. At the level of state or regime (private) forestry subunits, there are still these functions, hereinafter referred to as "forest district chief" and "forest district head".

The definition of the title of leader supposes the guidance of ready-formed and connected team. As a position in the plan, the leader appears in front of his party (Leveric 2014), he faces the problems that are solved by the unquestionable support of the helping team. The leader is positioned behind the group, being protected from certain primary risks (gaining time for the next decision step). The manager is presented by the literature as being placed in the middle of the group, flanked on all sides, he knows the strengths and weaknesses of each, qualities he manages depending on the factual situation and the purpose pursued.

- A leader relies heavily on the team's confidence, a manager on everyone's qualities, a boss on his qualities.
- A leader thinks about the future, draws horizons. A manager manages the present, taking small but sure steps. A boss recalls the past, seeking the solution lived to solve the current problem.

Consequently, only for the few reasons mentioned can we conclude that a good leader has the qualities of the three titles. The popular saying "having an iron hand in a velvet glove" best characterizes the quality of a leader. Power exists at all times but hidden in the form of permissive rule. In the following, I will refer to the managerial and management activity as an activity carried out by a manager, as I consider this title suitable for the studied field.

Decision-making factors in a forest district. The decision makers within a forest district represent those persons (employees) who, through the decisions thought and issued, produce changes in the current activity of the institution (Zenovic et al 2008). In relation to the impact on a number of people, decisions can be classified into individual decisions and collective decisions. Individual decisions are found in the sphere of each employee because in his activity he encounters different critical moments when by his own decision he can overcome that impasse. Its own individual decision lies in the

psychological construction of each individual, it is easily accepted by its own issuer regardless of the consequences.

The development of a stand by a delegate in charge of the forest district is an eloquent example of individual decisions. The choice of trees extraction requires, in addition to experience and responsibility, a high degree of determination on the side of the staff. The choice decision is purely subjective based on technical norms and specialized literature, but the decision belongs to the head of the delegation who provides through his actions the characteristics of the future tree. Another category of individual decisions are those issued by a superior for a single subordinate individual; in this case, the dose of responsibility increases from the issuer, while the acceptance dose decreases from the beneficiary. In a forest detour, the important decisions are carefully thought out by the unit manager or the "detour chief" who is responsible for the managed institution, the employees and the result of their work. It should be specified that the "Decision" as a document prepared under this title is not issued by the forest district but by the higher unit or the forestry department, the latter having legal personality (the legality of the document being attested by the signature of the legal department, located in organization chart only of forestry directions).

Collective decisions concern a number of two or more people. This type of decision is generally more difficult to issue and manage due to the large number of reactions that can result. The variability of the results and the probability of errors can be much higher compared to the individual ones. Collective decisions are generally thought of by a board of directors, board of directors, board of directors, etc., which includes general managers, economic directors, heads of offices, legal representatives, trade unionists, etc. The idea of forming such a commission is to analyze any constant and variable that may occur in a decision-making process.

Problems arise when the interests of each member of the group differ from those of the organization, at that time divergences may even arise conflicts and rarely reach a beneficial compromise for the institution and its staff.

Depending on the interest of the institution and the long-term strategy, the whole decision-making process can be:

- Quick, when the decision or decision is made in a short time, choosing the most correct option for the institution (sometimes to the detriment of the employee);
- For a long time, when meetings, convocations and analysis are necessary, the correct decision is chosen by passing it through several strategic criteria (Miclăuş et al 2007).

According to the way of formulating a decision, we find two models:

- the manager collects the information from the subordinates, without organizing meetings or debates for the case; he / she makes the decision and consider it effective;
- the manager organizes meetings or debates with subordinates, exposing the issue, and together they come up with more or less efficient proposals, finally choosing by vote.

