

TOWARDS IMPROVING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN
REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA BEYOND THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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DOI 10.20544/EBSiDE.01.01.22.p27

Abstract

The commitment to the organization, productivity and the achieved performance are resulting to some extent from the motivation of the employees. Therefore, it is important for any organization to be able to understand the relation between motivation and performance and to find out what actually motivates employees to put more effort in terms of quality and quantity, into their work. People are different from each other, each individual has his own set of motivators that encourage him to put more or less effort in the performance of a particular activity and achieve a certain goal. Motivation is the driver of human activity, shapes it in a certain direction and maintains it during the formation and until the final achievement of the set goal(s).

It is extremely difficult to determine what are the real motives that force the maximal and high quality effort to work. In order to understand what is the motivation and how it contributes to increasing the performance in the organizations in Republic of North Macedonia, this research was conveyed with the following set goals: analysing motivation and what it entails; perceiving the motivation for work in Republic of North Macedonia; discovering what motivates the employees; perceiving what is the motivation of the employees during a pandemic; where, based on the conducted research, a review and analysis of the obtained results was prepared and pointing out possible good ways to increase the motivation of the employees, which will improve the performance.

Only a well-established and focused motivation policy can deliver good performance and satisfied employees who achieve the stated performance. The path to effective (self-)management of a person lies in understanding their motivation.

Keywords: *motivation, factors, performance, improvement, satisfied employees*

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1. Introduction

There are several questions of interest in any professional domain – why people work, does the extent of hardship align with the motivation or it is reverse, how does efficiency and productivity increase, how can work be made more attractive and in general, what is the employee motivation to engage in effective work? "Satisfaction in work puts perfection in work" (Aristotle Quotes).

Thousands of years before the word "motivation" entered the vocabulary of leaders, it was well known that one can deliberately influence people to successfully carry out the tasks of an organization. Gredler, Broussard, and Garrison (2004) broadly define motivation as the attribute that moves people to do or not to do something. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation that is animated by personal enjoyment, interest, or pleasure. The way to effectively manage a person (if that is possible at all) lies through understanding their motivation. Motivation occupies a leading place in the structure of personality and is one of the basic concepts used to explain the driving forces of behavior.

Taylor's theory was the first of many motivational theories in business. Taylor's theory, also called Scientific Management, could also be called the money as a motivator theory (Teeboom, 2018). Taylor's motivation theory underscores money as the only way to motivate employees. Modern theories of personnel motivation and their use in practice prove that material incentives do not always make a person work harder. It is extremely difficult to determine the true motives that compel the worker to give maximum effort to work.

Motivation is the process which influences people to act. Motivation is a set of arguments, and motives in favor of something (Tracy, 2005). Motivation is a state of predisposition or readiness, a tendency to act in a certain way. Based on human behavior, a significant place is occupied by the orientation of the individual, by which in sociology we mean stable attitudes toward certain social values. The motivation of a person, a social group to be active, indicates the reasons and mechanisms of social actions, the behavior of people aimed at achieving goals. Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000) emphasize that motivation as an internal mechanism that guides behavior.

One of the most widespread theories of motivation is Maslow's (Abraham H. Maslow, 1982) theory of the hierarchy of human needs. The theory is based on the constant increase in expectations because by satisfying one need, new needs are encouraged. According to other authors, all seven needs are always present in every person, but the importance of each of them changes depending on the level of the standard of living, achieving goals, and personal determinations.

Everyone's motivation is different, it is necessary for the human resources department to make individual analyses. The challenge of motivating employees becomes greater in turbulent and unpredictable circumstances.

Crisis situations in organizations create interruptions and imbalances between organizational expectations and employee behaviors. During a crisis situation, employees are faced with challenging events that demand special consideration from normal case situations (Mefi and Asoba, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has caused major changes in the behavior of both managers and employees. Namely, many questions related to motivation arose during this crisis

period. There was a challenge to motivate both those who were physically at their workplaces and those who were working from home. There were also fears of losing jobs, unemployment and pay cuts. As a result, ordinary techniques of employee motivation seemed challenged.

