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PREVENTION OF PROCRASTINATION AT WORK THROUGH MOTIVATION ENHANCEMENT IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN SLOVAKIA *

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Abstract. Human resources are the backbone of well-functioning SMEs, similar to other businesses. It requires commitment, work, and specific leadership, driven by creative work, flexibility, and effective time management. Small and medium-sized enterprises are the driving force of the European economy, as they contribute to job creation and economic growth and ensure social stability. This study investigates the relationship between work motivation and procrastination among office employees in SMEs. The PAWS (Procrastination at Work Scale) and WEIMS (Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale) standard questionnaires were filled out by office employees in Slovak SMEs to collect data. This quantitative approach enhanced our understanding of work motivation and procrastination and provided useful empirical data for minimising its negative impacts. A total of 153 self-completed Likert questionnaires were distributed and analysed using SAS. Pearson's correlation coefficient results showed a strong and significant negative relationship between intrinsic work motivation and work procrastination. The results show if the managers in SMEs examine the interaction between individuals and their environment, they can reveal what motivates the employees and thus reduce the frequency of procrastination.

Keywords: small and medium business management; business environment; human resource management; employee

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1. Introduction

From a quantitative point of view, the term small and medium-sized enterprises are present in all sectors of the economy if they do not exceed a specific size. Since terms indicating size are used to name small and medium-sized enterprises, economists have decided to categorise them based on quantitative, measurable indicators.

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(Hatten, 2011; Mura, Krchova, & Chovanova Supekova, 2021). According to Schmidt et al. from Grant Thornton International (2021), leaders must replace the traditional operation-focused model with a more flexible approach. A new leadership model will allow companies to develop in the post-pandemic environment. During a crisis, managers play a crucial role in responding to employees' needs and dealing with anxiety, stress, and the resulting aversion to work tasks. Scientific studies examining the problems caused by the impact of the pandemic from the perspective of experts in the field of human resource management have identified issues, e.g., management of employee morale, motivation, and work engagement (Caligiuri et al., 2020). The presented contribution aims to examine the impact of work motivation on the level of procrastination in daily work activities among employees in SMEs. We define the current state of the issue within the dimensions of work motivation and the types of work procrastination. We analyse the modern phenomena associated with digital overload, its consequences after the pandemic, and the possibilities of improving this situation using the acquired knowledge. The presented ideas are supported by quantitative research conducted on a group of administrative employees of small and medium-sized enterprises in Slovakia. The research was conducted in the form of an electronic questionnaire survey. Based on the respondents' answers, reference points can be proposed for elaborating an effective company policy, the aim of which is to reduce the procrastination tendencies of employees working for small and medium-sized enterprises and increase their motivation.

2. Theoretical background

Work motivation is an integral part of the work environment. To achieve goals, employees have to experience a feeling of work satisfaction, be proud of work performance and do a job they like. A motivated person focuses on self-evaluation of his abilities, which is related to the result of the activity. There is also a direct relationship with a desire to succeed. This means that the greater the desire to succeed, the greater the motivation to perform. However, the opposite is also true. The greater the fear of failure, the lower the motivation to act (Reinberg and Ashkenazi, 2008). Self-determination theory (SDT) distinguishes between different dimensions of motivation in terms of different goals or reasons that lead to actions (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The most fundamental difference is recognised between extrinsic (i.e., doing something because it leads to an outcome) and intrinsic motivation (i.e., doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable). Compared to extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation has emerged as a more critical phenomenon for scientists (the individual's thinking and perception systematically determine, i.e., the natural source of success) (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Klingsieck, 2013). Many academics have concluded that intrinsic motivation is fundamental in terms of the detailed description of factors in the work environment. Intrinsic motivation is an individual's tendency to engage in a task that they find comfortably challenging, satisfying, and interesting (Hon, 2012). The earlier research on motivation concludes that individuals with a high level of intrinsic motivation are more likely to be cognitively flexible, curious, open to using unconventional approaches to decision-making, and open to new knowledge (Hon, 2012; Mura et al., 2021). In addition, intrinsically motivated employees tend to perform better in the work environment. They are more effective in achieving goals, happier and more satisfied than their colleagues (Koestner et al., 2008). Employees with high motivation to achieve success tend to be more attracted to work environments (Mura & Horváth, 2015), where there is a personal responsibility for attaining challenging, but achievable goals, and consequently prefer feedback on their overall performance. Power-oriented employees might be more attracted to work environments where they can influence the activities and think of others. These individuals are also attracted by achieving group or organisational goals (Stahl & Harrell, 1983). In a work environment, these employees may try to gain a reputation and status to gain satisfaction from exerting their influence (McClelland, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000, 2002) assumed that autonomous forms of motivation have many benefits, notably more remarkable persistence and resilience to work problems, better performance, better interpersonal relationships, and greater subjective well-being. A positive attitude and work environment can significantly reduce unnecessary workplace activities such as procrastination. They expressed this idea in the Self-