The effectiveness and efficiency of a decision can be seen in the results, its implementation depends on the qualities of the employee, his level of training and the environment of application. The decision-maker supervises from the outside the course of his decision without disturbing in any way the approach of the employee. If the pace is not as planned, the manager can make recommendations and even tactically support the employee to ensure success. An example of traceability of the implementation of a decision is the timber recovery program assigned to a forester or forest district chief. There are certain parameters that must be achieved in terms of value and quantity over a period of time. When the head of the forest district observes from the outside that the pace of recovery is slow and the deadline is approaching, he tries to identify the problem and a possible solution. The manager will recommend a solution but does not impose, in order not to destabilize the initial decision that was theoretically programmed at the time of issuance as a success.

Material and Method

In order to analyze the decision-making process at forestry level, it was necessary to interview the staff employed (subordinated) by the state and private forestry structures, regarding the elaboration and implementation of a decision received from the decision-makers. In this regard, an online questionnaire was completed in the free survey management software provided by Google (Google forms). The target group of respondents consists mainly of department heads and district heads, the main beneficiaries of the decisions. The purpose of this survey was to identify how to formulate a decision issued by the head of the district, the participants in the decision-making process and the leaders. The questionnaire (Colibaba 2001) was anonymous, in order to obtain the most objective answers possible.

Questions 1 and 12 in the questionnaire were of the multiple choice type and questions 2 -11 were of the linear scale type, with 5 exclusive possibilities of mandatory selection: 1- Total disagreement, 2- Little agreement, 3- Irresolute, 4- I almost agree, 5- Total agreement. Although the questionnaire required the selection of an answer, in the interpretation of the results, the answers with 3-undecided selection were skipped.

Results and Discussion

A survey of 67 people employed by forestry sector entities, out of which 51 state structures and 6 private structures (Figure 1). The questionnaire was opened for acceptance for 10 days.

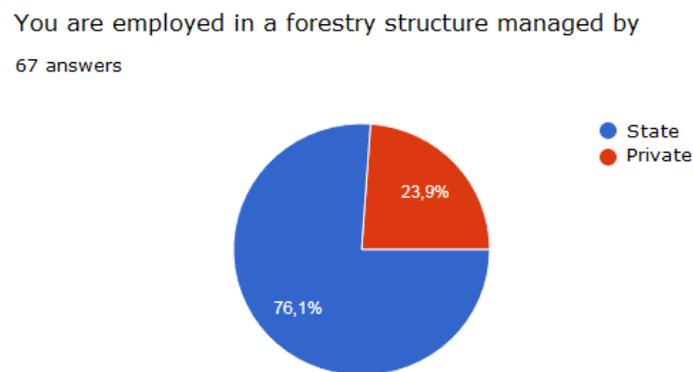


Figure 1. Centralization of the answers to the first question in the questionnaire.

When asked about the distribution of work tasks between subordinates (Figure 2), activity established by the head of the unit, over 50% of respondents consider that tasks are distributed fairly among colleagues, a decision that ultimately leads to balancing labor productivity among employees and creating a motivational environment.

Do you consider that the distribution of tasks between subordinates / colleagues is balanced?

67 answers

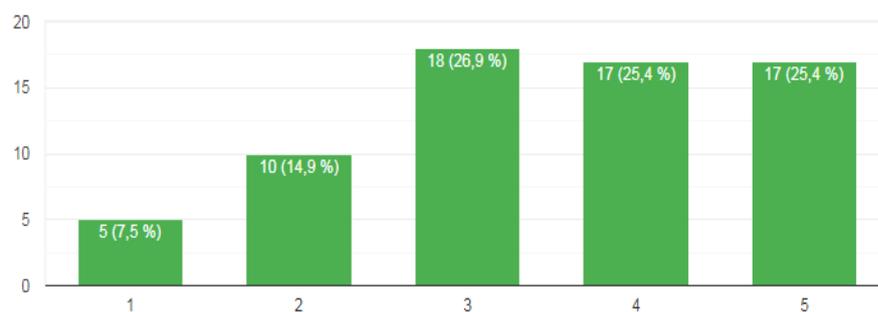


Figure 2. Responses on sharing tasks.