This paper covers theoretical and empirical elaboration. Namely, in addition of this introduction (first) part which emphasizes the importance of the motivation forces, the second part elaborates on factors and the types of motivation, and the third part presents the results and analyzes empirical research for improving employee motivation in the Republic of North Macedonia beyond the pandemic.

2. Motivation

Motivation includes the psychological factors within the individual that determine the direction of a person's behavior in an organization, a person's level of effort, and a person's level of persistence in the face of obstacles (Jones and George, 2008). Motivation must have such a form to lead people to participate in the life of the organization, to accept and share the same paradigm. Motivation cannot be directly measured, but conclusions can be drawn about it based on employee behavior, the degree of their commitment, persistence and work results. One of the most important indicators of motivation according to Bakhtijarevic-Shiber (2014) is work performance which is a product of ability and motivation.

Employees who are not motivated to work, have very low business performance, do not communicate purposively, are not interested in the quality of products and services, do not identify with organizational values, are not related to the organization, its problems, development and performance and are often ready to leave it.

Employee's motivation is affected by many different factors which can be categorized into 3 groups (Hong Le et al., 2020):

- *Human-related factors*. They are intrinsic factors that energize a person to do something, examples: one's benefit, personal goal, personal attitude, the ability of a person, experience.

- *External factors influencing an employee*, examples: company's culture, human resources policies.

- *Work nature-related factors* are the main elements that determine the worker's salary in an organization, such as job stability and autonomy, level of the discrepancy of a task, responsibility, task complexity and work's attraction.

In the context of analyzing motivational systems, we should distinguish between motivational systems based on material compensations and motivational systems based on non-material compensations. A fully built motivational system means a system that respects both groups of motivational strategies and which neither reduces nor overemphasizes the importance of any of the listed strategies (Naumovska, 2008).

Material motivations are a complex construction of several forms of motivation aimed at ensuring and improving the material condition of employees and delivering financial compensation for the performed work tasks.

Based on the degree of directness, we distinguish two forms of material compensation:

1. Direct financial compensation received by the employee in monetary form.
2. Indirect material profit that contributes to raising the standard of the employee, which he receives as part of the salary or in general in monetary form.

Intangible factors represent an approach to increasing the motivation of employees by satisfying their needs that are not related to money or any other form of material reward. Non-material compensations refer to the satisfaction of higher-order needs, such as the need for respect, status, autonomy, career development, advancement of personal abilities, etc. The most frequently used non-financial forms are: shaping (design) of the work; employee participation in decision-making; management by objectives; flexible working hours; feedback from operations; various forms of recognition for work done; delegation of powers and others.

In addition to the general division of material and non-material motivation, a more detailed classification of motivation is also distinguished as follow: (Ankur, Bhuwan & Meenakshi, 2019; Triola 2021):

- Intrinsic motivation refers to an internal motivation, which is subjective but believed to occur as a result of actions aligning with values or with pleasure for performing a task. This type of motivation include pride in a task's completion, interest or enjoyment in the task itself.
- Extrinsic motivation is an external influence that impels people to act or behave in a specific way such as accomplishing a task or job but can also be a personal goal such as losing weight. External influences include bouses, rewards, promotions, prizes, etc.
- Introjected motivation is an internalized motivation like intrinsic motivation, but it is a form of motivation resulting from the feeling pressured to perform in order to gain appreciation from individuals of importance such as parents or bosses.
- Identified motivation refers to a form of motivation which occurs as understanding or feeling the need to perform or accomplish some task but not yet acting on this need. This is a powerful form of intrinsic motivation that prepares the person to act.
- Positive motivation can be simulative, such as higher pay, power position etc. This type of motivation can be called reward-based motivation and/or achievement-based motivation
- Negative motivation implies the use of penalties, punishments etc., negative motivation is relating with fears and can be called also fear-based motivation

3. Research methodology

The purpose of this paper is to identify certain strategic factors that contribute to increasing the motivation. This is in direction of understanding what motivation represents and how it contributes to increased performance in the

organization. After analyzing the most relevant research and papers, conference papers, open-access materials, study reports related to the research topic and other relevant publications, we shaped the conceptual theoretical background in this paper.

