

REGIONAL MOTIVATION DIFFERENCES OF SERVICE SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS IN SLOVAKIA

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***Abstract:** Effective motivation programme should be consistent with all facts affecting employee work performance. Well-motivated staff help the organisation fulfil its goals and lead to long-term prosperity. The objective of the research is to determine the level of employee motivation in urban and rural areas in COOP Jednota Slovakia. A questionnaire is used to collect research data. We supposed that differences in people values living in urban and rural areas do not change despite the increased urbanization of Slovakia in the 21st century. Moreover, we supposed that significant differences in desired level of motivation of people working in urban and rural areas still exist. Following the obtained results we determine the order of 10 most important motivation factors of employees in urban and rural areas and we suggest that the organisation focuses on mentioned motivation factors when creating tailored motivation programme. Findings indicate that, regardless of the operation-related issues, the motivation factors associated with interpersonal relationships in the workplace are the most important. Other important motivation factors are associated with finances and stability, but the level of preferences varies.*

***Keywords:** Employee motivation, Regional differences in Slovakia, Motivation programme, T-test, Urban and rural areas in Slovakia.*

***JEL Classification:** M12, R11.*

Introduction

Thanks to globalization, the requirements on company competitiveness but also on the quality of human resources are increasing [23]. Competitiveness of each enterprise and results of its activity depend a lot on quality and efficiency of a usage of labour resources [16]. Good employees are the most valuable asset any company can have. Management literature (e.g. [20], [40]) asserts that people are the most important organisational resource and the key for achieving higher performance.

Management requirements affect employee behaviour and their motivation significantly. 21st century is characterised by fast pace and changes, increasing requirements and expectations [25] therefore the business world is undergoing consistent change [2]. Employees are affected by these dynamic factors in negative ways – they come into play to weaken their motivation and to ramp up stimuli. That is why it is necessary to increase the level of motivation, to improve its quality in enterprises, to orient it towards enterprise objectives and mission. State-of-the-art motivation of employees working in COOP Jednota Slovakia in the year 2014 is analysed as well as requirements and needs of rural and urban areas are compared in the paper. We supposed that differences in people values living in urban and rural areas do not change despite the increased urbanization of Slovakia in the 21st century.

Motivation is studied for very long time. Each human activity is affected by motivation. Many authors have been dealing with motivation so far. Therefore many different forms of motivation exist, for example [32], [46] the private sector, literature indicates that corporations usually link employees' satisfaction with the provision of financial (salary and high-powered incentives) rewards. Gomez-Mejia and Welbourne [14] argued that pay choices available to management have a positive impact on firms' performance and the effective use of human resources, whereas Spilerman [44] saw a positive relationship between the opportunity for hierarchical advancement and increased financial income. Researchers have taken various approaches to explain what motivates individuals. Some researchers believe innate personality traits are the primary motivators, while others believe external/situational factors (push-pull) are more important [8]. We can highlight Provazník [38]. He understood motivation as a system of factors those constitute inner driving powers of activity of man. These powers direct man's recognition, experience and actions [31]. They can be understood as dynamic tendencies of the personality. Employee motivation presents one of the serious matters managers deal with in the business environment [24], [29], [41], [6], [51]. Motivation in the workplace has been, owing to its positive impact on the employee performance at work, the centre of attention of scientists for many decades. It was proven that highly motivated employees can affect enterprise efficiency significantly [22], [12], [26]. Moreover, research studies show that lack of motivation affect the employee health in negative way, what is associated with lower performance at work as well as increasing healthcare expenditures due to worse health state. Rainey [39] presents that motivation at work is affected by many various factors associated with human nature, job description as well as the organisation. Theoretical knowledge of employee motivation helps us generate ideas how to improve it in order to improve employee performance and quality of work resulting in employee satisfaction that is the biggest asset an entrepreneur has.

Dreams of all managers are productive employees willing to work in accordance with business objectives [11]. Management of people as unique individuals is not easy. Therefore a good manager must be familiar with the employee behaviour. Motivation factors are specific for each individual, e.g. finances, personal success or competitiveness. The most difficult area in human resource management includes understanding how the person might think and feel [5].

Several motivation factors can be considered universal, i.e. positive as well as negative. They affect all types of employee motivation. Positive factors contribute to achieving goals [21], the opposite effect occurs due to negative factors. We try to avoid doing things we do not enjoy but it does not mean it happens. Independence is one of positive stimuli. Lack of independence at work presents negative impact. Employers must keep in mind that importance of the stimuli considered reliable in the past, e.g. job security, good working conditions or reasonable salary, can change and their effectiveness is not so high permanently [15]. Motivation varies as a function of different factors in the work environment, therefore they need to be updated regularly [43].