When asked about the effectiveness of the decisions made by the head of the detour, over 50% (Selection 4- close to agreement and 5- of total agreement) of the respondents (Figure 3) consider that most of the decisions and issued decisions are effective, whose results indicates that the solution chosen by the unit manager has been carefully analyzed beforehand. In addition to this possible analysis, the result also shows a high degree of confidence in the hierarchic superior.

Do you consider viable all the decisions issued by the hierarchically superior boss (respectively the head of the forest district)?

67 answers

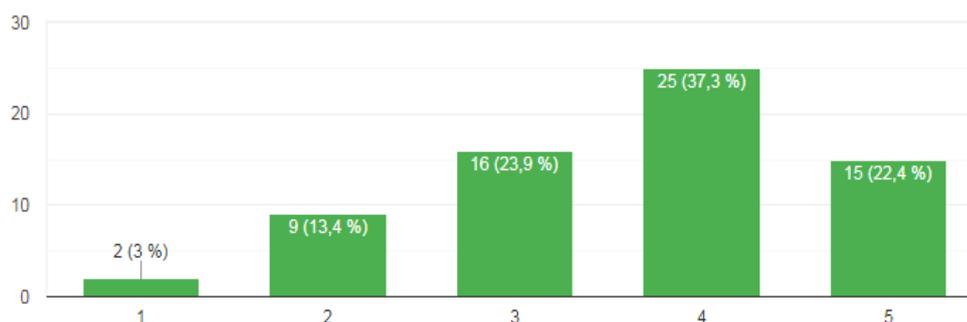


Figure 3. Responses to decision efficiency.

Even if the head of the unit decides by himself what is better for the institution he manages, in order to issue an optimal solution, it is necessary to accept certain compromises or take risks. These seem to be observed by subordinates in view of the answers received to the question of the acceptance of compromises by the head of the unit (Figure 4).

Do you think that compromises are often used to make a certain decision?

67 answers

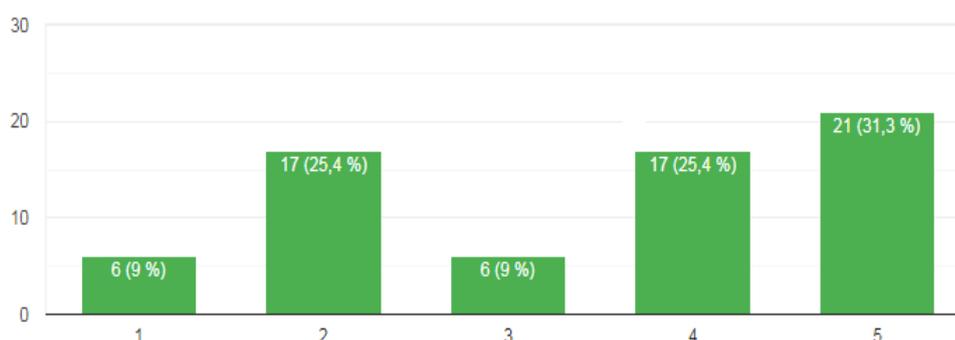


Figure 4. Compromise call responses.

Regarding the involvement from outside or inside the forest system in formulating a decision (questions 5 and 6 of the questionnaire), over 70% of respondents (Figure 5 and Figure 6) consider that, at the level of forest management, decisions are influenced only by higher hierarchical forest bodies or structures, not to mention major political implications, or other institutional forms.

Do you consider that the decision issued by the manager is the result of consultations and outside influences? (outside forest structures)

67 answers

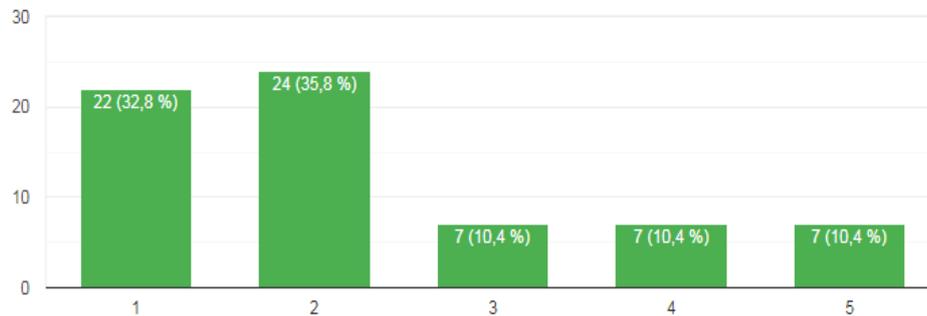


Figure 5. External influence responses in decision making.

