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NAVIGATING TALENT SEAS: ENHANCING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN DALIAN SHIPPING COMPANIES

Mr. Puspanathan Doraisingam¹, Dr. Kumarashvari Subramaniam*², Dr. Anantha Raj A. Arokiasamy Alex³, Bi Honglu⁴, Dr. Fawad Ahmed⁵

¹Lecturer Faculty of Business and Communications, INTI International University

²Lecturer British University Vietnam

³Associate Professor Lecturer Faculty of Business and Communications, INTI International University

⁴Faculty of Business and Communications, INTI International University

⁵Assistant Professor: Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

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Corresponding Author: Kumarashvari Subramaniam
(puspanathan.dsingam@newinti.edu.my)

ABSTRACT

Professional shipping employees are important human resources in shipping companies, they make up a significant share of the number of all the employees in the companies, maintaining enough, a reasonable structure and a high-quality talent team has a vital role, for example, they can ensure the ship safety and life safety, protect the marine environment, guarantee the sustainable development of shipping industry and so on. Faced with the shortage of professional shipping human resources and the significant loss, it is of great significance for the healthy development of shipping companies to study the factors that affect employee motivation in shipping companies and thus reduce the loss of employees. Finally, through the analysis of the questionnaire research found that salary, work environment, and leadership style have an influence on employee motivation shipping companies in Dalian, and salary is one of the biggest influences on employee motivation, therefore, how to improve employee motivation through reasonable salary is imported to the shipping companies in Dalian. The research of this paper is based on the analysis of the factors that influence employee motivation in salary, work environment, and leadership style, and it profoundly summarizes and analyzes the reasons for the loss of professional seafaring talents. This paper is divided into five chapters, the first chapter summarizes the purpose and significance of the topic; The second chapter is a literature review; The third chapter is the research methodology; The fourth chapter analyzes the collected data; The fifth chapter gives some suggestions and discusses results. Additionally, this research contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, by addressing the importance of employee motivation and retention in the shipping industry, thereby promoting economic growth and ensuring decent work for individuals in this sector.

KEYWORDS: Shipping company; Employee motivation; Salary; Working environment; Leadership style, Decent work, Economic Growth

1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, international shipping is closely related to people's lives, and the international shipping economy is a weathervane of the world economy. The development of the world economy is inseparable from the shipping economy, and the development of the shipping economy is also inseparable from the development of the world economy, they are mutually reinforcing (Verhetsel and Sel, 2009). Seventy percent of the earth's surface area is covered by the oceans, ninety percent of the world's economy is done by the sea, and half of the world's population would starve without ocean transportation. (Lee, Chang and Lee, 2013). Nowadays, the world economic competition is increasingly fierce, and in the end, it is the competition of the shipping economy. Whoever grabs the sea first is the winner of the future (Panayides and Wiedmer, 2011)

Every country in the modern world is dependent on cheap raw materials that allow the factory to function properly and to make homes or offices light or heated. Some countries produce large quantities of cheap fuel to meet the needs of countries around the world, which are mined from mines and shipped to the rest of the world by oil tankers. Some countries produce goods that are transported to other countries by container, the connection between the different countries in modern society has become so close, it is because international shipping has formed the network transport system for centuries, transportation systems to efficiently has put the world closely linked together, therefore, international shipping plays an important role in promoting modern economy, especially economic globalization.(Jacks and Pendakur, 2010) If there is international trade, people always have to engage in activities related to international shipping directly or indirectly, so international shipping can influence people's lives to some extent. In addition, international shipping is an important scarce resource to humans in the sense, it is not only to carry passengers or goods from one region to another region, but also it is an important behavior that affects human activities.

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the world's economy is done by the sea, and half of the world's population would starve without ocean transportation.(Lee, Chang and Lee, 2013) Nowadays, the world economic competition is increasingly fierce, and in the end, it is the competition of the shipping economy. The country that controls maritime trade and resources will be well positioned to control the future global economy (Panayides and Wiedmer, 2011).

China gradually realized the importance of the shipping industry in the national economy, so it constantly increased investment in the marine economy, and actively supported and promoted the development of the shipping market, to drive the further development of the state economy and trade(Vanecko, 2011). The rapid development of technological progress and the economy in China in recent years, has also led to the rapid development of the shipping industry, China's shipping industry in its singular gestures holds more say in the international arena. China's shipping industry is influencing and changing the world after it has experienced the process of being influenced and changed by the world. China's national economy has entered a new stage of development, it will realize the scale expansion of heavy industry, processing industry and other industries through industrial layout adjustment, and the implementation of the coastal port layout planning will provide the conditions for the Chinese shipping industry to achieve large-scale transportation, it will be the biggest positive factors affecting the development of shipping industry in the next few years. On the road of the prosperity and development of China's shipping industry, shipping enterprises and their professional fleets are changing from traditional comprehensive to specialized, large-scale.

