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## ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES IN WESTERN SLOVAKIA REGION \*

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**Abstract.** It is important for leaders to ensure that their employees do their best in order to reach organizational goals. One way to achieve this is by implementing motivational systems. An effective leader must be aware of what motivates employees to perform. Motivation gives human behavior a direction and intensity which results in certain rewards that are valuable to the individual. The objective of our research was to analyze the effects of motivational factors. In the Slovakian economy, nearly 60 percent of employees are employed by small and medium-sized enterprises, which makes them highly significant. They play an important role in reducing unemployment and the development of the local economy both on a national and on a regional level. In addition, we feel there has only been a small number of studies conducted regarding the factors of internal motivation of small and medium-sized enterprises employees. With this objective in mind, based on the data we collected, we would like to set up a model for the organizations concerned that is easy to comprehend and enables the leaders to get a comprehensive picture about which motivating factors have a relevant impact on the motivation of their employees.

**Keywords:** extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors; employee's motivation; small and medium-sized enterprises; Slovakia

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## 1. Introduction

A number of definitions are used in the literature with regard to motivation. The literature is not settled on a single unified definition of motivation; a reason for this is the degree of complexity of the motivational systems. The most important motivational theories are namely Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Alderfer ERG theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Locke goal setting theory, McClelland expectancy value theory and Vroom's theory. On an organizational level, motivation is carried out by leadership with the goal of getting others to act and increase their efficiency in order to reach the desired outcome (Aliekperova, 2018).

According to Pinder (1984), motivation in the workplace is the set of external and internal influences connected to work that affect work-related behavior - determining its form, intensity, duration, and direction. Lindner (1998) found that motivated employees are more productive. For this reason, managers need to develop an understanding of what motivates employees. This is unquestionably one of the most complex leadership mission (Kovach, 1987; Smerek & Šurinčíková, 2020).

Karácsony (2017) argue that a correct application of positive motivation is crucial for leaders working in the current, ever-changing business environment because it is essential for them to stay ahead of their competition. The motivation can be separated into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Amabile (1993) explains this as follows. Individuals are intrinsically motivated when they seek interest, self-expression, or personal challenge in the work. Individuals are extrinsically motivated in the work in order to obtain some goal (Fila et al., 2020).

The object of the research is designed to investigate what the basic motivating factors are that help facilitates the motivation of employees so that they perform in the organization as well as possible.

Furthermore, we also seek to establish if there exists a difference between the motivating factors that affect the motivation of physical workers and the factors, which influence that of intellectual workers. Since there is a great number of factors studied in our questionnaire, we grouped these into six basic pillars: *payment, non-financial benefits, nature of the job, self-realization, leadership, workplace atmosphere*. The analyses have also shown that physical workers and intellectual workers have different preferences with regard to the individual factors – there are factors that have a strong influence on both groups and also others which seem to have an effect only on one group or the other.

## 2. Literature review

Job satisfaction is a psychological concept referring to attitudes and characteristics relating to the job such as wage and rewards, company policy, work environment, career opportunities and self-realization (Dartey and Harley, 2010; Tóth and Mura, 2014; Aliyu et al., 2020). Wages are one of the most important factors in terms of job satisfaction (Bryan and Sell, 2011, Vel'misova, 2019; Valent, 2019; Maris, 2021). Wages are a kind of reward in work besides recognition and future opportunities (Clark and Oswald, 1996). In addition to financial motivators, employees are also motivated by promotion opportunities and greater responsibility (Vlacsekova and Mura, 2017). Nabi (2000) defined career-oriented motivation as advancement motivation and the importance of the job. This means that a career-oriented person has a strong desire for professional growth and as a result of this he gets a higher level of satisfaction from work (Peracek et al., 2020). According to Karácsony and Machová (2015), there are numerous critical factors to a successful motivation system. The size of the reward should be big enough to influence employee behavior because a too small reward does not motivate.

