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Article

Crisis COVID-19 and changes in motivation in the public administration sector

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Crisis COVID-19 and Changes in Motivation in the Public Administration Sector

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to define the level of employee motivation and its development in public administration sector of the Slovak Republic in the years 2017-2023 in terms of gender. The research sample consisted of 3571 respondents. Relational and financial factors are the most significant for public administration employees in Slovakia, given the fact that they are statistically at the same level of importance each year. In 2020 and 2022, there is a significant preference for relational factors over financial factors. Based on the ANOVA test results, the test identified significant changes for the group of relational, financial career and social factors at the 5% significance level. The Eta-squared test results indicate that in the case of the financial group of factors, these changes are of negligible significance and in the case of relational factors, there is a low substantive significance of these changes. Based on the results, it is possible to conclude that the needs of public administration employees are stable in the long run. By further analysing the results, it is possible to define the motivational factors influencing the needs of public administration employees in the form of an incentive programme.

Keywords

Employee motivation, Public administration, Slovak Republic, Human resource management, ANOVA

JEL Classification

O15, J24

Introduction

Human resources have an ability to enhance the performance of any organization. They are the most important resource and are responsible for every action and decision taken. Their management depends on organizational policies, strategies, and practices that have a major impact on employee behaviour, attitudes, and performance (Stacho et al., 2023).

A motivation system is an integral part of human resource management (Kmecová, 2021). The art of motivating people is a challenging activity based on the skills and knowledge of the managers (Jankelova et al, 2023). Motivational strategies are considered an important tool for increasing employee efficiency, work productivity and organizational goals (Kucharcikova, Mičiak, 2018). Its goal should be to increase the employee's effective contribution to the organization. Managers of manufacturing companies try to maintain the performance of their employees by optimally managing human resources at the necessary level so that from the perspective of the development of the company, its economic potential is sustainable in the long term (Bogdanovic et al. 2016). Also, managers of employees in the public administration sector must carry out HR activities related to the development of employee performance in such a way that their performance is perceived positively from the point of view of the population (Erazo-Munoz et al. 2023, Nguyen et al. 2020). We can also include motivation programs among such activities. Since public administration provides public tasks of local government through activities carried out by

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government agencies and public institutions, its main objective is to operate public welfare through the strengthening of civil society and social justice. In Slovakia, there is a parallel model in which the civil service is a separate and distinct component of public administration. Public administration in Slovakia is organised along the lines of state-region-municipality. The Slovak Republic is divided into 8 regions and 2 890 municipalities.

The aim of the thesis is to define the level of employee motivation and its development in the public administration sector of the Slovak Republic from the perspective of gender. Furthermore, based on the results to define the possibility of creating motivation programs for public administration employees.

Literature Review

In human resource management, the focus is either on control and compliance-oriented human resource management configurations (Arbab and Mahdi, 2018) or on employee-oriented human resource management configurations (Smerek and Vetrakova, 2020). Motivation represents the reasons for people's activities, wants and needs. It is characterized as a direction towards any activity. It can be divided into two concepts namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Urbancova, Vrabcova, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is a completely autonomous type of motivation. A person is motivated by the task itself beyond their interests and pleasures. Individuals are intrinsically motivated when they receive benefits directly from the activity itself without receiving extrinsic benefits. Intrinsically motivated employees show persistence and exhibit higher job performance and emotional commitment (Delaney, Royal, 2017). Extrinsic motivation is influenced by the organization and the work environment (Mendoza-Ocasal, et al. 2022). Behaviour is controlled by the influence of external sources such as social norms, peer influence, authority, or promises of benefits (Vrabcova, Urbancová, 2022). It focuses more on the utility of the activity than on the activity itself (Assiri, 2016). Motivated employees are strategically important for a company's competitiveness. If they consistently perform well, they can be a source of competitiveness for the company (Ganta, 2014). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators can be considered as the goals of motivation. Therefore, the goals of an individual are often the deciding factor in determining the level of motivation. The importance of employee motivation can also be understood through organizational culture (Iguisi, 2009). Employee motivation and organizational culture are interrelated. When employees feel a mutual bond with other employees through their organizational culture, they tend to be more motivated and satisfied with their jobs (AzmyAzmy, Wiadi, 2022).