COOP Jednota is a Slovak retail system with a long-time tradition. It offers customers wide range of quality products including its own-brand products in more than 2,193 operation units throughout Slovakia. These operation units are divided depending on the number of employees into micro and small-sized, medium-sized and large units. 2,827 employees are working in 1,755 micro and small-sized units. 419 medium-sized units employ 6,371 employees. 19 large units of COOP Jednota exist in Slovakia [50]. They

provide jobs for 4,849 employees. Based on the annual report from 2015 totally more than 14,000 employees work for the company thus it is one of the top-ranked employers offering wide range of professional and personal development opportunities. System of fringe benefits together with continuing education is applied in the company. Supplemental retirement savings presenting funds for the employee future belong to traditional benefits. The objective of the paper was to compare the level of motivation of employees working in rural and urban areas following the research into desired and state-of-the-art level of motivation.

1 Literature review

Managers are often convinced of their ability to motivate others but sometimes it is not true as motivation is mainly an inner push in order to improve and have more energy. Motivation comes from the self: it is locked from the inside out [48, 4]. Employers can provide conditions and the environment but they cannot make staff feel motivated. Essential condition for creating good working environment is to get familiar with motivation factors affecting the employee motivation in positive way [5]. Therefore motivation in the workplace can be evaluated as a circle – needs of individuals are reflected in their desire for success that is reflected in goal-oriented behaviour, e.g. to fulfil goals of the enterprise following the satisfaction of a job well-done and performance-relevant reward [47]. Employee motivation is a way how managers can direct employees to achieve goals specific for the enterprise. It implies that essential part of motivation depends upon individual needs and requirements whereby the other part is out of control of the employee. Therefore the managers must be aware of the importance of both parts of motivation and of their key role in making employees feel motivated [1], [27].

When regional heterogeneity is taken into account the differences between rural and urban areas cannot be defined exactly. Various authors [7], [9], [10] present various definitions valid in specific time and space. Most definitions of rural and urban areas are based on population density or total population or on the level of urbanisation, distance from the residential area. Due to advantages and disadvantages of each definition it is necessary to analyse the issue with regard to the specific customs and traditions in the country.

2 Methodology

Comparative analysis and the application of the Student's T-test were used to handle results of the research. We proposed that significant differences in motivation of employees working in rural and urban areas exist due to their lifestyle as well as their living and working conditions. The goal-setting questionnaire was used to provide empirical evidence and to verify the hypothesis. The questionnaire consisted of 30 closed questions relating to 30 motivation factors [19]. Using the questionnaires, opinions, interests and respondents' approaches are recorded. They feel free and more relaxed when the participation in the survey is anonymous. Motivation factors are in alphabetical order not to affect respondents' decision and in order to be clear to all groups of respondents. Respondents had a chance to express their view on desired and actual state of motivation in studied enterprise considering the importance or the satisfaction with individual motivation factors. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was focused on socio-demographic and qualification characteristics of employees in the organisation. By means of this part we acquired information about respondents relating to their age, sex, number of years at work in the

organisation, completed education, and job position. This information was used to analyse motivation of employees and they were informed about the anonymous way of completing the questionnaire. In the second part respondents expressed their view on desired and actual state of motivation by one of the five levels of importance from a pre-defined 5-point rating scale, 5 - very important and 1 – unimportant. Respondents could define the importance of individual motivation factors affecting the employee performance more or less. Individual motivation factors through which we can acquire information about characteristics of work environment, working conditions, employee appraisal and reward system, about human resources management, health and social care system and system of employee benefits as well as information about employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction, value orientation, relation to work and enterprise or co-workers' relationship are included in the second part of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were submitted to randomly selected employees of COOP Jednota in various towns and villages in Slovakia in order to ensure variability and randomness of respondent selection necessary for relevant data acquisition.

The questionnaires were submitted via mail or personally and data were acquired from November 2014 to January 2015. Survey results were handled using mathematical and statistical methods, whereby the sample size had to be set prior to the survey.

Statistics formula, where n is a function of desired accuracy and confidence at estimating particular stimulus in population was used to calculate minimum sample size (n). The equation is as follows [36]:

$$n = \frac{z_{\alpha/2}^2 \cdot \delta_x^2}{\Delta \bar{x}} \quad (1)$$

where:

n – sample size,

$z_{\alpha/2}$ – critical value of a standard normal random variable z (1.96 for $\alpha = 0.05$),

$\Delta \bar{x}$ – desired absolute accuracy,

δ_x^2 – standard deviation.