The important aims of having motivation systems are formulated by Arvidsson (2004) as management control, motivating employees to perform as desired and recruiting and keeping employees. Since the aims of the employees frequently diverge from the aims of the organization, the role of management control is to ensure that the personal aims of the employee are at least partly identical to those of the organization (Mura et al., 2019). At the same time, management control is also aimed at ensuring the achievement of high organizational productivity and efficiency in the activities carried out (Manolopoulos, 2007). According to Arvidsson (2004), the second aim of motivating employees can be reached, in part, if the employees value the reward that they get when the desired result is reached. Poór et al. (2017) believe that payment is a part of the motivation system, but because it is an obvious corollary to any work, it is likely not so important as are incentives of other types because employees automatically expect to get paid. In this regard, the importance of other forms of compensations and benefits is also high (Witkowska & Kompa, 2020) especially if they cause the positive perception of social protection by means of motivation system within the enterprise (Mishchuk et al., 2020). Based on the fact that individuals react to various incentives differently, it is a crucial factor to introduce rewards that motivate as many employees as possible (Sinambela, 2020). Such approach leads to overall increase of satisfaction with working environment (Martínez-Buelvas et al., 2021). Therefore, these aspects are typical objects of social dialogue in enterprises (Bilan et al., 2019). The third aim of motivation systems is recruiting and keeping employees (Breaugh, 2008). In today's labor shortage environment, it is essential for the organization to be an attractive employer to the potential employees found in the labor market (Leete, 2000; Marisova & Maris, 2015).

### **3. Methodological approach**

Our study involved the application of descriptive research methods with the goal of giving an account of the motivational tools used by small and medium-sized enterprises in Western Slovakia Region, their effectiveness and effects on employee job satisfaction.

To collect qualitative data, we chose the questionnaire method, the method that is the most widely used to collect primary data in social science research. As a first step in the process of preparing the questionnaire, we were looking for indicators - we conducted four focus group discussions with employees of various organizations we had selected, with 10 people participating in each discussion. During the discussions, we talked to the employees about their job satisfaction in general, focusing on the topics related to motivation. We constructed the first version of our questionnaire after the discussions - the structure of the questionnaire was decided, the type of the questions chosen, then the order of the questions and the logical layout of the questionnaire established. We used the following question types in the questionnaire:

- simple or multiple selection, with the answer variables evaluated using nominal or ordinal scales,
- five-point Likert scale items, with the answer variables further evaluated using an interval scale (we would also like to point out that the literature is unsettled on the level of measurement of Likert scales with some researchers evaluating the variables using ordinal scales and others using interval scales).

The data were collected among 45 Slovakian small and medium-sized enterprises. The enterprises involved were selected randomly, they were contacted personally. During data collection, 543 questionnaires were filled out. The resulting data provides an opportunity to thoroughly examine the topic. The data were collected about:

- 17 small enterprises (number of questionnaires filled out: 235)
- 28 medium-sized enterprises (total number of questionnaires filled out: 308)

After data collection, the questionnaires were checked for errors and validated. In this phase, we decided to ignore the unclear and the logically incompatible answers and, in the interest of creating a better database, to treat these as missing data in the later phases. This was followed by questionnaire coding and data entry, data preparation and addressing inaccuracies in the coding.

In the main part of our work, we aimed to create a motivational model using multiple regression analysis, separately for physical workers and separately for intellectual workers. We used our regression analysis primarily to find out, to what degree do the studied motivating factors strengthen (or possibly weaken) each other's effects and to what degree can the combined effect explain variances in motivation. During the analysis, we also looked at the F statistic found in the ANOVA tables which - if significant - confirms the relationship between the variables. In the further phases of the analysis, we studied the influence of each factor on the variance of motivation using the beta values, where these values are significant in terms of the model.

#### 4. Empirical results

Demographic characteristics can be a significant factor when researching employees' motivation, four of these characteristics are analyzed. These demographic characteristics are gender, age, academic degree, and work experience in the company. Our questionnaire was filled out by N=543 respondents from amongst the employees of Slovakian small and medium-sized enterprises. In terms of gender 300 respondents were women, 241 were men and 2 questionnaires did not include an indication of the respondent's gender. In terms of age, 50.45 percent of respondents (274 persons) declared themselves to be under 40 years, while 48.25 percent (262 persons) over 40 years with 1.29 percent (7 persons) not declaring their age. The most respondents (153 persons) are between 41 and 50 years, followed by those between 30 and 40 years (138 persons). The age group with the smallest representation in the sample (54 persons) was the group between 18 and 25 years of age. If we take a look at the educational background of the respondents, most of them, 254 persons have finished their secondary education. The following group is the respondents with a university qualification (149 persons). Those who finished primary school (135 persons) make up below 25 percent of the respondents and are mainly from the older age groups. 5 people in the sample did not declare their educational background. It was found that 34.07 percent (185 persons) of the employees had 6 to 10 years of experience, while 20.07 percent (109 persons) had more than 10 years of work experience. 16.02 percent (87 persons) and 29.83 percent (162 persons) of the respondents had 0 to 1 year of experience and 2 to 5 years of experience respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
female	300	55,25
male	241	44,38
missing	2	0,37
<b>Education level</b>		
primary school	135	24,86
secondary school	254	46,78
university	149	27,44
missing	5	0,92
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	54	9,94
26-30	82	15,10
31-40	138	25,41
41-50	153	28,18
51-	109	20,07
missing	7	1,29
<b>Work experience</b>		
0-1 year	87	16,02
2-5 years	162	29,83
6-10 years	185	34,07
more then 10 years	109	20,07