The actual motivation for delivering quality services in relation to public organisations remains an important issue in the history of government management. There is a general belief that public managers and employees are sufficiently motivated by the feeling that they are providing a service to the public (Ferdousipour, 2016).

However, public administrations often face the problem of declining workforce motivation due to several internal organisational factors. These are, for example, mismatched organizational culture and personnel policies or practices, and external factors such as economic uncertainty and budgetary measures taken because of austerity measures (Mustajbašić, Husaković 2016). Although public administration organizations pride themselves on the strong intrinsic motives of employees, the influence of intrinsic motives diminishes over time as public service becomes commonplace for individuals who have worked for years in the same sector (Riyanto et al. 2021). New employees of younger generations often join public service with high expectations and idealised views of public organisations being ideal organisations with smooth and highly efficient workplaces - an ideal rarely achieved in the real world. In reality, public organizations are composed of heterogeneous individuals of different backgrounds, cultures, classes or dispositions, and work processes are not as smooth and efficient as one might hope or assume from textbooks on organizational management and leadership (Vetrakova and Smerek, 2019). This can dampen the motivation and morale of public administration sector employees when faced with procedural complications, bureaucracy, and unexpected ways of working and organizational culture in the public administration sector. This can lead to frustration and reduced interest among public administration sector employees as they progress slowly and achieve only lacklustre results, which is often attributed to the organisational culture of the public administration sector (Mansor, 2014). Although public employees have a greater will and intention to contribute to the greater public good, debilitating factors in the public administration sector affect their desire to consistently contribute their services to citizens. In such a situation, increasing work motivation and fulfilling the spirit of public service could not only achieve the goal of increasing work performance but also positively affect employee satisfaction (Sánchez-Sellero et al. 2018). Moreover, removing debilitating factors could help in maintaining employee motivation and morale in the public administration sector (Kjeldsen et al. 2016).

As employee motivation has recently become a determining factor for the success of an organisation, human resource management is directly linked to the performance of the business. Chenhall (2006) emphasized that employees are an important asset to all organizations and that they should be motivated given the changing context of the organization in which they operate. Work motivation is not only dependent on part of the job but also on factors such as age, gender, and education, especially at the management level (Eskildsen and Nussler, 2003).

The COVID-19 has been characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization due to the high numbers of confirmed cases and deaths and has posed an unprecedented health crisis to human beings (Chan et al. 2020; Stier et al. 2020; WHO 2020). As of 1 October 2020, the pandemic has caused over 33 million confirmed cases

and over 1 million deaths globally. Restrictions on the use of public spaces, quarantine and social distancing are key measures implemented to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and protect public health.

Countries across the world have introduced policies such as stay-at home-lockdowns, restrictions on public events, social gatherings and public transport, the closure of schools and workplaces, and public COVID-19 information campaigns (Honey-Roses et al. 2020; Ritchie et al. 2020). In Slovakia, tourism sector has been influenced most by the pandemic. A lot more significant economic impacts can be expected in connection with decreasing of activities in key sectors of economy as for example production of vehicles, consumer electronics or building industry (Statistical Office of the SR, 2021). Since the state sector had to ensure the running of the state, employees went to work except when work from home was possible. For that reason, the COVID-19 pandemic had a smaller impact on these employees. Despite this fact, it is assumed that a certain uncertainty prevailed in the public administration as well, which could be reflected in a higher need for job security (Dujava and Peciar, 2020). Studies of Batarliené et al., (2017), Greiner (2018), Huang, Xu and Van De Vliert (2003) and Inglehart (1997) present that the change in economic conditions also brings with it a change in the orientation of priorities and therefore motives within employment. Therefore, we formulate the assumption that the preference of priorities in the motivation of public administration sector workers will differ from the previous period due to the coronavirus crisis (assumption for the formulation of research hypothesis 1 and 2)

Today's women have a significant place in the workforce and their participation in economic life is steadily increasing. Underestimation and misunderstanding of women's work motivation led to the underutilization of their skills and experience (Saether, 2019). Research on gender differences in motivation is based on the idea of fundamental differences between men and women, i.e. the existence of gender stereotypes that can be viewed in a historical context of male hegemony based on gender/sex differences in the perception of priorities and the guarantee of qualitative differences between people. According to the author Peterson (2004), men prefer to work independently and seek help from those in positions of authority. Conversely, women prefer to work interactively and seek help from colleagues with whom they are in the same group. Using gender stereotype theory as support, Manzoor (2012) suggests that men and women are motivated in different ways since their needs and goals vary as well. According to DeMartin and Barbato (2003), men desire independence, power and status, self-validation, popularity, and success.