For example, with the 95 % confidence (ensured with critical value $z_{0,025} = 1.96$), desired accuracy $\Delta \bar{x} = 0.2$ and response variability specified by variance = 0.6, it is expected minimum sample size of respondents:

$$n = \frac{1,96^2 \cdot 0,6}{0,2^2} = 58 \text{ respondents} \quad (2)$$

Responses of 58 respondents working in operation units in rural areas and 58 respondents working in operation units in urban areas will suffice to provide desired accuracy and confidence. Finally, 62 employees working in rural areas and 86 employees working in urban areas throughout Slovakia were engaged in the research and completed the questionnaire, whereby we meet criteria for minimum sample size.

For verifying statistical significance of differences in average levels of motivation of employees working in towns (\bar{x}_M) and in villages (\bar{x}_V) at the selected level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ the Student's T-test was used [36]. The null hypothesis vs. the alternative hypothesis was tested, they were as follows:

$$H_0 : \mu_1 = \mu_2 \quad \text{vs.} \quad H_1 : \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

H_0 : we suppose that averages of studied motivation factors (real, required) presenting the level of motivation of employees in urban areas are equal to averages of studied motivation

factors presenting the level of motivation of employees in rural areas and at the same time we suppose that the difference between them, if any, is caused only owing to the random variation of results.

H_1 : we suppose that averages of studied motivation factors (real, required) presenting the level of motivation of employees in urban areas are not equal to averages of studied motivation factors presenting the level of motivation of employees in rural areas and at the same time we suppose that the difference between them cannot be considered accidental, therefore, it is statistically significant.

Individual values of the Student's T-test in our research were gathered using the programme STATISTICA 10. We mention also Fisher's F-test to assess the equality of variance of changes in satisfaction in both sampling units at the same selected level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$), whereby the values of standard deviations show that the opinions of both sampling units are homogenous. If the value of F-test does not cross the critical value of F_α at the selected level of significance we can find out whether the employees in compared sampling unit are more homogenous or heterogeneous than those in the other studied sampling unit.

3 Results

3.1 Hypothesis Testing

Within the research 180 questionnaires were submitted to both sampling units. 148 were completed correctly; hence the questionnaire response rate is 82 %. Representative sampling unit consists of employees of COOP Jednota working in operation units in rural (62 respondents) as well as urban areas (86 respondents) throughout Slovakia. Table 1 shows the structure of 148 respondents in terms of age, education, job position and seniority.

Tab. 1: Structure of sampling unit

Age		Education		Seniority		Job position	
up to 30	35	Primary school	12	Less than 1 year	9	Manager	30
31 – 40	28	Lower secondary education	56	1 – 3 years	29		
41 – 50	45	Upper secondary education	67	4 – 6 years	20		
50+	40	Higher education	13	7 – 9 years	22	Employee	118
				10 years and more	68		

Source: own research

Hypothesis testing – we supposed that differences in desired state of motivation of employee working in urban areas in comparison to motivation factors preferred by employees working in rural areas exist – was evaluated due to the significance of differences of averages according to the importance of individual motivation factors (Tab. 2). Motivation factors (MF) with differences statistically significant are in bold at the selected level of significance (p-value).

Results of the Student's T-test show that the difference can be considered statistically significant in 18 from 30 analysed motivation factors, i.e. the requirements for the level of motivation of employees working in rural areas and employees working in urban areas are significantly different.

The differences considered statistically significant occurred mainly in motivation factors associated with:

- interpersonal relationship in the workplace (atmosphere in the workplace, good work team, communication in the workplace),
- financial reward of employees (fringe benefits, information about performance result, recognition, prestige),
- workload (working time, job performance, type of work, physical effort at work, mental effort),
- applying one's own ability (self-actualization, competences, individual decision making),
- the workplace environment as well (work environment, limitation of stress, mission of the company).

Physical effort at work, mental effort and limitation of stress in the workplace are motivation factors, from the group of 18, with differences considered statistically significant. Employees in rural areas work under difficult conditions as a consequence of heavier workload as well as of higher responsibility and autonomy. We suppose that is why they consider each of these three motivation factors more significant in comparison to employees in urban areas where work teams consist of higher number of staff therefore the workload can be divided among more employees. Subsequently, the work is easier and also the aspect of burnout typical for rural population is less common. In general, higher importance of individual motivation factors can be seen in respondents working in rural areas. It means that requirements for the level of motivation of these employees are higher. We suppose that it is owing to the dissatisfaction of employees working in rural areas that is much greater than of those working in urban areas. Thus we think, the more dissatisfied employees are, the higher requirements for the individual motivation factors they have.