Dalian, which harbors the largest port in the region and serves as the entry point to northeast China, offers considerable opportunity in the shipping industry. The strategy analysis produced because of this endeavor makes helpful suggestions for the development of mobility, energy conservation, and industrialization. Dalian partners with World Economic Forum to make a contribution to the urban development. Dalian is part of the Urban Development initiative which aspires to open technology to business owners and public authorities to reach a neutral ground to benefit both parties. (Dalian and Zhangjiakou Champion City Strategy, 2014).

Research Objective

The objectives of this research are as follows:

RO1.To find out if leadership style affects employee

motivation of the shipping companies in Dalian.
 RO2.To find out if salary affects employee motivation of the shipping companies in Dalian.
 RO3.To find out if the work environment affects employee motivation of the shipping companies in Dalian.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Justification

Locke proposed the goal-setting theory, which believes that the clarity of the work objective can improve the performance of the work (Locke and Latham, 2006). Because people have the desire to understand the results and the cognitive tendency of their behaviors, this tendency can reduce the blindness of behaviors and improve the degree of self-control behaviors (Locke and Latham, 2002). Clear goals can help people figure out what they want to accomplish and how much effort they can make. In particular, the goal is more difficult than the employee's ability, but it can be achieved by a certain degree of effort (Erez and Judge, 2001). This goal can provide a challenge, and through the completion of the goal, the employee can achieve a sense of accomplishment and meet the need for self-growth. The goal-setting theory emphasizes timely feedback on the employee's work situation so that employees have a clear understanding of their work completion (Locke, 1996). Locke and Latham designed a complex model of individual goal setting and performance (Gilson, 2006). The following diagram shows a simplified version of this model (Covington, 2000). It can be seen from this model that the variables that result in individual high-performance level and their relationship. The basic idea of the model is to see the goal as a motivator because it allows people to compare the current performance with the desired goal (Griffin and Moorhead, 2007). To some extent, it is generally assumed that they will not be satisfied if their current level does not meet the requirements of the target, but if they believe that they can achieve their goals through hard work, they will work hard and achieve their goals (Schunk, 1991). Setting goals can improve your performance, because goals can make the desired type and level of performance more explicit (Pintrich, 2000).

2.2 Motivation

Golzadeh (2001) coined that human factors are one of the most important factors in achieving organizational goals in industrial or commercial organizations. As a result, incentives within humans have been recognized that they can increase efficiency and productivity and thus meet their

needs. In addition, the motivation for field management is a complex and multidimensional behavior, so the understanding and application of motivation depends on the knowledge and skills required (Di Serio, Ibáñez and Kloos, 2013). The author does a questionnaire survey on employees, and their answers can find the motivation of employees, therefore, managers can take some actions to achieve organizational goals by cooperating with employees (Deterding, 2012).

It is important to train employees' work enthusiasm and make them more interested in the work, which is very important for achieving organizational goals. When employee dissatisfaction becomes apparent, it will affect productivity and quality (Vance, Siponen and Pahnla, 2012). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the fundamental theories that explain motivational factors beyond money for workers and the public. This theory demonstrates 5 levels of motivation, firstly from the bottom of the pyramid money becomes the primary motivator. This is followed by safety needs which explains about living in a safer environment especially to the workers for instant proper supply of equipment and safety gears. The third tier of motivation is belonging and the need to socialize with co-workers. The top two motivators according to Maslow are Esteem needs and Self Actualization which denotes the highest level of motivational element for workers such as recognition at the workplace and willingness to accept challenging tasks from superiors (Gambrel, P. and Cianci, R., 2003).

Ostovar (2003) conducted a descriptive study of the "factors affecting employees", and he analyzed the collected data using the chi-square test and SPSS. The result showed that managers and employees had a consistent view of the hierarchy of needs, in other words, there was no significant difference in motivational factors between managers and employees. Others point out that wages and job security are the most important predictors of motivation, Vioasami (2001) studied this issue, he probes into the factors affecting the motivation of employees, these factors include communication skills, crisis management, interpersonal relationships, relationship between decision conflict management, error management, incentive management, trust, supervision, and guidance, the results show that employees' motivation increases when they participate in the decision-making process.

2.2.1 Employee Motivation

Motivation is the internal passion of employees, which drives employees to complete work

(Chaudhary & Sharma, 2012). They indicate that motivation's process is the process of pursuing demand, and to meet that demand, set a goal, the incentive mechanism is set up to better accomplish the goals, and they also point out that motivation can improve the efficiency of the organization and improve employees' willingness to work.

Intrinsic motivation, from internal sources, Deci and Ryan (2000) note can be seen through personal fulfillment, a sense of achievement, alignment with one's values and interests

internal reasons like personal fulfillment, a sense of success, or harmony with one's beliefs and interests are the source of intrinsic drive. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is fueled by outside incentives like cash, job advancement, or public acclaim (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Intrinsic motivation fosters creativity and innovation by enhancing psychological safety, especially in complex, cognitively demanding jobs.