Determination Theory subscale, where they present the so-called motivational continuum (Fig. 1), which forms the basis of investigating workplace motivation.

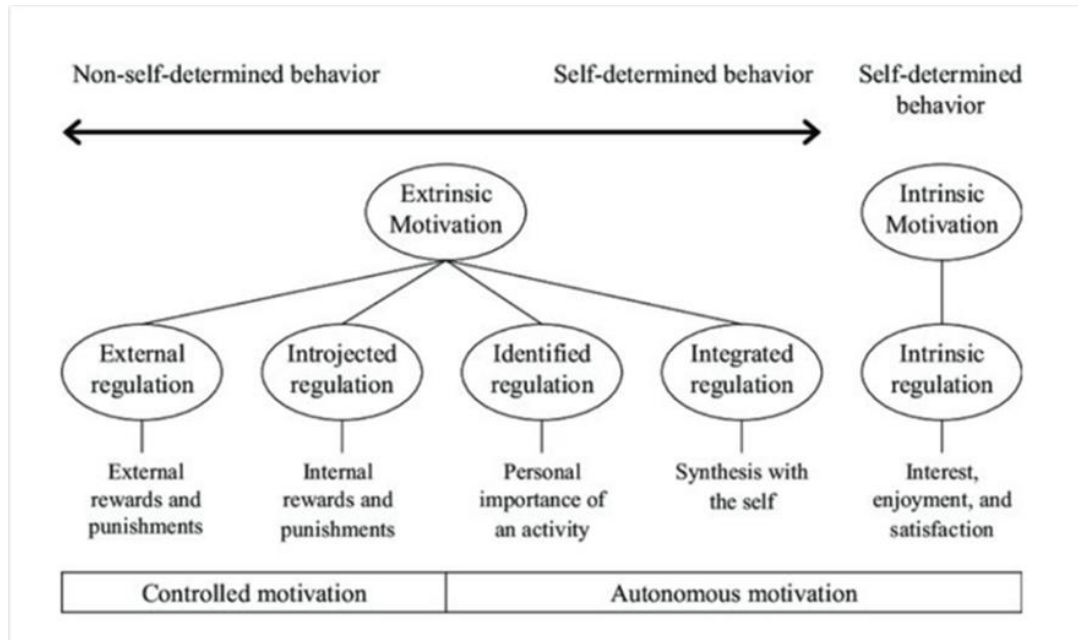


Figure 1. Self-Determination Theory

Source: van Beek et al. (2011)

- At the right end of the continuum is intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated behaviour is the prototype of autonomous or self-determined behaviour since this behaviour is performed voluntarily (Ryan & Deci, 2002).
- Another type of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation. The individual partly internalises the regulation but is not accepted it as his own. This behaviour is performed under pressure to avoid guilt and shame and achieve a sense of self-worth. According to SDT, behaviour is entirely controlling and has an externally perceived locus of causality (Deci & Ryan, 2002).
- Identified regulation is a more autonomous or self-regulated type of extrinsic motivation. An individual values a regulation or goal and consciously specifies themselves with it. According to SDT, identified regulation has an internal perceived locus of causality (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2002).
- Integrated regulation is the most autonomous type of external motivation. The individual identifies themselves with the importance of behaviour and evaluates and aligns the regulation with their values, goals, and needs that are already part of the self (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 18). The individual fully accepts the regulation. External regulation is fully internalised into self-regulation and results in self-determined extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
- The minor autonomous sort of motivation is external regulation. It is a classic example of extrinsic motivation, in which people's actions are controlled by external factors, e.g., material goods or punishment.