There are women and men in the workplace with different preferences or goals, so their motivations are different. Satisfying stereotypical male needs such as economic gain, independence and success are more typical for men. Thus, performance incentives such as financial income, freedom, promotion, challenge, and opportunity for self-fulfilment, etc. are more important for men. According to Meece et al. (2006), incentives such as the need for family and care for the quality of their family life should be fulfilled by women.

Inceoglu et al. (2012) say that gender differences can be observed in relation to changes over the life course: for example, when women have the need to start a family their priorities may change. Likewise, when they take a career break, when working part-time or when experiencing some conflict in the family or at work. A different attitude towards motivational preferences can also be highlighted by different different conditions on the labor market. Outputs from Harman (2021) point out that women in the Slovak Republic were less affected by job loss than even in the case of higher education. Therefore, there is an assumption that women and men will have different reactions in terms of motivation during the corona crisis, even in the conditions of public administration. This forms the basis for the formulation of the third research hypothesis.

This thesis aims to define which groups of motivational factors influence the motivation of employees in public administration in terms of their requirements over time and to define possible differences in preferences within gender.

Methods

The object of the study was employees working in the public administration sector in Slovakia. Public administration entities (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2023) are legal entities registered in the statistical register of organizations that are included in the public administration sector in accordance with the European ESA 2010 methodology established by Regulation (EU) of the EP and Council No. 549/2013 of 21 May 2013 on the European system of national and regional accounts in the European Union. To achieve a representative sample, the research consisted of respondents from each region in Slovakia, of different gender, ages, education and occupational category. The research consists of 3571 respondents (the return rate of the questionnaire was 43%), and its more detailed characteristics are presented in Table 1. The freely available list of public administration entities regularly published by the Slovak Statistical Office 2017-2023 (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2023) was the basis for determining the sample. Each year, there was randomly selected subjects from the list. About two employees of each selected subject were selected using freely available information on the entities' websites by to a quota selection based on gender and job classification. The survey was conducted between 2017 and 2023. Using the G-power program, an examination of the necessary minimum sample size for sufficient power of the statistical tests used was performed.

Table 1. Structure of the research.

category/year		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	men	201	37.6	131	25.8	134	26.0	216	40.4	124	26.8	172	34.1	181	35.4
	women	335	62.4	376	74.2	381	74.0	319	59.6	340	73.2	332	65.9	330	64.6
Age	lessthan30years	72	13.4	59	11.6	66	12.8	84	15.8	75	16.2	79	15.6	117	23.0
	31-40yearsold	148	27.6	117	23.2	131	25.6	123	22.9	109	23.6	165	32.7	112	22.0
	41-50yearsold	189	35.2	182	35.8	190	36.9	176	32.8	149	32.2	167	33.1	172	33.6
	51yearsandmore	128	23.8	149	29.5	127	24.7	153	28.5	130	28.0	94	18.6	110	21.4
Education	primary	2	0.4	4	0.8	3	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.3	2	0.4	1	0.3
	lower-secondary	15	2.8	24	4.7	38	7.3	16	3.0	19	4.1	31	6.1	13	2.6
	upper-secondary	182	34.0	196	38.7	154	30.0	220	41.0	251	54.1	207	41.2	164	32.0
	university	336	62.8	283	55.8	319	62.1	300	56.0	192	41.4	263	52.3	333	65.1
Job position	manager	42	7.9	59	11.6	70	13.6	41	7.6	47	10.2	33	6.5	82	16.0
	blue-collar worker	106	19.8	108	21.3	85	16.4	63	11.7	111	23.9	221	44.0	111	21.7
	white-collar worker	387	72.3	340	67.1	360	70.0	432	80.7	306	65.9	249	49.5	318	62.3
Total		536	100.0	507	100.0	514	100.0	536	100.0	464	100.0	504	100.0	511	100.0

