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ETHICS OF THE PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS. CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Abstract

Many factors affect the quality of public transport. Apart from the traditional elements, the behaviour of the people having contact with the passengers, i.e. the drivers, matters a lot. Currently, the ethical aspects of the professional drivers' work have a growing significance. Therefore it seems appropriate to review the determinants of the behaviour of this group. It has been assumed that these determinants depend both on the driver himself and on his work environment. Hence, the reasons and consequences of the moral dilemmas which occur due to the conflicts between the person and the organisation have been pointed out.

Keywords: ethics, work ethics, professional driver, public transport

Introduction

Current functional conditions of companies, especially service companies, require them to generate appropriate behaviour towards a more demanding consumer. The same goes for passenger transport. The passengers want the public transport (mostly based on road transport) carriers to satisfy their transport needs while also delivering a high quality service. The quality of transport services is affected, apart from the traditional elements, by the behaviour of the people having contact with the passengers, i.e. the drivers. Their behaviour is an effect of many factors, both exogenous and endogenous. One of the specific occurrences connected with the drivers attitude towards work in general, but also towards passengers is their work ethics. The ethical aspects are connected partly with the standards in companies or in sectors but also with the internal attitudes of the employees regarding what is right when it comes to work. Based on that, a number of moral

dilemmas might occur, which have to be settled in a way which favours the work quality of a particular driver but also their work comfort.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a different field connected with ethics and economic activity. More and more companies create formalised functional rules based on ethical and ecological standards with respect to their effectiveness goals. Despite the growing popularity of the CSR programmes, they are mostly attributed to large companies, with established market position and good traditions of business practice. Whereas ethical standards should apply to all entities on the supply side of the market – including small and medium enterprises of which, especially on the transport market, there are many. This is especially important in the times of many vacancies in transport, because the use of CSR in companies leads to a better upkeep and motivation of the employees (Figura, Michałowska, 2016, p. 31). The employees who, when better motivated, tend to do their job better, thus increasing the efficiency of the company. Therefore, a positive approach to ethical aspects, both in the individual and institutional dimension, is not only justifiable but also worth analysis.

The primary goal of this paper is to present the results of the research on ethical determinants of drivers' behaviour. Based on the assumption, that these determinants result from the driver himself and his work environment, the secondary goal of the paper is to point out the reasons and consequences of the moral dilemmas which occur due to the conflicts between the person and the organisation.

1. Ethical standards in professional drivers' job

The work standards of particular employees result primarily from the job specifics and secondarily from the rules adapted in particular companies – employers. Therefore, it is vital to present the specifics of the drivers' job, which is the concern of this research, by including the ethical demands of the job. Further in this paper, it will be updated by the specifics of public transport services along with the presentation of the ethical demands put in front of the entities – the contractors of these services.

Certain competences have to be possessed in order to carry out a specific job – partly they are a result of the aptitude, partly of fulfilling formal demands. In order to work as a professional driver, one has to know the road traffic rules. However, other elements of knowledge, surpassing the road traffic rules are necessary. Due to the specifics of the work the following competences are important (Juszczuk, n.d.):

- the decision-making ability;
- the anticipation ability;
- care about committed goods;
- the common sense on the road, i.e. the ability to drive carefully;
- responsibility;
- punctuality;
- at least basic language skills (especially needed in international transport);
- knowledge of road traffic rules in Poland and other countries.

Apart from that, the professional drivers are required to have a number of permissions and competences, specified in sector regulations.

In order to present the requirements towards the people who wish to start a job in road transport, one has to define the concept of the "professional driver" so as to differentiate it from other people who might carry out the duties of road carriage, whilst not being professional drivers. A driver is a person who drives a vehicle, even for a short period of time, or who is transported so as to be able to start his professional duties of driving if needed – that is the definition to be found in the Regulation 561/2006 of the European Parliament¹. The descriptions found in the professional classifications present a wide number of activities connected with the professional duties of bus drivers and truck drivers (connected, among others, with the maintenance check before travel, technical upkeep, road documentation). The character of the professional drivers' job can also be deduced from the documents of the Central Institute for Labour Protection, which describe the dangers of this working place (e.g. the danger of traffic accidents, long-term uncomfortable working position, etc.) (CIOP, n.d.).

