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Gender-Based Analysis of Intrinsic Motivation: The Case of Public Sector Servants in the Republic of North Macedonia

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Abstract

Public sector provides various essential services in terms of promoting social equity and inclusion, protecting the public interest, regulating and supervising various aspects of society and economy, fostering economic development, and supporting democratic governance. Therefore, the motivation of the public sector servants indirectly contributes to the overall effectiveness of the public service sector and finally to the well-being and prosperity of the society. Considering this, in the public sector, extrinsic factors cannot be easily and quickly influenced, i.e., they are fixed. This paper can be of crucial importance when determining the intrinsic factors behind the public sector servants' satisfaction with their jobs and ultimately their performance. Considering this, in developing economies, such as the economy of the Republic of North Macedonia, public sector servants exhibit poor performance. The main purpose of the research presented in this paper has been to investigate the motivational factors of the public sector servants at municipality level in the Republic of North Macedonia. In the research, primary data collected by using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation have been used to determine whether gender-based differences exist in intrinsic motivation.

Keywords: public sector servants, motivation, satisfaction with jobs.

Introduction

Motivated employees want to be involved in multiple aspects of their institution. They are ready to work overtime and put a lot of effort and energy in improving the organizational performance. In 2014, the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence highlighted a long-term decline in motivation among public sector employees, noting that both morale and the sense of self-worth among public officials have been decreasing for many years. On the other hand, the direct consequence of high motivation and, thereby, commitment of public sector servants is the satisfaction of the citizens' municipality when providing municipal services (Ngowi, 2015). When discussions are held in this context, i.e., when the citizens' satisfaction with the provided municipal services is considered, data from the Report on the Public Opinion Survey on Citizens' Satisfaction with Local Services in North Macedonia (2021) are particularly useful. According to this report, 38% of the respondents reported that they were satisfied or completely satisfied, while 33% were dissatisfied, and approximately 28% were neutral, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, when asked about their overall satisfaction with the services provided by their municipalities. Furthermore, if the results with the previous years' findings are compared, it can be concluded that there is a continuing trend of increase of dissatisfaction among citizens with the services provided by municipalities, the lowest level of general dissatisfaction being 2.97 (average grade of satisfaction with municipality services on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 denotes strongly dissatisfied, and 5 denotes fully satisfied). Furthermore, when evaluating the overall satisfaction according to demographic characteristics, municipalities in rural areas (37%) note significant dissatisfaction with municipal services compared to those in urban areas (29%).

This trend highlights the need for enhancing the quality of local services and more effectively meet the needs and expectations of the citizens. Regardless of the proposed strategies for enhancing the delivery of general and specific municipality services, the motivation and the commitment of the municipality servants have a direct impact on the municipality performance (Ritz et al., 2016), and in this context, indirectly affect the local and national economic growth.

Therefore, the purpose of the research presented in this paper has been to investigate the intrinsic factors of motivation of the public sector servants at the municipality level in the Republic of North Macedonia, and additionally determine whether there is a gender-based difference among them, by answering the following research questions:

1. Which are the motivational factors that guide Macedonian municipality servants' performance?
2. Are there significant gender-based differences in intrinsic factors of motivation among municipality servants?
3. Which are the recommendations for policy improvement for increased motivation among female and male municipality servants?

Additionally, the paper is aimed at filling the gap in literature related to intrinsic factors of motivation in the case of public sector servants in the Republic of North Macedonia and determining whether there is a gender-based difference in their intrinsic motivation.

Research Methodology

The main issue in this paper, alongside the research questions, will be answered by using secondary data from empirical findings, academic articles, reports of scholars, and reputable institutions, and primary data collected through a survey carried out among 122 respondents coming from 14 municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia. The survey was constructed based on the content of the Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Motivation, but focusing only on the aspect of motivational factors. It was conducted during the second semester of the year of 2023. The primary data will be analyzed by using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation.

Literature Review

People bring their human capital into organizations, regardless of whether they are governmental, non-governmental, or corporate, and organizations should carefully evaluate and develop it. An organization can have employees with tremendous abilities, but they may fail to make the contributions they are capable of. The concept of human capital, and the paradigm shift that Davenport (1999) explains, focuses on the relation of the worker-as-investor, where employees gain negotiating power and behave more like free-agent owners of investable capital. Based on their expectations, beliefs, ambitions, and obligations, they decide how much mental and physical resources to use (effort) to achieve a specific goal. In other words, motivation is found behind every employee's action that guides their behavior to-

wards effective and efficient performance. From this point of view forward, the main question in practical and academic literature would be: Who has the main role in determining the motivation of employees, employees themselves or the organization?. The Herzberg's Two Factor Motivation theory approaches this question by involving dual factors when analyzing the employees' motivation, i.e., it focuses on the needs of the people, whether they are fulfilled or not. On one hand, enhancing motivators, which are related to and are intrinsic to the job, arise within the employee (Tranquillo and Stecker, 2016) as employee acknowledgement, greater responsibility, recognition, opportunities for growth and self-actualization. If these motivators are present, they significantly boost the satisfaction with jobs and performance. In other words, based on these factors, employees decide whether, when, where and how much mental and physical resources they will apply. On the other hand, enhancing hygiene factors, or extrinsic factors to the job, which are related to the surroundings or the environment in which employees work, enable absence or reduction of dissatisfaction with jobs. Translated in other words, these factors come from the external environment of the individual and are the influence of the organization itself.