When integrated motives drive the individual's behaviour, it is performed voluntarily to achieve personally essential outcomes because the activity is inherently interesting or enjoyable. Behaviour is committed to achieving a self-contained result, where the value of the outcome is well integrated with the self. According to

SDT, integrated regulation has an internal perceived locus of causality (Deci & Ryan, 2002). On the other hand, without a motivator, negative work habits may occur. Procrastination in the workplace refers to the deliberate postponement of work activities that must be completed, which has far-reaching consequences for employees' lives and organisational development. Investigating the causes of procrastination at work is crucial since it provides theoretical knowledge and practical advice on effectively avoiding these problems (Bolden and Fillauer, 2019). This insight is, therefore, essential for managers, who should choose the most effective tools to fight procrastination, focusing on the specifics of the phenomena. Procrastination is sometimes referred to as a modern-day plague, with a prevalence rate of 20–25 per cent among the population. Employees in administration procrastinate about 1.3 hours per day, which is probably underestimated (D'Abate and Eddy, 2007). However, procrastination nowadays is also caused by modern technologies at workplaces, such as digital overload of employees, so-called digital distraction, or technostress. Technostress is a psychophysiological condition characterised by high levels of stress-sensitive hormones and cognitive symptoms such as poor concentration, irritability, and memory impairment. There is evidence that information overload from the use of mobile phones and other devices can increase negative emotions such as anger and anxiety (Torre et al., 2020; Szeiner et al.; Clare et al., 2020).

More than 95% of procrastinators want to eliminate this harmful behaviour at work. Considering the high costs and adverse effects of procrastination, understanding this behaviour will help us to minimise or eliminate it in workplaces (Metin et al., 2016). Available studies suggest that procrastination is a prevalent behaviour at work, which is also influenced by personality factors, such as high neuroticism and low conscientiousness or situational factors, e.g., limited role relevance, limited autonomy, and ineffective feedback. In addition, it is associated with high levels of stress and boredom, reduced workload, and performance (Metin et al., 2018).

Procrastination in the workplace is characterised by two dimensions, represented in Figure 2, namely soldiering and cyberslacking:

- **Soldiering** is a type of offline procrastination in the workplace that hinders work activities by making the employee prioritise non-work tasks without malicious intent. Long coffee breaks, employees, avoiding planning and daydreaming during work are typical examples of offline procrastination. However, a new way of procrastination at the workplace has also emerged with the increased use of mobile technologies.
- **Cyberslacking** (online procrastination) is using the Internet or mobile devices for personal purposes during working hours. While the Internet often allows employees to get work done faster and safer than before, it also makes it easier for them to use the Internet for personal purposes, resulting in high financial costs associated with less time spent on work. Cyberslacking is challenging to observe and measure compared to offline procrastination because employees may appear to be working (sitting in the office looking at a computer screen). At the same time, they are engaged in non-work activities (e.g., face-to-face communication) or checking social networks and websites (Vitak, 2011).

Online procrastination in the workplace can be a negligible phenomenon. It might take only a few minutes (e.g., checking personal emails and shopping online), or it can require much more time (e.g., playing gambling games, watching movies, and constantly chatting on social media platforms), which can significantly reduce employee productivity. According to research, the rate of cyberslacking in the workplace is about 60-80%, which leads to about 30-40% decrease in productivity. Previous research has examined the factors that cause cyberslacking in the workplace, including poor organisation and information overload. Similarly, the adverse effects of cyberslacking in the workplace have been explored, such as time wasted, loss of productivity, a distraction from work-related activities, violation of organisational norms and culture, and threats to the security of email systems and networks (Nusrat, 2021).