Source: own research, 2020

In the following part of our research, we examine the factors of the basic motivational pillars. The first basic pillar is the rate of *financial factors (payment)*. Our assumption that we will find a relevant positive correlation with financial factors in the case of both physical and intellectual employees. Based on the sample tested, we can conclude that payment rates have a relevant impact on the motivation of both the physical and the intellectual workers to perform their job activities better. The correlation test had a similar result with regard to both groups, the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.376 and 0.366, respectively, which implies a moderate positive correlation between the two variables, which is confirmed by the results even at a  $p < 0,000$  significance level. The difference between the physical workers and the intellectual workers is not relevant, so we did not perform any confirmatory analyses, but accepted that the rate of payment has a similar impact for both groups.

*Non-financial benefits* also have a significant impact on the level of employee motivation. In Slovakian small and medium-sized enterprises, non-financial benefits (opportunities for further training, contributions to the holiday expenses of employees, healthcare benefits etc.) have an influence in the case of physical workers and also in the case of intellectual workers. The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.310 in the case of physical workers, while 0.347 correlation coefficient was identified based on the answers of intellectual workers; both results show a moderate positive correlation. We got the results at a  $p < 0,000$  significance level.

The next studied factor concerned the *nature of the job* in the framework of which we examined two levels of satisfaction related to the nature of the job. In terms of the nature of the job, we did not find a significant relationship in the case of either factor, neither among physical workers nor among intellectual workers. Nevertheless, there are observable differences between the employees hired for physical work and those hired for intellectual work, because in the case of the physical worker's data indicate a significant ( $p = 0,003$ ) but weak correlation between the workload and motivation. The influence of the workload on the individual groups is also worth noting, for which we have observed a negative correlation among employees hired to do intellectual work. On the other hand, it is also worth highlighting that because these relationships are weak, the results should only be treated as indicative information and that we should not draw significant conclusions from them.

*Self-realization* (professional development, autonomy) as a basic motivational pillar warrant more attention in the case of intellectual workers than in the case of physical workers. Despite this fact, we could find relevant differences between the two groups with regard to professional development. The data show the first noticeable result in connection with intellectual workers: a relevant correlation can be identified between their motivation and opportunity for professional development. The correlation is positive; its strength can be characterized by a correlation coefficient of 0.220; the same correlation cannot be observed among employees doing physical work. The opportunity of autonomy does not prove to be a strong motivating factor, but the 0.128 correlation observable among physical workers can, in any case, serve as an indication.

The *leadership* (leadership style, communication, workplace security) is also relevant to motivating factors. The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient in the case of leadership style in both groups shows a weak (physical workers 0.182, intellectual workers 0.173) significant correlation. We can observe a similar correlation in the case of communication with superiors, where both the physical workers (0.282) and the intellectual workers (0.248) show a significant correlation. With regard to workplace security, it was surprising to find a correlation only in the case of physical workers, in which case the strength of the correlation was 0.220, but because of its low significance level, this result does not have a substantial impact on the further stages of the study.

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the *workplace atmosphere* factor is 0.257 for physical workers, while among the intellectual workers shows a weak (0.158) correlation with a  $p < 0,000$  significance level. Because of its weakness, it does not considerably impact our research results. The workplace atmosphere does not have a motivating influence on intellectual employees, and so these we rendered irrelevant in terms of further analysis.

As shown above, the motivational factors of Slovakian small and medium-sized enterprises have different effects on employees. Based on the results of the correlation analyses built on these, we got an adequate overview of the effects the motivating factors. *The main objective of our research was to make a motivational model for Slovakian small and medium-sized enterprises.* In the following part, we will build on this and use a multiple regression model to find which factors have a significant impact on employee motivation. Given the high number of factors studied so far, we only include those factors in our regression model that we observed to show a relationship stronger than 0.2. In the following part, we made a separate model for the group of physical workers and a separate one for the group of intellectual workers.