The term "professional driver" is not precisely defined in Polish law, therefore it is assumed, that if someone carries out the professional activities connected with transport of goods or passengers, he is treated as a professional driver. Particular regulations only describe the necessary competences and the employment of drivers with various permits. In regards to passenger transport, two categories are pointed out – the permit to drive vehicles with up to 9 seats (8 passenger seats and the driver's seat) and the permit to drive buses/coaches. In goods transport there are permits to drive cargo vehicles (with payload of up to 3.5 tonnes) and vehicles with larger payload. There are also additional permits necessary to drive a vehicle with a trailer. There is a different category of people who work as cab drivers – they only need the regular driver's licence.

In road transport there are also various entities which carry out the transport activities. They can be either entrepreneurs or simply people carrying out the transportation. Based on that, there is a distinction between entrepreneurs and drivers (which can be the same person, but the regulations on the entities as well as their obligations are different). An entrepreneur who carries out road transport should have a certificate of competence, while the driver who drives a heavy duty vehicle with a payload above 3.5 tonnes or a bus should have a certificate of professional competence, for which he must have completed an introductory or accelerated qualification and obtained an appropriate driver's licence (C or D category and derivatives). If he wishes to extend his qualifications he needs to carry out additional qualifications or accelerated additional qualifications (articles 39a and 39b of the Road Transport Law – Dz. U., 2001).

In order to work as a driver in road transport, one needs:

- driver licence C, CE, D, DE;
- certificate of professional competence;

Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the harmonisation of certain social legislation relating to road transport and amending Council Regulations (EEC) No 3821/85 and (EC) No 2135/98 and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 3820/85.

- psychological decision (based on the 39k of the Road Transport Law);
- medical decision (based on the 39j of the Road Transport Law).

The professional drivers' qualifications are confirmed by an entry in the drivers' licence, table 12, code 95 and the expiration date of the certificate of professional competence (95, DD.MM.RR)².

The obligatory competencies in this field can be extended by finishing and ADR course, which is a specialist training which permits to transport dangerous goods. After the completion of the course the drivers has to pass a national exam. Afterwards, he is granted a permit, which allows him to transport materials treated as dangerous, in national and international transport. The permit is acceptable in all European countries³.

Apart from that, every driver, who performs road transport in vehicles with payload above 3.5 tonnes or buses is obliged to complete periodic training connected with the vehicle, which he uses for transportation, within 5 years, from the day he receives the certificate of professional competence (article 39j, p. 2 of the Road Transport Law – Dz. U., 2001).

Therefore, a professional driver is a person who drives a vehicle or is carried in a vehicle so as to be able to start his professional duties of driving if needed⁴, who has a C or D driver's license while also being obliged to fulfill periodic training appropriate for the vehicle type which he drives, every five years from the day he acquired his professional qualifications (Dz. U., 2001, article 39d).

Regardless of the used definition of the term "professional driver", it doesn't implicate any ethical standards which exist in every profession. Ethics plays an especially important role for those professionals who are responsible for other people. This is certainly a case of a professional driver, especially in passenger transport. Society expects a high ethical standard from employees in professions of public trust, such as medical doctors, teachers, lawyers or clerks (Żuraw, 2012). Apart from these professions, there are those in which there is a direct contact between the customer and the contractor, such as the services of passenger transport, regardless of the area of transport (international, regional or urban).

Generally speaking, ethics is a science which deals with the "reflections on the justification of human behaviour and establishment of the rules of moral behaviour" (Kietliński, Martinez Reyes, Oleksyn, 2005, p. 115).

Work ethics, on the other hand, is a system of norms and regulations on the behaviour of particular socio-economic groups, connected directly with the profession they carry out (Żuraw, 2012). "Professional duties and the connected moral duties cannot be separated. Professional duties involve the technical side of the professional activity, while the moral duties covered within the professional ethics apply to the internal qualifications of a human being. They determine his professional behaviour from the point of view of moral right and wrong. Therefore

http://abc-szkolenia.com/swiadectwa-kwalifikacji-zawodowej/.

³ https://poldek.pl/jak-zostac-kierowca-zawodowym.

⁴ Regulation (Ec) No 561/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the harmonisation of certain social legislation relating to road transport and amending Council Regulations (EEC) No 3821/85 and (EC) No 2135/98 and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 3820/85.

the goal of professional ethics is to protect the professional from the moral hazard connected with the character of the profession" (Michalik, 2003, pp. 59–60). Work ethics apply to the three aspects of moral norms (Lewicka-Strzałecka, 1999, pp. 22–23):

- formalised norms along which one should behave in a given profession;
- beliefs on a profession which are shared by the people working in that profession;
- real behaviour judged in regards to the accordance with the moral norms.