Do you consider that the decision issued by the manager is the result of consultations and influences from within? (Upper forest structure / other forest structures)

67 answers

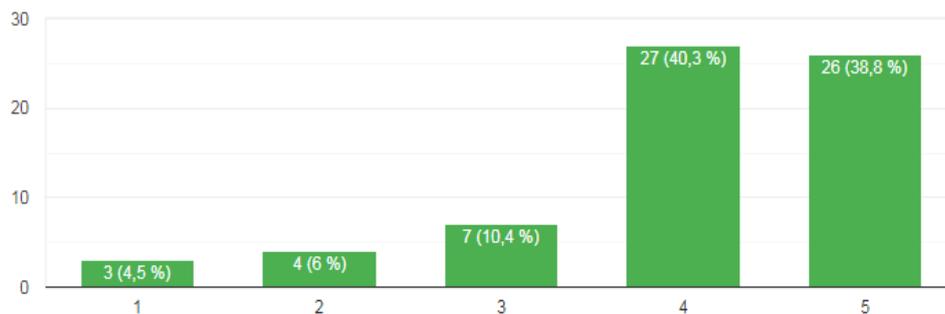


Figure 6. Responses to internal influence in decision making.

To questions 7 and 8 (Figure 7 and Figure 8) on consultation and active participation in the decision-making process, including those affected by the measures of a decision, over 70% of respondents consider it is necessary and beneficial to consult/participate in the decision-making process, especially those affected by the application of a measure or decision. These answers also show dissatisfaction with some of the decisions made by the manager for some of the respondents at a given time. Although until the time of the questionnaire they declared that they were consulted on the decisions and judgments that affect their activity, they consider that this practice is normal and should be permanent and developed at a large scale.

Are you consulted regarding the issued decisions related to the activity you carry out?

67 answers

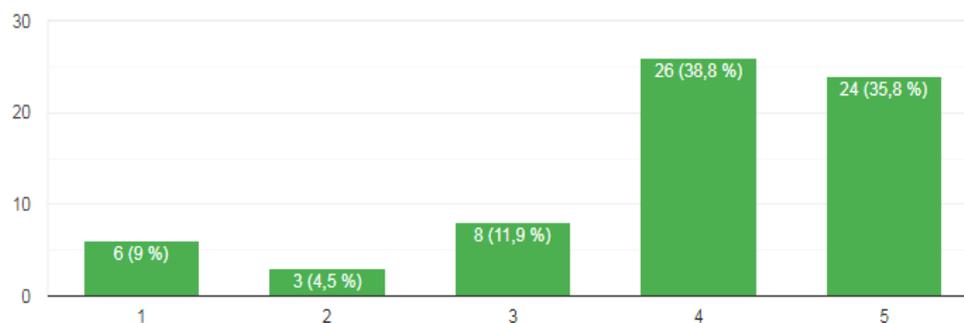


Figure 7. Responses to consulting the subordinate before issuing a decision.

Do you consider it useful to have more people involved in the decision-making process, including those affected by the outcome of the decision?