**Table 2.** Model of motivation for physical workers - a descriptive statistical summary

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Motivation	3,32	1,217	259
Work organization	3,49	0,925	259
Payment	3,40	1,236	259
Non-financial benefits	2,88	1,190	259
Workplace atmosphere	3,64	0,919	259
Communication with superiors	3,56	0,976	259
Communication with colleagues	4,34	0,792	259
Workplace stability and security	4,11	0,835	259

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

Table 2. shows the factors that we have determined to be strong motivating factors for the group of physical workers by applying the logic described above. Based on the satisfaction indices related to the individual factors, they are most satisfied with communication with colleagues and generally consider their current job stable and reliable. The other side is represented by satisfaction with the payment and non-financial benefits - these factors got the lowest ratings.

We used the regression calculation to find an answer to what degree the studied motivating factors can the combined effect of these factors explain in employees' motivation.

**Table 3.** Regression summary table

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.585 <sup>a</sup>	0,342	0,324	1,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work organization, Payment, Non-financial benefits, Workplace atmosphere, Communication with superiors, Communication with colleagues, Workplace stability and security

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

Table 3 gives a summary of our model. It is visible even at first glance that the effects of the variables included in the regression process strengthen each other; the value of the overall correlation coefficient (R) is 0.585, which implies a stronger than average positive correlation. In our case, this means that if the satisfaction indices of the individual increase, then it positively impacts the motivation of physical workers. The next significant index of the summary is the coefficient of determination (since we are using multiple regression analysis, we calculate



based on the adjusted R square) which shows a remarkable value of 0.324, that is to say that the factors included in the model have the power to explain 32 percent of the variation in motivation. In the following part, we will examine the results in more detail.

**Table 4.** The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the model of motivation for physical workers

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	130,631	7	18,662	18,631	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	251,407	251	1,002		
	Total	382,039	258			

a. Dependent Variable: Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work organization, Payment, Non-financial benefits, Workplace atmosphere, Communication with superiors, Communication with colleagues, Workplace stability and security

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

The results are shown in the ANOVA table (Table 4) give further support to the existence of the aforementioned relationship. The F-test significance is  $p < 0.000$ .

**Table 5.** Model of motivation for physical employees - coefficient table (Coefficients)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2,397	0,571		-4,200	0,000
	Work organization	0,187	0,069	0,142	2,696	0,007
	Payment	0,227	0,060	0,231	3,760	0,000
	Non-financial benefits	0,163	0,062	0,160	2,627	0,009
	Workplace atmosphere	0,286	0,069	0,216	4,120	0,000
	Communication with superiors	0,234	0,065	0,188	3,580	0,000
	Communication with colleagues	0,191	0,081	0,124	2,355	0,019
	Workplace stability and security	0,271	0,077	0,186	3,545	0,000

a. Dependent Variable: Motivation

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

We continue with an analysis of the effect of the individual factors (Table 5). As it is shown, the significance levels of all studied factors are below the 0.05 limit, which suggests that as a result of the regression process we can reach the statement that all factors included have a considerable influence on the level of motivation of the respondent physical workers. We analyze the strength of the relationships with the help of the beta, based on which payment (0.231) has the strongest influence followed by the workplace atmosphere (0.216) and communication with superiors (0.188).

After analyzing the group of physical workers, we also analyzed the motivational factors for the group of intellectual workers. Similarly to the previous part, we begin by dealing with the factors that the correlation analyses have shown to have a strong relationship with the motivation of employees.

**Table 6.** Model of motivation for intellectual workers - a descriptive statistical summary

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Motivation	3,33	1,186	261
Work organization	3,66	0,937	261
Recognition of work	3,94	0,862	261
Payment	3,58	1,126	261
Non-financial benefits	3,64	1,147	261
Opportunity for professional development	3,72	0,959	261
Communication with superiors	3,96	0,887	261

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

Some motivational factors show similar data to those in the case of physical workers - two examples are payment and non-financial benefits which seem to be significant influences for this group as well (Table 6). On the other hand, we can see two factors that did not show a relevant effect on the previous group. These are recognition of work and opportunity for professional development. In the following part, we try to answer our question about the degree to which these factors are – taken together – able to affect the motivation of intellectual workers.

**Table 7.** Regression summary table

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.504 <sup>a</sup>	0,254	0,237	1,037

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work organization, Recognition of work, Payment, Non-financial benefits, Opportunity for professional development, Communication with

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

The overall correlation coefficient - similarly to that observed for the first group - indicates a moderately strong positive relationship (Table 7), so we can conclude that the factors included in the model strengthen each other's influence in this case too. However, the value of the coefficient of determination is significantly lower than in the case of physical workers – our model is able to account for nearly 24 percent of the variance in motivation, which is still a remarkable result.