Furthermore, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in interest in the role that leadership plays in inspiring workers. By encouraging a feeling of purpose and autonomy, transformational leadership which is typified by motivating and empowering staff members, has been demonstrated to dramatically increase motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Likewise, psychological safety, the state in which workers may express themselves and take chances without worrying about the repercussions which has been associated with increased levels of engagement and motivation (Edmondson, 2019).

Additionally, the COVID-19 breakout has changed the nature of employee impulse. As remote work and hybrid models have become more popular, companies have had to modify their motivating tactics to meet new issues including preserving team unity, preventing isolation, and guaranteeing work-life balance (Kniffin et al., 2021). Research indicates that in the post-pandemic age, successful incentive tactics today need clear communication, flexible work schedules, and an emphasis on employee well-being (Parker et al., 2020).

2.3 LEADERSHIP STYLE

Leadership is a critical component of organizational success, encompassing the ability to influence, inspire, and guide individuals or teams toward achieving shared goals. It involves not only directing tasks but also fostering a vision, building relationships, and creating an environment that encourages growth and innovation. Over the years, leadership theories have evolved, reflecting changes in organizational structures, workforce dynamics,

and societal expectations. From traditional models like transformational and transactional leadership to contemporary approaches such as servant and adaptive leadership, the concept of leadership continues to adapt to the complexities of the modern workplace.

One of the most influential leadership theories is transformational leadership, introduced by James MacGregor Burns and further developed by Bernard Bass. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers by creating a compelling vision, encouraging innovation, and fostering a sense of purpose (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership style has been widely studied and linked to higher levels of employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational performance (Wang et al., 2011). In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on maintaining order and achieving short-term goals through rewards and punishments. While effective in certain contexts, transactional leadership is often criticized for its limited ability to inspire long-term commitment or creativity (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

In recent years, the concept of servant leadership has gained prominence. Introduced by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s, servant leadership emphasizes the leader's role as a caretaker who prioritizes the needs of their team members, fosters their development, and empowers them to achieve their full potential (Greenleaf, 1977). Research has shown that servant leadership positively impacts employee well-being, trust, and organizational citizenship behavior (Eva et al., 2019). This approach is particularly relevant in today's workplace, where employees increasingly value empathy, inclusivity, and ethical leadership.

Another emerging leadership style is adaptive leadership, which focuses on navigating complex and uncertain environments. Developed by Heifetz and Linsky (2009), adaptive leadership emphasizes the importance of flexibility, resilience, and the ability to mobilize people to tackle challenging problems. This approach is especially relevant in the context of rapid technological advancements, globalization, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have required leaders to adapt quickly to unprecedented challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009).

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of empathetic and resilient leadership. Leaders have had to navigate remote work, employee well-being, and economic uncertainty while maintaining organizational stability. Studies have shown that leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence, clear communication, and a focus on employee mental health have been more effective in maintaining morale and productivity during the

crisis. Additionally, the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital tools and virtual collaboration, requiring leaders to develop new skills in managing remote teams and fostering a sense of connection in a virtual environment (Kniffin et al., 2021).

AI and digital technologies at the workplace are reshaping leadership practices. Artificial intelligence is transforming decision-making, enhancing digital leadership, and influencing managerial roles, with AI increasingly capable of supporting or even replacing human leaders in organisations (Kollmann et al., 2023; Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2023).

H1: Leadership Style Affects Employee Motivation of the Shipping Company

2.4 Salary

Past research has shown that money is a motivator and is seen as a success symbol in the world (Engelberg and Sjoberg, 2006). Money is an advantage for managers to manage employees because money is a good management way, and it has a huge impact on employees' performance.

Some researchers point out that motivation is the main tool in motivating employees, they know that there is a direct relationship between wages and outcomes (Androniceanu, 2011). Nohria (2008) says managers should reward employees for the hard work they do, there are other important factors, a satisfactory salary is one of the most important factors. The theory of F.W.Taylor clearly articulates that money (salary) is the primary motivator of all where offering more wages based on productivity could benefit the organization (Blake and Moseley, 2010).

Svecova (2009) pointed out that the improvement of productivity, the increase of innovation, and the improvement of product quality are the main manifestations of the increase in employee satisfaction therefore, employers must improve employees' job satisfaction and then they will be loyal to the company, the main factors of satisfaction included a diversity of work, salary, good supervision of subordinates, work environment, and welfare, and personal development opportunities of employees.

Low salary is one of the key causes of employee turnover, as it leads to dissatisfaction, reduced motivation, and decisions to leave the organisation in search of better financial rewards (Al-Suraihi et al., 2021). In the shipping industry, although salary must be the main consideration for employees, just relying on salary is not enough to guarantee their enthusiasm (Angott, 2007). According to Arokiasamy (2013) job satisfaction directly affects employees' turnover intent.

According to a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) study conducted in 2023, 82% of employees cited competitive pay as a crucial element in job satisfaction and motivation (SHRM, 2023). In the same way, a study done in 2022 underscored that the compensation package attracts skilled labor and retains it, as workers are less keen on looking for other job opportunities when they feel appropriately remunerated (PwC, 2022).