Since, in the public sector, hygienic or external factors, such as salary and working conditions are rigid due to bureaucratic procedures in the public administration, intrinsic motivators like acknowledgement, recognition, and responsibility might be critical in raising the employees' motivation levels (Hur, 2017). Thereby, the Herzberg's theory is particularly relevant when analyzing public sector servants' motivation. Furthermore, according to his findings, public managers' satisfaction with their jobs is significantly affected by intrinsic factors, while hygiene factors do not have a significant effect.

When investigating the factors that affect motivation in the public sector, Papadopoulou and Dimitriadis (2019) also used the content theory, i.e., the Self-Determination Theory. This theory focuses on three fundamental psychological needs, namely, competence, connectedness, and autonomy, according to which, if a person wants to grow as a person and there is a sense of belonging and autonomy in control of the person's actions, then this person is highly motivated. Papadopoulou and Dimitriadis's (2019) findings reveal that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between intrinsic motivation, public service motivation and job performance.

In their findings, Hasso and Akbay (2020) reveal that education, job status, job security, training and development as well as justice, are the significant factors af-

fecting the motivation of employees. Furthermore, they have found that between motivation and practical training, goals, contribution to the mission and acknowledgement, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship.

According to the findings of Fernandes et al.(2022), motivation of health professionals in the public sector is under the greatest influence of salaries, poor working conditions and career advancement as extrinsic factors, and absenteeism, altruism and job security as intrinsic factors.

Discussion and Results

Led by the previous justifications of choosing this area of research, the paper investigates the motivational factors of public sector servants at local level, by using primary data collected through a survey based on the Herzberg's two factor theory. The survey was carried out by participation of 122 public sector servants in 14 municipalities on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. 46% of the respondents were male, while 54% were female. Each of the respondents expressed their level of agreement (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 - strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree and 5 – fully agree) with the statements that describe the intrinsic factors of motivation, i.e., personal growth, recognition and responsibility, the work itself, advancement in the career, and achievement.

The findings show that municipality servants in the Republic of North Macedonia strongly agree and agree that their job at the municipality enables them to develop as persons (59.83%), 16.39% are neutral, while 23.77% disagree and strongly disagree. Overall, this finding shows a positive perception of job-related personal development which can further be exploited as a recommendation for investing in training and skill-building programs, which can enhance employees' satisfaction and performance. In other words, municipalities should prioritize professional growth opportunities.

When asked to assess the level of agreement with the statement that respondents are receiving appropriate recognition for the finished job, 25.41% agree and strongly agree, 59.83% disagree and strongly disagree, while 14.75% are neutral. The lack of recognition for finished tasks and duties may lead to demotivation and reduced productivity. Therefore, it is beneficial for municipalities to implement recognition programs or feedback mechanisms that can improve public sector servants' morale and job satisfaction.

When asked to assess the statement related to the work itself as a determinant of intrinsic motivation, 54.41% respond that they agree and strongly agree that their job is very interesting and that they have different tasks and responsibilities, 30.33% strongly disagree and disagree with this statement, while 19.67% are neutral. The fact that the majority of respondents find that jobs with diverse tasks are interesting highlights the importance of meaningful work, and therefore, municipalities should maintain engaging job roles and foster a sense of purpose among employees.

Related to the question about advancement in the career, 48.36% agree and strongly agree with the statement that they prefer advancing in career instead of monetary awards, 26.22% disagree and strongly disagree, while 25.41% are neutral. The preference for career advancement over monetary rewards indicates that employees value long-term growth and municipalities can align incentives with career advancement to retain skilled staff.

Nearly 65% of the respondents reply that they agree and strongly agree with the statement that they have a sense of professional achievement, 22.96% disagree and strongly disagree, while 12.30% are neutral. The sense of professional achievement positively impacts the employees' morale and commitment. Thereby, regular recognition of professional achievements can boost satisfaction with jobs and loyalty.