In case of professional drivers in the public transport, the professional ethics apply to two areas. First of all, the attitude of the driver towards his employer and all the behaviour norms connected to that attitude and to the job itself. Second of all, work ethics determines the behaviour of the drivers towards the passengers – users of the public transport. Based on that, one can observe a variety of different attitudes and, in consequence, a variety of behaviour in the work environment and towards the customer.

2. Drivers attitudes towards ethics which differentiate their behaviour

Drivers' behaviour can be different due to their various attitudes towards ethics. In general, the attitudes are a result of the beliefs on the results of a given behaviour. It is assumed, that the higher the subjective expected value of a result of the behaviour, the stronger the attitude towards the intent to act in a way leading to that behaviour. In this case, it can be applied to the behaviour of a professional driver in public transport. According to A.B. Carroll⁶, behaviour can be differentiated based on the moral values believed and realised by a person. Hence, three attitudes of the work group can be identified:

- moral:
- amoral;
- immoral.

An attitude which goes in line with the expectations of the majority of a society can be considered moral. The attitude of a professional driver in public transport should be analysed in the context of generally accepted moral standards. The most important are: compliance with the law, moral norms and standards of professional behaviour in public transport services. In this case, the strive for the high quality of a service is accompanied by the respect towards the accepted norms.

The relations between the attitudes and the intentions and finally the behaviour were analysed by I. Ajzen and M. Fishbein and presented in the form of a model of reasoned action, and lated (after further research) the theory of planned behaviour. Both the theory of planned behaviour and the theory of reasoned action are useful in the analysis of complex mechanisms behind a given human activity, which occur in the form of behaviour. See: (Fishbein, Ajzen, 2010).

⁶ In his work, A.B. Carroll analysed the attitudes of the managers towards ethics, which appeared as a certain behaviour. It was the basis of a construction of three management models: immoral, amoral and moral. The adaptation of these models for the analysis of professional drivers behaviour has been done for the purpose of this paper. See: (Carroll, 2000, pp. 33–42).

An immoral attitude, which is the opposite, involves active actions against everything which is considered ethical. In this case, one assumes a higher expected value of immoral behaviour. Hence, such an attitude is connected with generating the work behaviour based on greed and selfish desire for individual profits, with a lack of respect towards social standards in the service of public transport. The immoral attitude can be characterised as an attitude in which the goal justifies all means in the strive for material success.

Between these two radical attitudes, there are also intermediate attitudes of two types. The first type is connected with a purposeful disregard for moral aspects in the professional decision-making. In this case, the driver believes that his occupation is beyond the area of moral judgement and therefore he doesn't make any. However, where there is a moral dilemma he is willing to accept the standards, e.g. the law. The second type appears in the case of unawareness of ignorance towards moral aspects. In his choices, the professional driver, ignores the moral aspects, thus negatively affecting his colleagues with his attitude lacking the moral judgement.

Ethics has an important place and is one of the important standards verifying the activity of public transport companies. Therefore, the most valuable employees are the workers who present moral attitudes. Immoral employees will probably be avoided by the employers. The amoral employees present a challenge. Their amoral behaviour can be considered a threat, however, a responsible company, aware of the lack of drivers on the labour market, can try and change the behaviour of these workers through training and with the use of other tools of human resource management (e.g. changes in the motivational systems). The effectiveness of these actions depends on the ability to recognise the causes of observed ethical behaviour of the employees. Therefore it is important to analyse the determinants of the ethical behaviour of professional drivers.

3. Determinants of the ethical behaviour of professional drivers

Factors which determine the individual choices of professional drivers, which are expressed in the form of ethical behaviour (Figure 1) might have both an individual and collective character. In the first case, one can discuss the individual ethics dimension, whereas in the second case, one should point out the importance of the organizational culture and ethics institutionalization. Collective factors, in this instance, are the same, for all the employees of one public transport company.

Professional drivers' behaviour is, most of all, an emanation of their individual ethical norms. They can be treated as subjective norms. They are connected with the degree by which an individual is affected by social pressure which enhances or reduces the attractiveness of a given behaviour. Based on individual beliefs, that a given behaviour is or is not acceptable for esteemed people, the subjective belief on the thresholds of a normal behaviour is created (Fryca-Knop, Majecka, 2018, pp. 135–148). According to M. Rybak (2004, p. 124) it can be analysed in the following categories: degree of moral development, attitudes and beliefs, respected ethical systems, ethical virtues.