Recently, McKinsey & Company discovered that, among the many factors affecting motivation, compensation is the most impactful when it comes to recruiting and keeping skilled employees. It was noted that those employees who considered their payment packages as reasonable and competitive were 1.5 more motivated and committed to the organization than those who didn't (McKinsey, 2024). Research consistently shows that salary and incentives are critical drivers of employee productivity and retention. Alamsyah et al. (2024) found that fair salaries and performance-based incentives directly boost employee motivation and commitment, ensuring they remain engaged and loyal to their organisations. Furthermore, compensation systems that promote internal and external equity help employees feel valued, encouraging them to perform at higher standards. Similarly, Eliza et al. (2024) highlight that compensation not only influences work motivation but also serves as an essential factor in improving employee performance, especially when combined with positive leadership and a supportive work environment. Competitive salaries, clear pay structures, and regular incentives align employees' efforts with organisational goals, reducing turnover rates and promoting a culture of achievement and satisfaction.

However, financial benefits alone do not sustain employee motivation in the long term. Other factors, such as recognition, career advancement opportunities, and a healthy work-life balance, play a crucial role in maintaining engagement and job satisfaction (Gallup, 2024).

H2: Salary Affects Employee Motivation

2.5 Work environment

The employer should provide safe working conditions, decent living conditions and reasonable employment conditions, in addition, they should also provide competitive salaries, bonus plans, share bonuses, paid vacation, and tuition reimbursement, pension and health plans, etc., so employers will convey to employees a powerful message: their importance in the company (Saks, 2006). Just relying on pay does not keep them on the job, although

salary must be a major consideration for potential employees (Angott, 2007). Employees are more likely to work in a safe and comfortable working environment where benefits other than monetary compensation can attract and retain employees according to management theory. Yazinski (2009) found that 70% of managers believe that the reason for employee turnover is not only related to salary but also to the working environment. Branham (2005) found that 88% of employees quit for other reasons. Therefore, shipowners and operators should implement the strategy of retaining talent and meeting the needs of employees in shipping companies. A study in Bangladesh by Ramachandran S.D, et. al, (2024) identified that work environment and internal policy have strong employee satisfaction.

In this context, the working environment can be perceived as engagement from superiors in an organization where work engagement has a significant impact on the organization's performance (Arokiasamy, 2021). Employees are increasingly redefining the boundaries between work and home, highlighting the importance of a more holistic perspective on workplace motivation. Thus, according to McKinsey & Company (2023), "What employees want from work, including flexible hours, remote work, advancement opportunities, work that is purposeful and meaningful, and a fair salary, can vary widely by these factors and more: age group, life stage, work experience, and so on" (p. 22).

Younger employees, like Millennials and Gen Z, prefer flexibility and a purpose-driven work environment over traditional benefits and atmosphere, for example. Researchers claim that 72% of employees under 35 years of age today consider remote work options and flexible working hours to be very important in job satisfaction (Gallup, 2024). Older employees, on the other hand, might value job security, health benefits, and retirement plans more. According to the 2024 report by Deloitte, companies that provided personalized benefits packages experienced a 30% retention rate across the age spectrum (Deloitte, 2024).

In the Future of Jobs Report 2025 by World Economic Forum, the availability of such an atmosphere is becoming a key measure to attract and retain talent. Interestingly enough, employee health and well-being are the third most critical strategy for increasing talent supply according to 64% of employers. There is also a growing focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, with 83% of companies having a DEI program, compared to just 67% of organizations in 2023. In addition to

this, more than half of employers (52%) state that by 2030, they will devote an even higher percentage of their revenue to wages, which demonstrates their intention to offer more competitive pay. These trends highlight how people-centric workplace strategies of employee well-being, inclusivity, and fair remuneration as priorities can usher in the right work environment (World Economic Forum, 2025).

H3: Work Environment Affects Employee Motivation of the Shipping Company

Independent Variables Dependent Variable

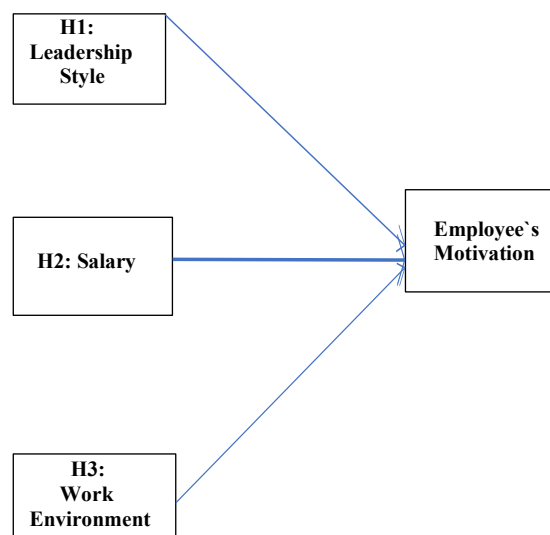


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3.0 METHODS

In this study, a quantitative descriptive design was used to identify and analyze the main factors influencing employee motivation. A collection of measurable data is known as quantitative research (Brassington, 2003). Therefore, according to the researcher, the results of quantitative study will only be impartial and trustworthy if a sizable representative sample is developed. The researcher employed an exploratory study because it looks at the factors that affect employee motivation. Exploratory factor analysis is used to determine the shipping company's leadership style, working environment, employee motivation, and compensation drivers. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess for reliability. The effect of the shipping company's leadership style, working conditions, and pay on employee excitement was then investigated using multiple regression analysis. The statistical software program SPSS for Windows was used to evaluate the data. All employees of Dalian shipping