Our primary data was obtained from a qualitative questionnaire prepared with questions related to the motivation of the employees, from which we could derive insights about the motivation and the values that the employees have at work, especially during the COVID19 pandemic. The target group for this research was employees in various sectors in the Republic of North Macedonia. The survey was conducted in duration of five months, from 8th January to 10th June 2022, with combined purposive sampling and snowballing sampling of the respondents. A survey link was sent to more than 450 employees located in the Republic of North Macedonia; responses were received from 273 employees. The responses from the survey can be considered as sufficiently indicative and can present information useful for managers and human resources teams of the organizations for creating strategies of employee's motivation, as presented here.

The theoretical framework we have adhered to is the one by (Hong Le et al., 2020), and we analyzed the following 3 categories of factors, in our questionnaire and research: human-related factors; external factors influencing an employee and work nature-related factors.

3.1. Qualitative questionnaire, purposive and snowballing sampling

The research questionnaire was completed by 273 employees in total. The questionnaire begins with the basic data for the respondents. The characteristics of the respondents in terms of age, education and work position are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents regarding age, place of residence, education and work position

Characteristics of the respondents	Number of respondents	%
Age		
18-25	101	53,5
26-35	73	21,3
36-45	64	12,9
46-55	23	7,7
55+	12	4,5
Education		
Secondary Education	61	29,03
Higher education	32	9,03
Bachelor	134	50,32
Master	35	10,32
PhD	11	1,29
Work position		
Employee	207	80,7
Leader/ management	55	12,9

Unemployed	11	6,4
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Source: Authors

The greatest number of responses are received from youngest employees (53.5%), follow by those aged 26-35 (21.3%). In terms of education, half of the respondents have a higher education (59.32%), while the remaining percentages are divided into other types of education. And as the last question in this section of general questions was the question of the work position in which the largest number of respondents are employed (93.6%), around 81% as a employee position, and 13% as a managers.

4. Analysis and discussion

The analysis of employee motivation confirms that three most motivated factors for Macedonian employees are following (“Fig 1”):

- Career development - 44% (human-related factors);
- Communication - 43 % (external factors);
- Reward system - 38% (work nature-related factors).

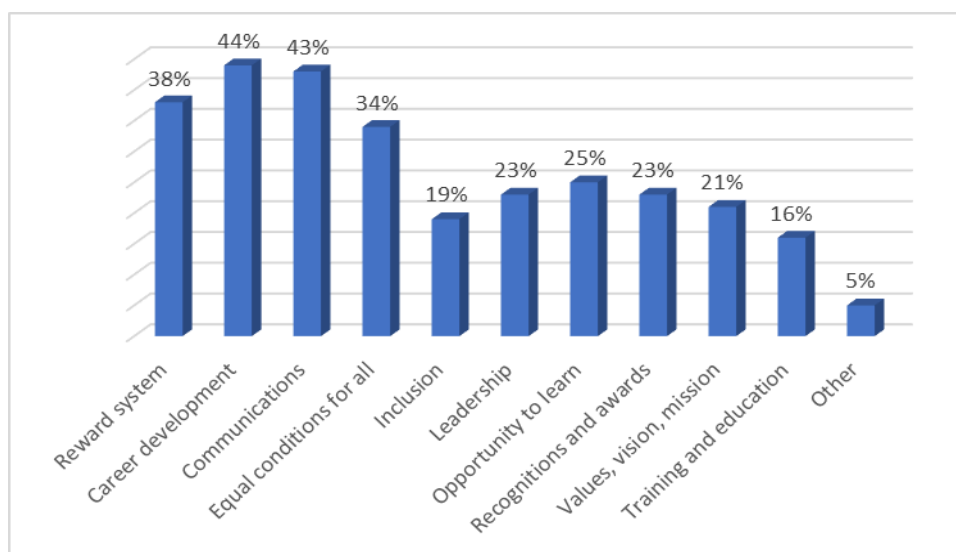


Figure 1: Key motivating factor

Source: Authors

Reward system (money) is a factor, but it ranked on third place, behind career development and communication. Of the respondents, 44 percent said that they wanted career development in the workplace, 43 percent want open communication with their manager and colleagues, and 38 percent said reward system is crucial for their motivation. Other key factors noted by more than 20 percent of the respondents are equal conditions for all, leadership, opportunity to learn, recognitions and awards, and values, vision, mission. Analyzes of research data confirm that Macedonian employees with higher education emphasize the

possibility of career development as a key motivator. Those employees who have secondary education emphasize the reward system in the first place, followed by the opportunity to learn.