By means of the values of F-test we appreciate the importance of differences of changes in satisfaction of both sampling units whereby individual standard deviations show the homogeneity of employees' opinions. The biggest difference in responses was seen in motivation factors atmosphere in the workplace, good work team and communication in the workplace. It shows evidence of differences in the quality of interpersonal relationships in individual operation units and the best way to improve it is to encourage managers because their approach can affect the team cohesion positively. Following the results we can conclude that the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected at the level of significance 5 %. Hypothesis H_1 is accepted and therefore we can consider the difference in individual motivation factors in both sampling units statistically significant with the reliability of 95 %.

Tab. 2: Hypothesis testing – desired state of motivation

S.N.	Average		Difference	T-test	P-value	Standard deviation		F-test	P-value
	Rural area	Urban area				Rural area	Urban area		
1.	4.77	4.26	0.52	4.46	0.000	0.42	0.84	4.00	0.000
2.	4.81	4.34	0.47	3.99	0.000	0.44	0.85	3.76	0.000
3.	4.60	4.27	0.33	2.86	0.005	0.69	0.69	1.01	0.965
4.	4.31	3.45	0.85	6.73	0.000	0.80	0.73	1.20	0.424
5.	4.65	4.50	0.15	1.14	0.257	0.77	0.76	1.02	0.927
6.	4.69	4.16	0.53	4.28	0.000	0.59	0.84	2.02	0.004
7.	3.76	3.74	0.01	0.10	0.924	0.92	0.84	1.19	0.465
8.	3.92	3.81	0.11	0.87	0.387	0.80	0.68	1.38	0.171
9.	4.45	3.93	0.52	4.77	0.000	0.62	0.68	1.22	0.421
10.	4.26	3.70	0.56	4.60	0.000	0.72	0.74	1.04	0.883
11.	4.56	4.30	0.26	2.25	0.026	0.69	0.70	1.03	0.898
12.	4.48	4.21	0.27	2.38	0.018	0.70	0.69	1.02	0.920
13.	4.48	4.05	0.44	4.19	0.000	0.65	0.61	1.12	0.634
14.	4.24	4.02	0.22	1.88	0.062	0.72	0.69	1.09	0.695
15.	4.19	3.66	0.53	4.39	0.000	0.72	0.73	1.02	0.930
16.	4.10	3.50	0.40	4.64	0.000	0.82	0.73	1.27	0.309
17.	4.60	4.50	0.10	0.76	0.446	0.71	0.79	1.24	0.373
18.	4.18	3.67	0.50	3.85	0.000	0.78	0.79	1.02	0.930
19.	4.35	3.95	0.40	3.21	0.002	0.83	0.68	1.48	0.096
20.	4.40	4.14	0.26	1.78	0.077	0.86	0.91	1.12	0.635
21.	4.56	4.29	0.27	1.82	0.071	0.78	0.98	1.57	0.062
22.	4.44	3.80	0.63	4.53	0.000	0.80	0.87	1.16	0.535
23.	4.32	3.65	0.67	5.22	0.000	0.81	0.75	1.16	0.525
24.	4.00	3.77	0.23	1.71	0.089	0.75	0.86	1.34	0.232
25.	3.94	3.74	0.19	1.31	0.192	0.81	0.92	1.31	0.271
26.	3.95	3.86	0.09	0.61	0.542	0.83	0.92	1.25	0.362
27.	4.08	3.59	0.49	3.66	0.000	0.91	0.71	1.65	0.333
28.	4.16	3.95	0.21	1.28	0.202	0.91	1.02	1.25	0.358
29.	4.55	4.15	0.40	2.90	0.004	0.76	0.86	1.28	0.311
30.	4.68	4.62	0.06	0.46	0.648	0.83	0.78	1.11	0.661

Source: own research

3.2 Comparison of the Most Important Motivation Factors

Effective motivation programme should be consistent with all facts affecting employee work performance. Well-motivated staff helps the organisation fulfil its goals and lead to long-term prosperity. The best way would be to create tailored motivation programme to suit requirements of each employee. It is time- and money-consuming, i.e. economically destructive. The company should focus on improving motivation factors to make employees satisfied. In the research we defined the most important motivation factors that employees working in urban and rural areas considered most significant and thus they help boost the motivation. Following the averages (\bar{x}) we selected 10 most preferred motivation factors

whereby the motivation factors presenting the most significant differences are in bold (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3: Comparison of 10 most important motivation factors