enterprises at all levels made up the research subjects. The traits that the population must have been determined by the qualifying criterion of the research of impartiality (Polit & Hungler, 1999). To participate in the study, participants must be employed by a Dalian shipping firm. They ought to be split up among shipping firms of all kinds that want to take part in the research. This study used non-probability sampling, namely convenience sampling, because the questionnaire was sent to assistants of several Dalian shipping companies. Five shipping businesses were chosen for the study and research based on the research demands; these companies are the top shipping companies in Dalian. Therefore, the researcher distributed 300 questionnaires to five Dalian shipping businesses for this investigation.

Recent quantitative studies on employee motivation and performance within the shipping industry have been suggested recently, suggesting the impact of leadership, work-life balance, and other factors, such as organizational commitment. Ricardianto *et al.* (2020) with a research sample of 290 ship crew members on and off passenger vessels who dock at the Port of Tanjung Priok, using SEM testing and

found that leadership style, work-life balance and employee engagement had a significant and positive impact to work effectiveness. The same goes for Widyaningrum, Widiana, and Sutarso (2022), whose sample consisted of 135 employees from a large shipping company located in Surabaya, Indonesia, and who used SEM to prove that leadership and work safety affect employee performance, with organizational commitment mediating these effects. Majid *et al.* (2024) in his study which involved 30 ship's crew sampling from PT Waruna Nusa Sentana, utilized a path analysis model, found that ship master leadership style and logistics management through direct and indirect approach were proven to affect crew performance and efficiency of tanker operations. Together, these four studies illustrate the power of a quantitative approach to examine employee motivation, with an emphasis on leadership and organizational factors as significant determinants of performance in the shipping industry.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Data

Table 1: Summary of Demographic Profile

Demographic	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	191	83.04%
	Female	39	16.96%
Age	20-25 years old	13	5.65%
	26-30 years old	26	11.3%
	31-35 years old	51	22.17%
	36-40 years old	86	37.39%
	Over 40 years old	54	23.48%
Education level	High school and below	70	30.43%
	Diploma	85	36.96%
	Bachelor's degree	59	25.65%
	Master's degree	13	5.65%
	Doctorate degree	3	1.30%
Years of working	Less than 1 year	89	38.70%
	1 to 5 years	94	40.87%
	5 to 10 years	23	10%
	More than 10 years	24	10.43%
Income level per month	Below RMB 4000	56	24.35%
	RMB 4001 to RMB 7000	93	40.43%
	RMB 7001 to RMB 10,000	58	25.22%
	RMB 10,001 and Above	23	10%

The above table 1 shows that among the interviewees, there are 191 males, accounting for 83.04% and 39 females, accounting for 16.96%. In shipping companies, the proportion of male employees is more than four times that of women. The proportion of respondents in the age range from big to small was 36-40 years old, N=86 and 37.39%. Over 40 years old, N=54, 23.48 percent; 31-35 years old, N=51, 22.17%; 26-30 years old, N= 26, 11.3%; 20-

25 years old, N=13, 5.65 percent. This indicates that more than half of the employees are over the age of 36 in the shipping companies in Dalian. The education level of the respondents was 67.39% below the junior college level, which indicates that most employees' education level is medium or below in the shipping company. Among them, the proportion of employees with education is 25.65%, which indicates that the proportion of employees

who have received higher education accounts for a quarter. The table also shows that the number of employees is very small and that education is higher than the undergraduate level. Respondents worked a fixed number of years 38.70% in less than a year, and the proportion of 1 to 5 years is 40.87%, this shows that the employee's work time is not long, the employee turnover is larger in the shipping company, the ratio of working years is roughly equal to 5 to 10 years and more than 10 years. In terms of income of respondents, nearly 65% of respondents had incomes below 7000RMB, which is a low income for employees working in shipping companies. Nearly a quarter of respondents had incomes of 7001-10000rmb, and only 10% of those surveyed had more than 10000RMB, indicating that employees' income level was low in Dalian's shipping companies.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

To study the direction and degree of dependence of two or more random variables. Linear correlation is used to measure the linear correlation strength between continuous variables mainly using Pearson correlation coefficient R; $R > 0$, linear positive correlation; $R < 0$, linear negative correlation; $R = 0$, there is no linear relationship between two variables, but it does not mean that there is no relationship between the two variables. Low correlation R is in 0.0-0.3, moderate correlation R is in 0.3-0.8 and height correlation R is in 0.8-1.0 (Norusis, 2006).