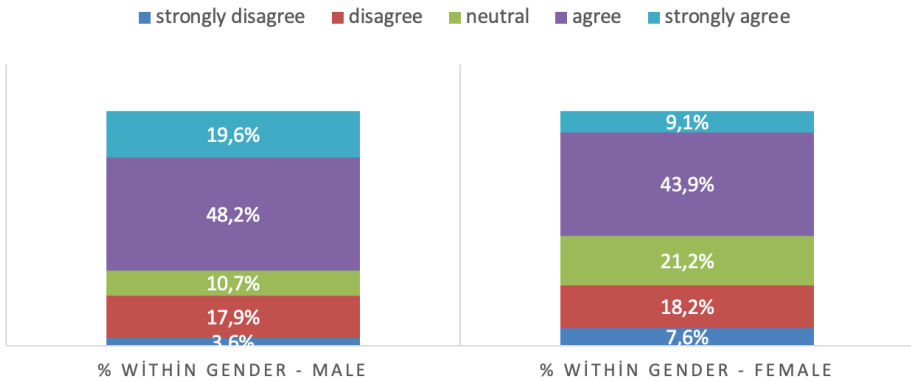
Gender-based Differences in Intrinsic Motivation

According to The State of Motivation Report (Attuned, 2023) conducted at a global level from 2018-2022, there are statistically significant gender-based differences in ranking of intrinsic factors of motivation regarding security, altruism, and competition (out of the total eleven that also include autonomy, innovation, financial needs, feedback, progress, rationality, social relationships, and status). Males ranked competition as the first factor, security as the third and altruism as the fifth one. Females, on the other hand, put security in the first place, altruism in the third place, and competition in the fifth place.

The findings of the research presented in this paper show a statistically significant difference between males and females (at a significance level of 10%) related to the intrinsic factor of motivation for personal growth. 67.8% of male respondents agree and strongly agree with the statement that their institution has enabled them to develop and grow personally, 10.7% are neutral and 21.5% disagree and strongly disagree. Within the group of females, 53% agree and strongly disagree, 21.2% are neutral and 25.8% disagree and strongly disagree. 4(see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Gender-based differences related to motivational factors of personal growth

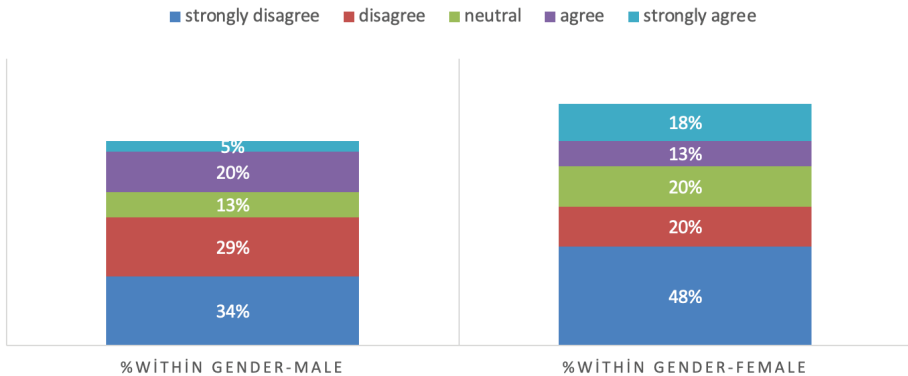


Source: Authors' research

There is no gender-based statistically significant difference related to the factor of acknowledgement. As shown in Figure 2, within the group of males, 25% agree and strongly agree with the statement that acknowledgement for finished jobs is received, 13% are neutral, and 63% disagree and strongly disagree with this statement. In the case of females, 26% agree and strongly agree with the statement, 17% are neutral and 58% disagree and strongly disagree with the statement that they receive appropriate recognition for their finished jobs.

Figure 2

Gender-based differences related to the motivational factor of recognition

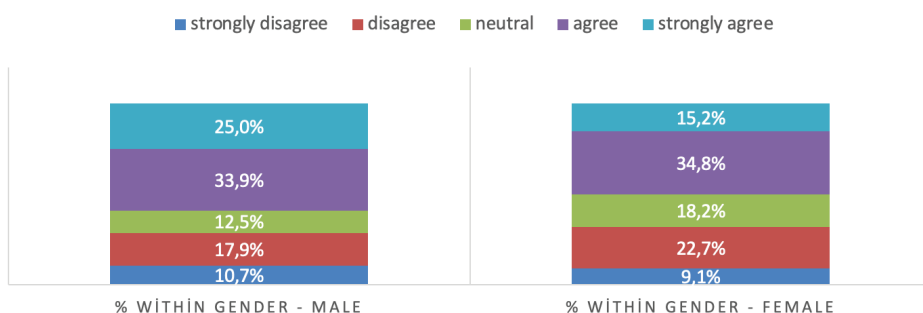


Source: Authors' research

Figure 3 shows that 58.9% of males agree and strongly agree that the work itself is interesting and full of different tasks and responsibilities, 12.5% are neutral, and 28.6% strongly disagree and disagree with this statement. 50% of the females agree and strongly agree with this statement, 18.2% are neutral, while 31.8% disagree and strongly disagree. With the crosstabulation, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females related to the intrinsic factor of the work itself.