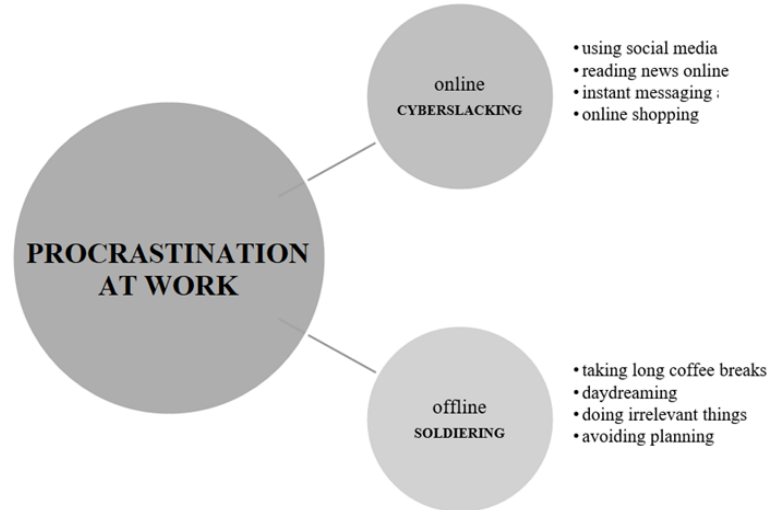


Figure 2. Procrastination at work

Source: van Beek et al. (2011); Authors' processing according to Metin et al. (2016).

3. Research objective and methodology

This research study is crucial for SMEs because employee productivity and efficiency are the main pillars of accomplishing company goals. Furthermore, based on the literature, there is little information about how work motivation and procrastination are interrelated. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the relationship between motivation and procrastination. Considering all the empirical research studies presented in the literature review, it is clear that this issue still needs to be addressed in Slovak SMEs. In conducting this quantified statistical analysis, the following statistical hypothesis was established: *H₁: There is a statistically significant relationship between individual types of motivation and employees' procrastination in small and medium enterprises.*

The presented research was conducted with the participation of administrative employees of small and medium-sized enterprises in Slovakia. We used an online data collection method based on CAWI questionnaire - computer-assisted web interviewing. The questionnaire aimed to determine the relationship between work motivation and procrastination. An electronic questionnaire was sent to 153 employees. The sample of respondents consisted of 47.1% men and 52.1% women between 18 and 60. The freely available Google Forms application was used to create and distribute the questionnaire, while SAS software was used to process the results. Employees' procrastination was measured using the 12-item standardised work procrastination scale (PAWS; Metin et al., 2016). The Procrastination at Work Scale (PAWS) consists of two dimensions, soldiering - offline procrastination (intentionally slowing down work so that the employee avoids a full day's work, e.g., longer coffee breaks) and cyberslacking - online procrastination (using the Internet or mobile devices for personal purposes during work). The offline procrastination dimension is assessed by 8 items on the work procrastination scale, such as "I take a long coffee break at work".

The dimension of online procrastination is measured by 3 items: "I shop online during working hours". The work motivation scale was attached to the work procrastination scale (PAWS). The double-sided translated Czech version of the WEIMS – Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale presented by Smahaj and Cakirpaloglu (2015) was distributed (Smahaj et al., 2015). The presented scale was originally proposed by the authors Tremblay et al. (2009). It consists of 18 items, divided into six subscales: internal motivation, integrated regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, external regulation and amotivation. This scale is based on the theoretical foundations of the theory of self-determination, which has three parts: internal motivation, external

motivation and amotivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 - "does not correspond at all" to 7 - "absolutely corresponds", where respondents determine the reason for staying in their current job.

4. Results and discussion

Cyberslacking or online procrastination gained popularity because of the increased use of workplace technology. Since cyberslacking is harder to measure than soldiering, as it can seem like work, web browsing, instant chatting, and other time-wasting activities are widespread in today's offices during working hours. As a result, cyberslacking causes employees to waste time and become less involved in their work, which lowers their productivity. To provide a complete and balanced view of procrastination among office workers in Slovakia, we present the data regarding questions related to online procrastination. During the data analysis, a significant frequency of Instant messaging during working hours was noticed (Fig. 3). 49% of employees in SMEs reported that they use Instant Messaging at work for personal purposes once a week or more, which means a couple of times a week or daily.