4.2.1 Correlation of Leadership Style with Employee Motivation

Table 2: Correlation of Leadership Style with Employee Motivation

Correlations				
		LS		EM
LS	Pearson Correlation		1	.707**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N		230	230
EM	Pearson Correlation	.707**		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	230		230

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the above table 2, the p value is 0.000, which indicates that the leadership style has a correlation with employee motivation, and the correlation value is 0.707, which indicates that their correlation is strong. There was a relationship between leadership style and employee motivation at significant level of 1%.

4.2.2 Correlation of Salary with Employee Motivation

Table 3: Correlation of Salary with Employee Motivation

Correlations				
		S		EM
S	Pearson Correlation		1	.781**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N		230	230
EM	Pearson Correlation	.781**		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	230		230

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the above table 3, the p-value is 0.000, which indicates that the salary is correlated with the employee motivation, and the correlation value is 0.781, which indicates that their correlation is strong. There is a relationship between salary and employee motivation at significant level of 1% (Field, 2018).

4.2.3 Correlation of Work Environment with Employee Motivation

Table 4: Correlation of Work Environment with Employee Motivation

Correlations				
		WE		EM
WE	Pearson Correlation		1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N		230	230
EM	Pearson Correlation	.701**		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	230		230

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the above table 4, the P-value is 0.000, which indicates that the working environment is correlated with employee motivation, and the correlation value is 0.701, indicating that their correlation strength is strong. There was a relationship between work environment and employee motivation at a significant level of 1% (Field, 2018).

4.3 Multiple Regressions

Multiple regression analysis of linear dependence of multiple independent variables and multiple dependent variables are also discussed, which is called the multiple regression analysis model (Norus, 2006).

Table 5: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.804 ^a	.646	.642	.69955

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work environment, Leadership style, Salary

As shown above table 5, the R-value is 0.804, which is greater than 0.70. It indicates that the predictive

relationship level is better between work environment, leadership style, salary and employee motivation.

4.3.1 Correlation Coefficients

Table 6: Coefficients

Model		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.126	.384		5.535	.000
	Leadership Style	.302	.063	.284	4.762	.000
	Salary	.604	.063	.573	9.600	.000
	Work Environment	.300	.057	.280	4.576	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Motivation						

In table 6, the various evaluation coefficients are presented about three proposed hypotheses in the paper, therefore, the above table shows that employee motivation has a strong correlation with salary, leadership style and work environment. Therefore:

H1: There is a significant relationship between leadership style and employee motivation. p -value=0.000 b -value=0.284. H1 is supported.

H2: There is a significant relationship between salary and employee motivation. p -value=0.000 b -value=0.573. H2 is supported.

H3: There is a significant relationship between work environment and employee motivation. p -value=0.000 b -value=0.280. H3 is supported.

5.0 DISCUSSION

Based on this study, it has been found that leadership style, salary and working environment have a considerable effect on work motivation in Dalian's shipping companies. Out of these factors, salary is the single most important determinant of employee motivation, followed by leadership style and working environment. These insights have potential operational implications for shipping companies based in Dalian as well as for other shipping firms worldwide in that there is a requirement to consider both extrinsic and intrinsic factors impacting employee motivational levels in the workplace to create a workforce that is motivated and engaged. By prioritizing these factors, organizations can minimize employee turnover, work efficiency, and sustainable growth.

Salary is known to play a significant role in motivating individuals and this study found a strong positive correlation (b -value = 0.573) between the two. Attractive and equitable compensation packages are key in attracting & retaining talent, especially in a demanding industry like shipping. Pay structures should be transparent to align employees with the goals of the organization along with performance-based incentives.

Moreover, employers should be mindful of employees' financial well-being and offer bonuses, health plans, and retirement packages to enhance motivation. Such measures not only enhance morale but also promote a feeling of fairness and appreciation among employees.

Furthermore, this study found a strong positive relationship (b -value = 0.284) between leadership style and employee motivation. Transformational and empathetic styles of leadership emphasize mentorship, inclusivity, and emotional intelligence as being particularly effective for creating a motivated workforce. Managers who prioritize workers' welfare, communicate effectively, and align their leadership with a clear purpose can foster higher levels of engagement and commitment. This study exacerbates the fact that the shipping industry being a 24/7 sector characterized by long working hours and crew rotation schedules presents an excellent opportunity to utilize these leadership practices to mitigate some of the unique challenges that employees at Dalian may face (maintaining a positive work environment, providing support for employee wellness).

Another aspect influencing employee motivation is the work environment and, as this study uncovered, we noted a positive relationship (b -value = 0.280) between both variables. Motivation and productivity rates remain high in a safe, supportive, and ergonomic environment. Companies need to innovate their workplace ecosystems to cater to the new employee priorities that have emerged due to the disruption caused by the pandemic, for instance by investing in workplace modernisation, mental health initiatives and flexible work arrangements. Promoting healthy culture - advocating diversity, equity and inclusion can also contribute to employee engagement and retaining talent. Investing in mental health is not only good for the individual, it is done on our teams in a way to enhance a more cohesive and productive workforce.