Respondents who hold the position of managers believe that equal working conditions provide greater motivation among employees, followed by opportunities for career development, as well as recognition and awards. It is important to emphasize that an open approach to work and listening to employees' ideas boosts employee motivation (83%) and increases their commitment to the organization.

COVID-19 has swept the world, spreading uncertainty and upheaval wherever it goes. These are undoubtedly troubled times, in which leaders are said to undertake all sorts of feats in order to motivate and persevere. But based on the conducted questionnaire through the prism of the employees, the situation is as follows: only 26% of respondents received some form of motivation during COVID-19 (Table 2).

- Did you get any form of motivation during COVID-19?

Table 2: Motivation during COVID-19

Answer	The number of respondents	%
Yes	71	26
No	202	74

Source: Authors

As forms of motivation that respondents received during COVID-19, they emphasized the following: flexible working hours, the opportunity to learn new things, mastering new applications and technologies, career development, bonuses, salary increases, new colleagues, additional days off days, new computers and more.

Organizational culture has a key influence on the motivation of employees, the analysis of the research data confirms that there is a positive change in the organizational culture of Macedonian companies, which positively affects the motivation of employees. The following changes can be highlighted:

- Team building events (53%)
- Award for the best employee (41%)
- Events for greater socializing and communication of employees and superiors (29%)

All these changes in a certain part result from the functioning of human resources departments, namely 69% of the respondents answered that such a department exists in their companies, which contributes to the motivation of employees.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

For the successful functioning of an organization in growing competition and an environment characterized by great uncertainty, highly motivated employees who are productive, satisfied, and attended to work are needed. Motivation is the one that initiates the activity of employees and gives them

enthusiasm for performing tasks and achieving goals. Establishing an adequate motivational system requires skill and understanding of the complex behavior system of the individual.

At the same time, life does not stand still, and "... the factor that today motivates a certain person to work intensively, tomorrow may contribute to the "disconnection "of the same person. No one knows exactly how the mechanism of motivation works. Therefore, in the management of human capital, there is constant research on various motivators for labor activity and the development of new methods and systems.

The results confirm that in addition to material factors, non-material factors are also key to employee motivation. Namely, the open approach, opportunity for career development, positive changes in the organizational culture contribute to greater motivation among employees

It should be emphasized that the combination of motivators is equally important. And what motivates a person today will stop motivating him tomorrow, because it becomes habitual. The most important, top priority task now is to find those factors and motivators that are important to employees. It is necessary to develop well-defined goals and tasks, identify values, to find out who wants to do what and what not.

Recommendations that should be applied in Macedonian companies for greater motivation are the following:

- ✓ Creation of creative meetings in which each employee will have the opportunity to express his opinion regarding the work and propose a creative solution to solve a certain problem, or maybe create a future project, improve the work policy.
- ✓ Creation of a creative, fun space in the company (a room with fun games, a corner with books, a screen for playing videos, a movie) that will relax and create even more motivation for work.
- ✓ Introducing the motivation policy known as "Employee of the Month" because this will motivate them to work more and invest in their work, and if they are praised and distinguished, it will contribute to greater respect and recognition by their colleagues. as well as leaf satisfaction.
- ✓ Existence and policy of "Employee Voucher" with which, in addition to greater motivation to work in the company, there is also the possibility of joint use of the voucher, which encourages connection within the company itself among employees, but it should be emphasized here that there is an opportunity for cooperation and recognition with and among other companies.
- ✓ In times of crisis situations, unpredictable circumstances such as the case of COVID-19, it is necessary to reconsider the policy of motivation and a greater application of different forms of motivation.

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