Urban areas			Rural areas		
S.N.	Motivation factor	\bar{x}	S.N.	Motivation factor	\bar{x}
1.	Basic salary	4.62	1.	Good work team	4.81
2.	Job security	4.50	2.	Atmosphere in the workplace	4.77
3.	Supervisor's approach	4.50	3.	Communication in the workplace	4.69
4.	Good work team	4.34	4.	Basic salary	4.68
5.	Working time	4.30	5.	Job security	4.65
6.	Fair appraisal system	4.29	6.	Fringe benefits	4.60
7.	Fringe benefits	4.27	7.	Supervisor's approach	4.60
8.	Atmosphere in the workplace	4.26	8.	Working time	4.56
9.	Communication in the workplace	4.16	9.	Fair appraisal system	4.56
10.	Recognition	4.15	10.	Recognition	4.55

Source: own research

Employees working in urban areas prefer finances and therefore the most important motivation factor is basic salary. It is followed by job security and supervisor's approach. The personality of supervisor plays an important role especially in rewarding, recognising and engaging staff. Further motivation factors in ranking were associated with workload, financial reward as well as with social environment. Employees working in towns consider social relationships important. They appreciate good atmosphere and communication in the workplace even though they are not as important as finances and living conditions. Employees in operation units in towns are members of bigger teams and their interpersonal relationships are not so close and deep, they do not know each other because they are from different parts of the town and thus they are more self-centred.

3.3 Changes in Motivation Programme of the Company

Interpersonal relationships, good work team, atmosphere and communication in the workplace are the motivation factors considered the most significant by the employees working in rural areas. People in rural areas grow and live in small communities. They know each other and the values preferred by them are not those associated with career path but with cohesion and family-friendly workplace policy. Interpersonal relationships are followed by job security and living conditions that result from unfavourable economic conditions. Supervisor's approach, recognition and fair appraisal system motivate the employees in positive way, too. Following the findings we suggest that the company, in order to motivate employees, should focus mainly on mentioned motivation factors when creating motivation programme. By comparison of motivation factors we found out that 10 most important motivation factors occurring in both sampling units are the same despite differences considered statistically significant.

Employees working in urban areas prefer financial reward because of higher living standards in towns in comparison to villages. On the other hand, employees working in rural areas prefer cohesion, interpersonal relationships because of way of living in small rural communities.

Despite mentioned differences we can state that, due to identical most important motivation factors in towns and villages, the people values are similar. Following the result we beg to state that it is possible, despite the increased urbanization of Slovakia in the 21st century, to create unified motivation programme for employees working in operation units of COOP Jednota in rural as well as urban areas. This motivation programme is for the company economically advantageous and according to our research also effective. We suggest creating motivation programme focused on motivation factors preferred by the employees in order to improve financial conditions and to strengthen relationships and cohesion among employees through various teambuilding activities.

Conclusion

In the research we analysed the level of motivation of employees working in rural and urban areas in operation units of the company COOP Jednota Slovakia. We used the Student's T-test to test the hypothesis in order to accept or reject the supposition that that significant differences in desired level of motivation of people working in urban and rural areas still exist [3]. We supposed that employee motivation is closely linked with lifestyle and thus with work and living conditions. Moreover, we can state that differences in people values living in urban and rural areas do not change despite the increased urbanization of Slovakia in the 21st century.

At the same time we can state that well-motivated employees with real opportunities for personal development, pay rise and reward to a fair standard and in accordance with how the organisation values them are the most valuable asset any company can have to fulfil its goals leading to long-term prosperity. Employee motivation is not something that management can do, rather it is a process that management can foster and allow to happen [17]. Because motivation is a system for stimulation of any behaviour (actions, activity) that is caused by various motives [45], and according to Marcinkeviciute [33], [34], [35], the basis of motivation is motives, these must be identified when we strive to measure current motivation. Employees must be motivated permanently. Motivation changes in time, therefore, the motivation needs of employees must be analysed and motivation programme must be updated time to time [18]. It is the role of managers to choose appropriate approach to the employee motivation. Seeing that motivation programme creating is demanding and money-consuming activity, its effectivity resulted from targeted analysis of employees [37]. On the basis of actual analyses [49], [28] we can make the following conclusions: motivation programme in the company COOP Jednota Slovakia can be created following the average importance of individual motivation factors unifiedly. Following our analyses and proposals, COOP Jednota tested changes in motivating employees. Their efficiency will be evaluated at the beginning of the year 2017. Moreover, we suggest paying more attention to motivation factors considered significant by employees working in rural and urban areas. In the future motivation requirements of employees can also change after meeting their needs. Therefore we suggest carrying out the analysis of motivation at regular 1-year interval [50], [19]. Economic factors together with economic and social conditions in dependence on development of people values in time that can change, should be observed at longer intervals (2 – 6 years).

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