This study thus further highlights the need to focus

on salary, leadership style and work environment that can ultimately improve the level of motivation of the employees of Dalian companies. However, organizations can create a supportive work environment through competitive compensation management practices and transformational leadership styles that facilitate an engaged workforce. These efforts are consistent with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which notes the contribution of employee motivation to economic development. There is potential for future research to also consider additional factors such as opportunities for career development and the influence of technology as human motivator through the perspectives of employees, which will enable similar insights for the shipping sector and beyond.

H1: There is a relationship between leadership style and employee motivation.

H1 is supported by data analysis in the fourth chapter, its p -value = 0.000 and b -value = 0.284, it shows that there is positive correlation relationship between leadership style and employee motivation, at the same time, it also means that leadership style impact on employee motivation is significant in shipping company in Dalian. B -value can be described as adding one unit to a leadership style, and employee motivation will increase by 0.284 units.

Zeffanne (2003) believes that the impact of employee motivation is not only to provide the corresponding incentive factors, should also eliminate the corresponding negative factors such as unsuitable leadership style for the employee's actual situation and their goal, therefore, a correct style of leadership and management is to encourage employees to participate and be able to achieve organizational goals in the process.

In numerous quantitative research studies the link between leadership style and employee motivation has been well noted, ultimately confirming H1 which states that there is a positive correlation. Yusup and Maulani (2023) analyzed 150 Indonesian manufacturing company employees through multiple linear regression and observed that transformational leadership significantly increases employee motivation through clarifying vision, empowering employees with good authority, and delivering constructive feedback.

Similarly, Hajiali et al. (2022) in research that involved 125 employees working in LLDIKTI-IX confirmed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) that leadership style has a direct impact when it comes to motivation and job satisfaction which will

consequently determine performance overall. In the shipping industry, a practice of SEM was conducted by Widyaningrum, Widiana, and Sutarso (2022), whose subjects included employees from one of the biggest shipping company in Indonesia, concluding that leadership style positively influences employees performance, while organizational commitment have function as a mediation. Additionally, Majid et al. (2024), based on path analysis of ship crew members ($N = 30$), stated that crew entrepreneurs' motivation is significantly influenced by shipmaster's leadership style, which has productivity at its core. These results corroborate the p -value of 0.000 and b -value of 0.284 (chapter four) and reaffirm a statistically significant relationship between leadership style and employee motivation, underscoring the importance of effective leadership in enhancing workforce motivation and performance.

H2: There is a relationship between salary and employee motivation.

H2 is supported by data analysis in the fourth chapter, indicating a positive correlation between salary and employee motivation (p -value = 0.000, b -value = 0.573). That is to say, the salary of the employees is the most important factor in the motivation of their behaviors, especially in the shipping industry in Dalian. The b -value would tell us that for every 1-unit change in salary, employee motivation would change by 0.573. Readership survey: Salary is the direct reward for employees, but how organizations determine pay structures by survey to help determine competitive pay for the organization. An effective salary system can increase employees' motivation which will increase the quality and quantity of work (Decenzo, 2005).

Recent research confirms salary correlates with motivation. According to a study conducted by Thapa (2023), financial and non-financial compensation and employee performance are intricately linked; moreover, employee motivation serves as a mediating variable. Better-paid employees had much higher levels of engagement and productivity, highlighting the importance of providing competitive compensation solutions to retain talent. Similarly, Velghe et al (2024) through a systematic analysis of merit pay demonstrate that pay-for-performance systems increase employee effort with motivation especially if reward and output are aligned better known as Merit-Based Pay. Additionally, compensation theories such as Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) and Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) indicate that employees are motivated when they feel that their efforts will be rewarded financially in a fair manner. This perception of equal

remuneration enforces satisfaction and increases productivity. Gerhart (2023) goes further to justify that pay-for-performance fosters long-term motivation, as employees see a link between their effort and salary increments.

H3: There is a relationship between work environment and employee motivation.

H3 is supported by data analysis in the fourth chapter, its p-value = 0.000 and b-value = 0.280, which shows that there is positive correlation relationship between work environment and employee motivation, at the same time, it also means that work environment impact on employee motivation is significant in a shipping company in Dalian. B-value can be described as adding one unit to a leadership style, and employee motivation will increase by 0.280 units. The work environment plays an important role in employee motivation, and it has a great influence on employee motivation, whether it is a negative or positive result (Chandrasekar, 2001). Additionally, the research findings indicate that work environment factors, including physical conditions, interpersonal relationships, and organizational culture, significantly impact employee motivation levels (Achmad et al., 2024). A conducive work environment enhances employee engagement, reduces stress, and fosters higher productivity, leading to improved motivation and job satisfaction. Recent studies further confirm these findings. Shammout (2022) found that work environment variables such as employee benefits, supervisor support, training and development, and physical conditions have a statistically significant impact on employee motivation and performance. Similarly, Nikoloutsopoulos et al. (2022), in a study on the construction industry, emphasized that the physical and social aspects of the work environment influence motivation levels, with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory identifying work conditions as key hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction and drive motivation.