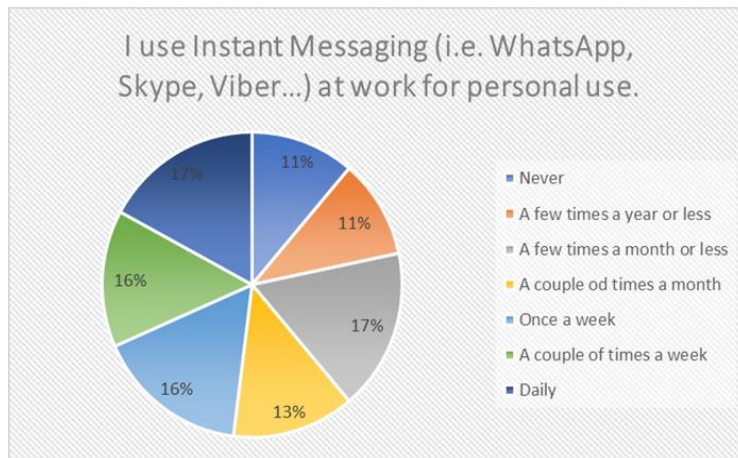


Figure 3. Frequency of Instant Messaging at work

Source: Authors' processing based on primary research

Regarding the next question, 17% of the respondents claimed to spend time on social media once a week. 18% reported that they use social media platforms during working hours a couple of times a week, and 14% claimed to use them daily (Fig. 4).

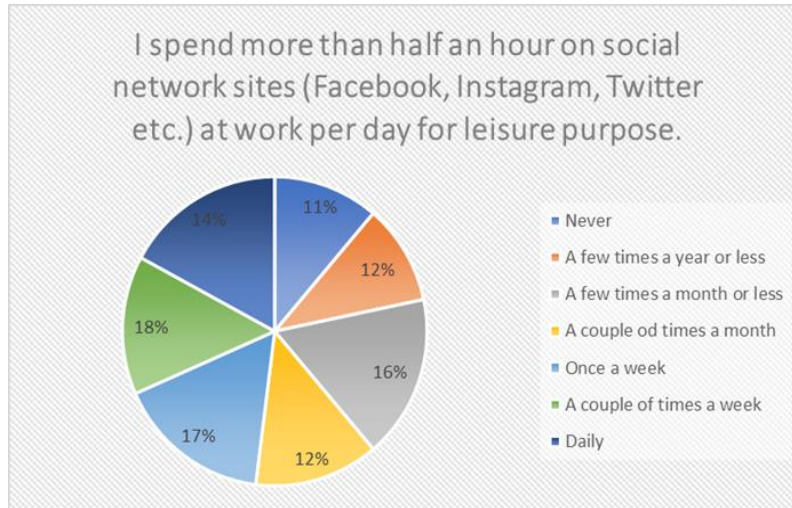


Figure 4. Frequency of social media use at work

Source: Authors' processing based on primary research

This behaviour can be explained by the term "escapism," defined by Griffiths (2000) as behaviour that might arise when a person uses social media to escape from fear, despair, and other challenges in real life. Procrastination may occasionally be a factor in such escape. Some people avoid or delay dealing with issues like money, loneliness, or stress by pretending to be in a different, frequently imaginary digital environment (Warmelink et al., 2009; Griffiths, 2000; Priyanshi et al., 2017). However, reading the news online appears to be another common kind of internet procrastination at work. In total, 37% of the respondents said they read news online at work a couple of times a week or daily (Fig. 5).

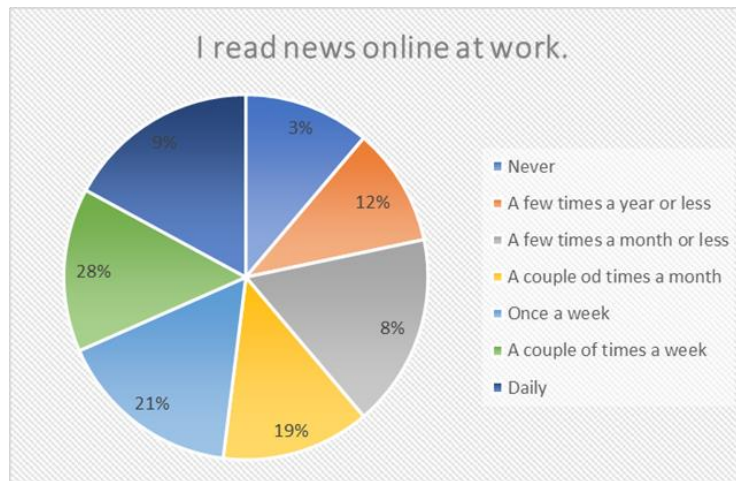


Figure 5. Frequency of reading news online during working hours

Source: Authors' processing based on primary research

By analysing the frequency of online procrastination among office workers in small and medium enterprises in Slovakia, the goal was to explore and investigate the relationship between procrastination and types of motivation according to the Self-determination theory (Table 1).