**Table 8.** The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the model of motivation for intellectual workers

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	93,076	6	15,513	14,437	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	272,924	254	1,075		
	Total	366,000	260			

a. Dependent Variable: Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work organization, Recognition of work, Payment,

Non-financial benefits, Opportunity for professional development, Communication with superiors

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

The ANOVA table (Table 8) also contains significant results based on which the F-test significance is  $p < 0.000$ , which in our case gives further confirmation to the existence of the relationship between the variables. Finally, we give a detailed analysis of the regression model.

**Table 9.** Model of motivation for intellectual employees - coefficient table (Coefficients)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0,480	0,446		-1,077	0,283
	Work organization	0,207	0,074	0,164	2,799	0,006
	Recognition of work	0,161	0,082	0,117	1,965	0,051
	Payment	0,132	0,091	0,126	1,448	0,149
	Non-financial benefits	0,199	0,089	0,192	2,242	0,026
	Opportunity for professional development	0,169	0,069	0,136	2,436	0,016
	Communication with superiors	0,151	0,077	0,113	1,963	0,051

a. Dependent Variable: Motivation

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

As the data indicate, the figures of this group are less clear in comparison to those relating to the physical workers. There are several motivating factors that show non-significant results, from which we can infer that they (in joint analysis with other factors) do not have a relevant impact on motivation (Table 9). Such a factor was shown to be the payment, the beta for which indicates a strong correlation, but not significant in terms of our model. Another two factors also fell outside our accepted 5 percent alpha. These are the recognition of work and communication with superiors. Here it is also important to note that these factors were just above our acceptance range. However, our analysis appears to suggest strong correlations with non-financial benefits (0.192) and opportunity for professional development (0.136) which are indicated in our motivational model as significant influences.

## Conclusions

Motivated employees can bring great improvements to the efficiency of small and medium-sized enterprises. Motivation is, therefore, crucial to properly influence employees' behavior in order to achieve the goals of the business. In addition to all of this, motivation is related to a number of other factors, such as workplace

atmosphere, leadership behavior, leadership style or organizational commitment. We aimed to study a topic the results of which could be used to develop small and medium-sized enterprises in Western Slovakia Region because their efficient operation is beneficial economically and serves the interests of the local community.

Using the model of motivation that was set up in order to fulfill the primary objective of our study, we can make the following new or novel findings:

1. For the group of physical workers, the significance level for all studied factors is under the 0.05 limit, so all studied motivational factors have a relevant impact on their motivation.
2. In the case of the motivational factors investigated in relation to intellectual workers, payment, recognition of work and communication with superiors are not significant, which leads us to conclude that these (in joint analysis with other factors) do not have a relevant impact on their motivation (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Model of Slovakian employee's motivation - aggregated table of coefficients

		Beta	Sig.
Physical workers	Payment	0,231	0,000
	Workplace atmosphere	0,216	0,000
	Communication with superiors	0,188	0,000
	Workplace stability and security	0,186	0,000
	Non-financial benefits	0,160	0,009
	Work organization	0,142	0,007
	Communication with colleagues	0,124	0,019
Intellectual workers	Non-financial benefits	0,192	0,026
	Work organization	0,164	0,006
	Opportunity for professional development	0,136	0,016
	Payment	0,126	0,149
	Recognition of work	0,117	0,051
	Communication with superiors	0,113	0,051

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

We used the beta to examine the strength of the relationships, which indicates that, for physical workers, payment (0.231) and workplace atmosphere (0.216) have the strongest influence, while communication with colleagues has the weakest (0.124). For the intellectual workers, the strongest factors were non-financial benefits (0.192) and work organization (0.164). Since we excluded three factors based on their significance levels, the factor that exerts the weakest influence is the opportunity for professional development (0.136).

**Table 11.** Summary of the regression tables

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Physical workers	.585 <sup>a</sup>	0,342	0,324	1,001
Intellectual workers	.504 <sup>a</sup>	0,254	0,237	1,037

Source: own research, processed in: IBM SPSS 25

The regression models presented above (Table 11) are able to explain 32.4 percent and 23.7 percent of the variation of motivation, respectively, which we consider a relevant result. The factors excluded are such sociological, psychological and economic factors that are outside the scope of our model, but that exerts a significant influence on the changes in the motivation of employees.

We believe the topic we investigated and the model of motivation that we set up will be of help to Slovakian small and medium-sized enterprise leaders in achieving higher efficiency and better organizational performance. It was our aim to set this model up so that it is generally easily comprehensible to Slovakian small and medium-sized enterprises and by doing so to help them increase their competitiveness. In our estimation, the model offers an opportunity for the studied sector to make a step forward.

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