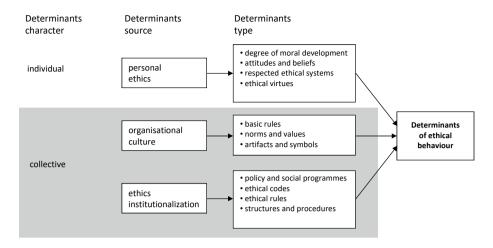


Figure 1. Determinants of ethical behaviour of professional drivers Source: (own elaboration based on: Rybak, 2004, p. 124)

Individual ethical norms of professional drivers can be affected by various factors. Their identification depends on the ability to recognize important people in the individual's environment, whose opinion he respects. In the case of professional drivers, apart from the opinion of the family, friends and social groups, the opinion of colleagues, managers and, broadly speaking, employers matters. However, the conscience of an individual human being is always at the roots of every type of subjective norms. It's worth noting that individual ethical norms are also shaped by objective factors, external to the analysed subject – the professional drivers. There are a few notable ones, which matter in public transport, i.e. various regulations, both economic and legal, as well as the ones which are connected with the profession specifics.

Organisational culture is thought of as an important factors in the creation of professional drivers' ethical behaviour. It can reduce or promote ethical values in a company (Rybak, 2004, p. 124), thus creating a space for the freedom of behaviour of the employees. In a broad sense, the organizational culture refers to basic assumptions, norms and values, which are common for the members of a given organisation. Based on this, artifacts occur, which are the external, visible representations of the culture. The development of cultural aspects in the enterprise leads to a specific "collective programming of the mind, which separates members of one organization from another" (Hofstede, 2000, p. 267).

It's hard to define organization culture (many researchers and authors create their own definitions, which underline the aspects which are crucial in a given research), therefore one should concentrate not on the definition itself but on the functions which it might serve in a company. The most important function, from the point of view of the ethical behaviour of the drivers, is that it integrates internally by putting forward a set of common criteria of behaviour evaluation for all the members of the organisation. All the employees know, what is considered

right and what is considered wrong in the work context of a given enterprise (Siemiński, 2008, p. 35).

The organizational culture structure, regardless of the organization is multi-layered as it covers basic components as well as their derivatives (Stańczyk, 2008, p. 28). This leads to a difficulty in clear interpretation, because the culture has an inderministic character resulting from a lack of clear rules on how it is shaped (Stańczyk, 2008, p. 39). Every enterprise has an individual culture, which, at most, can be classified as a part of a larger type.

Observation of public transport companies leads to a conclusion, that the cultural aspects are best described by a division into hierarchical and egalitarian cultures as well as conservative and innovative cultures (Sułkowski, 2012, pp. 89–92). Observed enterprises, mostly due to their history (originating from old, established public transport entities) and the character of the market on which they operate (regulated by many rules on the transport, services as well as local government rules), while also being governed (at least operationally) by local administration, tend to have a hierarchical and conservative culture.

Regardless of the character of the organizational culture identified in the analysed entities, it creates a certain moral climate in the enterprise which determines the freedom of behaviour of individual employees and the market behaviour of the whole entity. The ethical institutionalization is the practical representation of the moral climate of the enterprise while also being a part of that climate.

The ethical institutionalization occurs through a formalization of the rules of behaviour in accordance with the values of the entity. Formalisation allows a clear identification of what's considered moral and immoral in a given organization. In practice, this leads to a number of various ethical programmes, formalised management rules in accordance with the corporate social responsibility standards and, in many companies, also ethical codes. A few urban transport companies have such codes, e.g. in Warszawa, Kołobrzeg and Płock⁷.

This is however uncommon. What is more the contents of the ethical codes are different and their very existence doesn't prove that there is a high ethical standard in the enterprise activity. The code has to be treated as a part of a wider context of social policy of the organization, along with ethical training and control, as well as an incorporation of immoral behaviour prevention mechanisms. The organization can be treated as ethically institutionalized, once it has introduced these activities.

An existence of a proethical organisational culture and ethical codes is not a guarantee that the ethical norms will be obeyed. Every employee has internalize these external rules. If they are in line with his internal beliefs, there is a high chance that he will behave ethically. However, the real behaviour in the company environment is also affected by the situation in that environment. This includes mostly the labour market but also the obligations put forward by the market for the representatives of the companies. In the case of the public transport companies, the environment wants the drivers to behave appropriately towards the employees.

http://www.mza.waw.pl/spolka-mza/informacje-o-spolce/kodeks-etyki-mza; http://www.km.kolo-brzeg.pl/o-firmie/kodeks-etyczny-pracownikow?showall=&start=1; https://www.kmplock.eu/www/kodeks-etyki/.