Table 1. The relationship between types of work motivation and procrastination

6 With Variables:	IM	IntegR	IdenR	IntrjR	ExtR	Amo
1 Variables:	Prokrastinacia					

Simple Statistics						
Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum	Minimum	Maximum
IM	153	14.78431	3.56507	2262	6.00000	21.00000
IntegR	153	14.49020	3.15836	2217	7.00000	21.00000
IdenR	153	15.02614	3.31652	2299	7.00000	21.00000
IntrjR	153	14.22222	3.30713	2176	6.00000	21.00000
ExtR	153	15.41176	3.06836	2358	7.00000	21.00000
Amo	153	9.70588	6.00645	1485	3.00000	21.00000
Prokrastinacia	153	37.67320	20.23573	5764	2.00000	72.00000

Pearson Correlation Coefficients, N = 153	
Prob > r under H0: Rho=0	
	Prokrastinacia
IM	-0.68139 <.0001
IntegR	-0.46862 <.0001
IdenR	-0.38836 <.0001
IntrjR	-0.20938 0.0094
ExtR	0.07614 0.3496
Amo	0.78985 <.0001

Source: Authors' processing based on primary research

The results of the Pearson's correlation coefficient illustrated in Table 1 indicate the following:

- A statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -0.68139$, $P < 0.0001$) between the variables of intrinsic motivation and procrastination.
- A weak negative relationship ($r = -0.20938$, $P < 0.0094$) between the variables of introjective regulation and procrastination.
- A statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -0.38836$, $P < 0.0001$) between the variables of identified regulation and procrastination.
- A statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -0.46862$, $P < 0.0001$) between the variables of integrated regulation and procrastination.
- A statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.78985$, $P < 0.0001$) between the variables of amotivation and procrastination.

The results showed how important it is to achieve and maintain intrinsic motivation to lower procrastination. Furthermore, the Self-determination theory (STD) suggests that employees achieve optimal functioning to the extent that they are motivated—a state in which they voluntarily engage in work activities because they find them enjoyable or valuable. It is assumed that the prerequisite of intrinsic motivation is the satisfaction of psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It is clear from secondary sources (Slemp et. al., 2020; Steel, 2007) that postponing work tasks and responsibilities cause poor employee performance. Studies show that

procrastination is a complicated process associated with behavioural elements that can negatively affect organisational performance. Employee procrastination behaviour in the workplace is harmful, and researchers are still interested in investigating the causes and problems of this behaviour.

To support intrinsic motivation in workplaces in connection with the STD theory, we present the following elements modified according to scholars (Slemp et al. 2018; Berntsen & Kristiansen, 2019; Van den Broeck et al., 2016):

- Autonomy support refers to activities that offer employees options to choose between and encourage them to take the initiative. The management will avoid using rewards or sanctions to encourage specific work behaviour.
- Competence support includes activities that support employee efficiency, such as sharing knowledge, providing guidance, constructive feedback and creating realistic expectations.
- Relatedness support is behaviour that demonstrates sustained and authentic interest, care, and friendship among employees: active listening, mentoring and opportunities to develop relationships with others.

Conclusions

Employees' long-term unfavourable psychological connection with the company they work in creates the opposite development of behaviour and causes a loss of motivation and decreased personal productivity. The solution to this type of procrastination is to re-establish the psychological connection between the employee and the employer. Organisational policy and the lack of interest and desire are the main reasons for procrastination. Performance can only be achieved with motivation, and a lack of interest and willingness shows that employees are not motivated. Studies show that motivation leads to sustained intellectual and physical effort. It is an essential aspect of the work environment because it contributes to employee motivation and determines direction. In conclusion, the research sample may not apply to most SME employees in Slovakia. We believe that the respondents could answer the questions sufficiently, and the information obtained in the presented survey should be used as a basis for further research on the impact of work motivation on the procrastination behaviour of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises in Slovakia and abroad.

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