Figure 3

Gender-based differences related to the work itself as a motivational factor

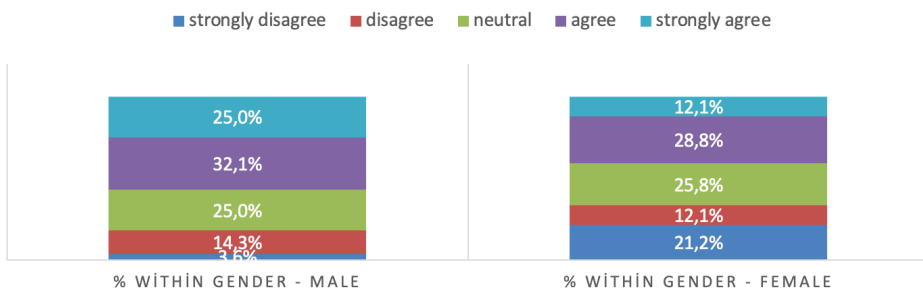


Source: Authors' research

There is a gender-based, statistically significant difference (at a significance level of 5%) related to the intrinsic factor of career advancement, where 57.1% of males agree and strongly agree that career advancement is more important than monetary rewards, 25% are neutral, and 17.9% disagree and strongly disagree (see Figure 4). 40.9% of the females respond that they agree and strongly agree that career advancement is more important than monetary awards, 25.8% are neutral, and 33.3% disagree and strongly disagree.

Figure 4

Gender-based differences in career advancement as a motivational factor

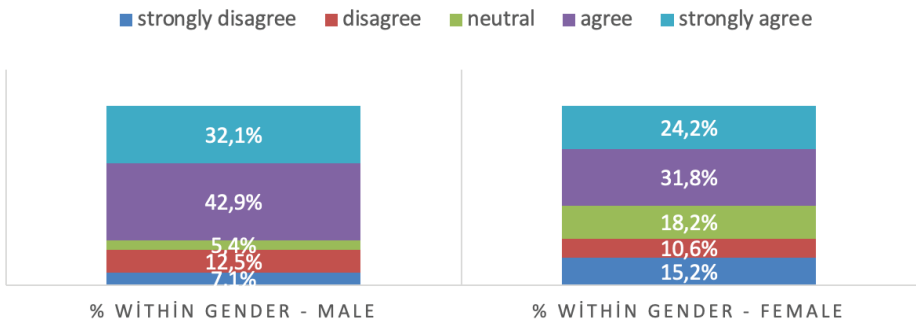


Source: Authors' research

Among female and male municipality servants in the Republic of North Macedonia, there is a statistically significant difference (at a significance level of 10%) when asked about achievement as intrinsic factor of motivation. As shown in Figure 5, 75% of males agree and strongly agree that they have a sense of achievement when realizing their work activities, 5.4% have a neutral opinion, while 19.6% disagree and strongly disagree with this statement. 56% of female respondents agree and strongly agree that achievement is present at their workplace, 18.2% are neutral, and 25.8% disagree and strongly disagree.

Figure 5

Gender-based differences related to achievement as motivational factor



Source: Authors' research

The findings reveal that, among municipality servants, there are statistically significant gender-based differences when analyzing the motivational factors of personal growth, career advancement and achievement. Additionally, male respondents are more motivated in terms of the above mentioned intrinsic factors than the female ones.

These differences should be recognized among municipality servants and a fair and more inclusive environment should be promoted and maintained. This means that the evaluation of performance and monetary and non-monetary rewards should be based on objective criteria. Recommendations in this area could additionally be found in developing training programs for gender differences in motivation and emphasizing that equal opportunities exist for both males and females. Moreover, successful women in the public sector should be used as role models and even as mentors for motivating and inspiring female municipality servants.

Conclusion

Intrinsic motivation of public sector servants is essentially important for providing efficient and effective services to the public. It implicitly contributes to the overall improvement of social well-being and economic development. The findings from this research reveal statistically significant gender-based differences in intrinsic motivation factors among public sector servants in North Macedonia, meaning that male respondents exhibit higher motivation levels related to personal growth, career advancement, and achievement. To address these findings, policymakers and municipalities should consider implementing gender-responsive policies, training programs, and inclusive leadership practices. Fostering gender equality in intrinsic motivation requires joint efforts of policymakers, organizational leaders, and employees. By implementing evidence-based strategies, a public sector that values and supports the diverse motivations of all individuals can be created.

However, to be able to truly understand the reasons for gender-based differences in intrinsic factors of motivation, these findings require further research of extrinsic factors, such as the organizational culture, the work environment, and societal norms. Gender equality in the public sector can be significantly enhanced by fostering an unbiased work environment, motivation, and job promotion.

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