67 answers

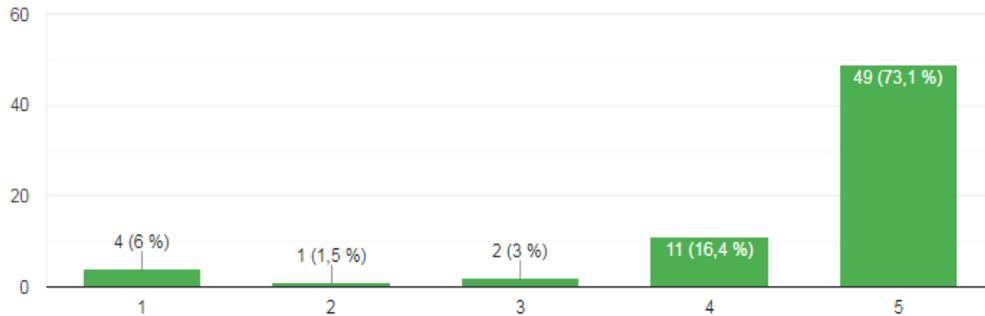


Figure 8. Answers on the usefulness of multiple participation in decision-making.

Do you think that the work sessions, carried out weekly / monthly, train the staff in the production activity?

67 answers

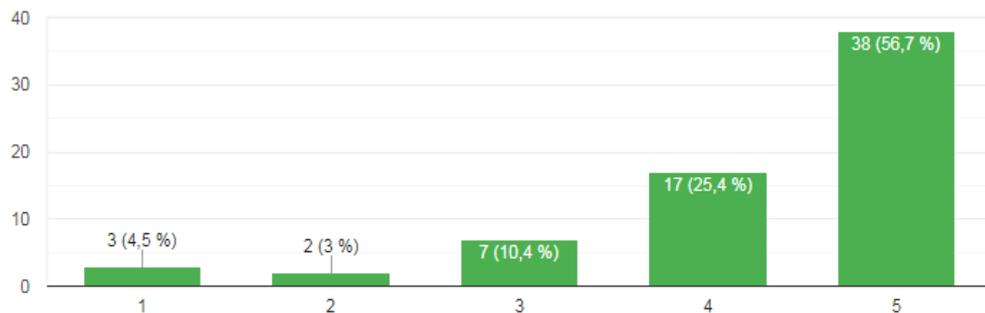


Figure 9. Answers on the usefulness of meetings in the decision-making process.

Although the routine of the weekly and monthly meetings creates discomfort among the participants, especially those who are asked to explain the achievements and compliance with the tasks outlined, the answers provided show that these meetings have the expected results and are beneficial in the production process. This is due to better activity organizing and working time planning during these meetings, resulting in repositioning and prioritizing the emergencies to be performed for meeting the deadlines. According to the centralized answers to question 9 (Figure 9), over 50% of respondents admit that weekly scheduled meetings involving staff in production.

Do you agree / are satisfied with the decisions issued by the superior to the department you manage?

67 answers

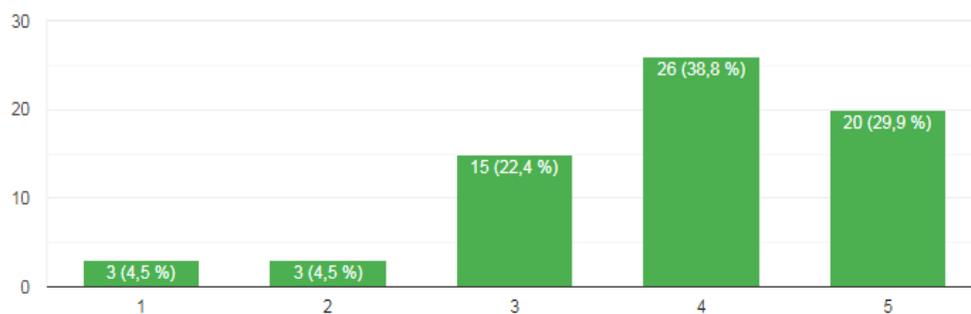


Figure 10. Responses to the acceptance of a decision.

In question 10, regarding the decisions issued strictly for the activity managed by the respondents, over 60% of them are satisfied/agree with them, which indicates the managerial abilities of the institution's leader (Figure 10).

Do you think that the decisions taken by the deputy head of the forest district (during his absence) are more substantiated?