The public transport passengers in Gdańsk often have a negative opinion on the work of the drivers and their attitude towards the passengers, as proven by opinion polls. The drivers are said not to respect the customer-provider rules. However, one should also focus on the drivers and their attitude towards the ethics in the provision of public transport services. As a part of a wider poll on professional drivers' attitudes, in April 2018, a diagnostic survey has been carried out among the employees of Gdańskie Autobusy i Tramwaje Sp. z o.o. (GAiT) company, in which there were asked: "To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I'm not willing to follow the ethical norms connected with the professional drivers' work?". At the time of the survey, 496 bus drivers (both men and women) were hired in the company, and they were the population of the research. The survey was sent to all the drivers who were not on vacation or other leave at the time. 138 questionnaires were received back, 18 of which were not included due to missing or incorrect data. 83 drivers had C and D driver's licence and 37 drivers only had the D licence.

66% of the respondents said that they disagree (totally or partially) with the statement, 21% agreed, while only 12% had no opinion on the matter. The results show that most people have some sort of an attitude on the ethics and willingness to use it during work. Even if some of the respondents said that they are not willing to obey the ethical rules in their job, it means that they have to know them, at least partially. They are not willing to obey them, but they do not question that they exist.

On the other hand, the interviews with the managers show that it is hard to expect job engagement and thoroughness in their duties from young people, who work in a company for a short time. Often, they quit job, without respecting the notice period or without even informing the employer. Women drivers are generally said to have a better attitude towards work. The management describe the women to be very good employees. They are rarely complained about, while often being complimented by the passengers on the appropriate, ethical attitude.

Both the managers and the drivers are aware of the lack of drivers on the market⁸. This awareness leads to a necessity to employ and upkeep the workers who are willing to work in public transport, even for a short term. Apart from that, GAiT carry out a few activities which are supposed to promote the job and reward the job engagement (they plan to reward employees who recommend a new driver⁹).

All these situations allow to conclude that the ethical problems affect many aspects of the company activity and pose a number of challenges, for the managers and for the employees. Often, they need to decide how to behave in a given situation. It affects the actions of employees towards employers, between the employees but also the actions of the employees towards the entities in the environment.

In this context, one should observe, that every member of an organization can work in the conditions of clear moral rules and agreement on the organizational climate but also in accordance with his beliefs and attitudes on the ethical aspects (Rybak, 2004, pp. 128–130). If the organizational climate poses problems

In Gdańsk (GAiT) 70 drivers are needed to fully deal with the transport duties, https://dziennikbal-tycki.pl/brakuje-kilkudziesieciu-kierowcow-komunikacji-miejskiej-w-gdansku-czesc-kursow-w-ogole-sie-nie-odbywa/ar/13233331.

https://www.trojmiasto.pl/wiadomosci/Gdansk-zmiany-w-komunikacji-miejskiej-n126837.html.

for the employee, which are not in line with his personal ethics, sooner or later he will find himself in a situation of a moral dilemma. One should be aware, that this leads to a dissonance between the ethical norms of the driver and the organization which employs him. Two situations are possible. First of all, the organization might put forward high ethical norms and expect the employees to follow them, which they might be unwilling to do. Second of all, the employee might have a high moral standard and he would like to function in accordance with them, but the organization forces him to behave unethically. In the case of the latter, the effect might be the same, a moral dilemma occurs. Regardless of its reasons, a moral dilemma of a professional driver might lead to interorganisational ethical conflicts. The observation of the behaviour of this professional group indicates that intermediate and unethical attitudes often occur which are a threat for the wellbeing of a company.

Conclusions

The quality of public transport services provision is affected, among others, by the attitudes of the drivers, who have a direct contact with the passengers. It can oscillate between two radical situations – a moral and immoral attitude – thus being the reason behind the observable behaviour of the professional drivers. The research allowed to identify three types of the determinants of the behaviour. They are: the personal ethics, which is connected with the subjective perception of the norms, the organizational culture, which creates a certain moral climate in the company and the ethics institutionalization, which through a formalization of the rules allows a clear identification of which behaviour is treated as moral and which as immoral. Therefore, the ethical norms are dependent both on the professional drivers himself and on his work environment. Therefore, in the case of a dissonance between the ethical norms of different sources, the drivers is put in front of a moral dilemma, which can lead to unwanted attitudes towards professional ethics.

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