Moreover, Daengs et al. (2024) highlighted that a supportive and well-structured work environment accounts for up to 59.4% of variations in employee performance, further establishing its critical role in motivation. In another study, Shammout (2022) revealed that organizations that actively invest in ergonomic workplace design, mental health support, and leadership development programs see increased levels of employee motivation and job satisfaction.

In conclusion, the work environment plays a vital role in fostering employee motivation, as supported by multiple recent studies. Organizations that focus on creating a positive, inclusive, and well-structured

work environment will likely see significant improvements in employee motivation, retention, and overall productivity.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

After analyzing the impact of independent variables such as leadership style, salary, and working environment on employee motivation in Dalian's shipping companies, this section offers recommendations for each independent variable. Consequently, this section presents guidelines derived from the previous analysis for each of the independent variables identified in the study of leadership style, salary, and work environment impacts on employee motivation in Dalian's shipping companies.

A leader of a company should care about employees and pay attention to employees' democratic participation (Bhatti, 2012). Employers who cultivate a leadership that satisfies their employees' higher psychological needs are valued and thereby perceived as more useful, leading to greater dedication and a sense of belonging to the organization, thereby ultimately claiming their benefits (Kara, 2013). Company management should actively learn modern management theories, enhance their education and overall competence, and prioritize employee well-being over mere production concerns. This leadership style can significantly improve employee motivation, ensuring both work quality and efficiency (Manzoor, 2011).

Based on this analysis of leadership style, salary and work environment in the shipping industry in Dalian, there is a significant need for a new, people-focused way of working to engage with employees (Xia, 2018). 'The leadership of the future must be empathetic, flexible and inclusive, ensuring that every stakeholder has a place at the table in the relevant decision-making processes and that trust, collaboration and emotional intelligence is cultivated (Northouse, 2022)' Today's workforce particularly millennials and Gen Zs demands transformational, people-centric leadership, one that prioritizes mentoring, work purpose and mental health (Winkler & Salas-Vallina, 2023). With hybrid and remote work models becoming dominant, leaders need to start using digital tools for transparent communication and inclusive management (Garton & Mankins, 2023). While compensation remains a key motivator, organizations should expand beyond traditional salary models by offering performance-based incentives, skill development opportunities, and financial wellness programs (Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, 2013).

The workforce places increasing importance on transparency in pay structures and equity audits (PayScale, 2023). However, modern employees expect intrinsic motivation as well as a reason to work, recognition, and growth pathways (Ryan & Deci, 2023). Considering flexible working solutions, mental well-being strategies and ergonomic workplaces have emerged as another key driver of motivation (Lee et al., 2024). As research shows, placing employees first results in performance and retention (Glassdoor, 2024); Salesforce, Hilton, and Cisco are excellent examples of this. Research has shown that organizations fostering psychological safety, diversity, and workplace wellness create more engaged and committed employees, whose efforts align with organizational goals (Edmondson, 2023). Employers must recognize that employee motivation extends beyond salary. By integrating leadership strategies, financial incentives, and well-being initiatives, organizations can foster greater employee engagement, job satisfaction, productivity, and long-term success (Shammout, 2022).

7.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on this study, it has been found that leadership style, salary and working environment have a considerable effect on work motivation in Dalian's shipping companies. Out of these factors, salary is the single most important determinant of employee motivation, followed by leadership style and working environment. These insights have potential operational implications for shipping companies based in Dalian as well as for other shipping firms worldwide in that there is a

requirement to consider both extrinsic and intrinsic factors impacting employee motivational levels in the workplace to create a workforce that is motivated and engaged. By prioritizing these factors, organizations can minimize employee turnover, while increasing work efficiency, and sustainable growth.

Salary is an important factor related and is positively correlated (b-value = 0.573) to the motivation factor. Innovative pay models, performance-oriented bonuses, economic wellness programs, health plans, and retirement packages enhance satisfaction among employees. Furthermore, leadership style significantly influences motivation (b-value = 0.284), with transformational and empathetic leadership effectively fostering employee engagement. The shipping industry is a 24/7 operation, and effective leadership can help alleviate challenges that may arise in the workplace.

Another influential condition is the work environment (b-value = 0.280), where an appropriate workplace can protect safety, provide support, and promote ergonomics (Hameed et al., 2017). To meet the changing demands of workers, businesses need to focus on modernisation, offer incentives for mental well-being, and implement flexible arrangements. This study illuminates the relevance of strategic HR practices, in line with UN sustainable development goal 8 which is Decent Work and Economic Growth. Future research could explore additional motivators in the shipping industry and beyond, such as career development opportunities and the role of technology in employee motivation

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