67 answers

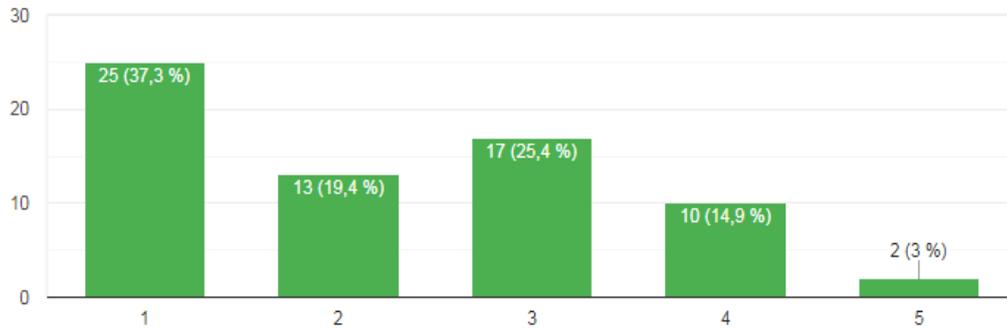


Figure 11. Responses to the credibility of management delegation.

Regarding the decisions and orders issued by the deputy head of the district during a period of absence for various reasons, getting replaced (Figure 11), respondents (over 50% of them) consider that they are not carefully analyzed and substantiated. And in this case, the answers may have an emotional implication and a degree of subjectivism depending on the experience and on the relationship between the affected person and the boss's replacement colleague. On the other hand, the lack of managerial experience can be one of the reasons for choosing a solution lacking objective foundations, ultimately leading to the destabilization of the team (which may be difficult to form and prepare).

What title would you assign to the person in charge of your subunit?

67 answers

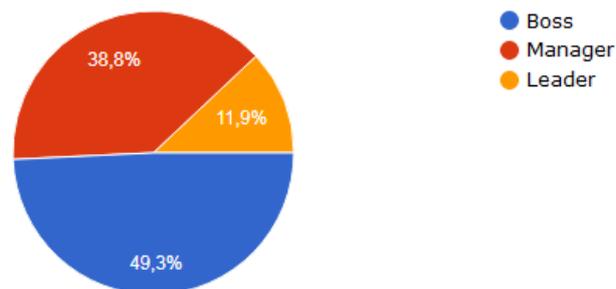


Figure 12. Responses to leadership attitudes toward subordinates.

The last question formulated in this questionnaire aims at analyzing the title assigned to the management in the vision of the subordinate, considering the characteristics of the three titles of boss, manager and leader. In question number 12, it was observed that the 67 respondents perceive the leadership differently. According to Figure 12, the majority consider that the current title of "boss" given to the head of the district is the correct one and the option of leader is still far from being found in the forestry field. However, 26 of the respondents find that the best matching of the top hierarchy position is with the concept of manager, a title that will probably replace in the future the notion of head of forest district.

Even if the external influences may come through the forest hierarchy, they are not well perceived by the subordinates of the forest district. The decisions taken by the

deputy head of the detour are not welcomed by subordinates who consider that they are taken unfoundedly and in the absence of certain basic information. From the small number of answers we can only conclude that in general the staffs employed by the forestry schools are satisfied with the head of the forest district, with the decisions elaborated by him. At the level of the forestry schools, where most of the respondents carry out their activity, the management collaborates and consults the persons possibly affected, before issuing a decision.

Conclusions. From a brief analysis of the decision-making process at the forest detour level, we can conclude that although the management of a forest detour is in the hands of a single person, the decision-making process is influenced by many factors and many variables. In many cases, the higher forestry structures formulate general decisions that can be implemented by the manager of a forestry district only by assuming a risk or compromise on his part. Decision makers are perceived differently by subordinates and this is due to the level of training and managerial experience assimilated by each of them. Regarding the influence of outside management, we notice that the forest system is quite closed and rigid. An appointment for managing positions is particularly important, involving a degree of responsibility, given the multitude of requirements that must be met by a head of district/institution manager.

Conflict of interest. The author declares no conflict of interest.

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