Data were collected by questionnaire survey (appendix A). Respondents were approached directly by email (questionnaire on the google forms platform) and in person (questionnaire in hard copy). The questionnaire was conducted anonymously, on the territory of the Slovak Republic. It consisted of two parts. The first part was aimed at identifying the socio-demographic profile of the respondent, which in addition to the identification of the region covered age, gender, number of years of service in the organization, completed education and job classification. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of thirty close-ended questions exploring employees' preferences in terms of motivation. Motivational factors were divided into the areas of work, social, career, financial, and relational. The reliability test result of 0.929 using McDonald's Omega indicates sufficient internal consistency across the 30 motivational factors examined. In the context of the paper, these 30 factors are observed within the 5 groups whose variability was also tested (presented in Table 2).

Table 2. Groups of motivational factors and their reliability.

Group of factors	McDonald's ω	Motivational factors
Financial	0.705	basic salary, additional financial evaluation, fair employee evaluation, benefits
Relational	0.730	the atmosphere at the workplace, good working team, the attitude of the supervisor, communication at the workplace
Careers	0.854	Opportunity to exercise one's own abilities, job performance, authority, job prestige, independent decision-making, self-development, recognition, the prestige of the organization's name, learning and personal growth
Working	0.807	the physical demands of the work, job security, the nature and type of work to be performed, familiarity with the work result, working hours, working environment, working practices, psychological strain, stress, free time
Social	0.782	the vision of the company, the development of the region, the relationship of the organisation to the environment,

Respondents assigned an importance rating on a scale of 1-5 (1 least important and 5 highly important) for each of the motivational factors. Primary information from the questionnaire survey was processed in Microsoft Excel. At the same time, an input data matrix was prepared for the analyses, which were conducted in SPSS. Data evaluation was carried out through basic descriptive statistics (relative and absolute abundance, weighted arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and confidence intervals), comparing the means of two groups using Student's t-test (two-tailed) at the significance level of 5%. The following research hypotheses were tested:

H1: Employees' motivational preferences will change significantly (in at least one category of motivational factors) because of the coronavirus pandemic.

H2: The perceived need for job security will be significantly higher due to the impact of the pandemic than it was prior to 2020.

H3: We hypothesize a significant difference in response to the pandemic crisis between men and women in terms of preference for motivational factors.

Results

Employees working in public administration have been impacted by several influences since 2017, the most problematic of which has been the onset of a coronavirus pandemic in 2020. Previous research by Ližbetinová et al. (2018) suggests that these changes tend to be reflected in attitudes and preferences the following year. Therefore, our research question was how these changes will be reflected in the motivational preferences of public administration sector employees in 2021. Figure 1 presents the evolution of the perceived importance of motivational factors classified into 5 basic groups over time from 2017-2023. The order of perceived importance of each group of motivational factors is broadly consistent with other studies of other NACE disciplines. For workers, relational and financial factors are the most important and are statistically at the same level of importance each year. In 2020 and 2022, there is a significant preference for relational factors over financial factors. This fact coincides with the findings of Siejk, and Szajt (2022). In terms of the evolution of preferences, it is possible to see a fluctuation appearing in 2020 and 2021, primarily in the financial, relational, and social factors. Table 2 presents the results of the ANOVA test, which identified significant changes for the group of relational, financial, career and social factors at the 5% significance level (hereby Research hypothesis 1 has been confirmed). The Eta-squared test results indicate that in the case of the financial group of factors, these changes are of negligible significance and in the case of relational factors, there is a low substantive significance of these changes. The Games-Howell test that was used to identify more proximate differences provides information that for most of the motivational factor groups there is a significant change lagged between 2020 and 2021 for financial ($p=0.031$), relational ($p<0.001$) and social ($p=0.005$) factors. Changes in career preferences were only reflected between 2021 and 2022 ($p=0.037$) and changes in relational ($p<0.001$) and social ($p<0.001$) were also observed in the turn of these years.

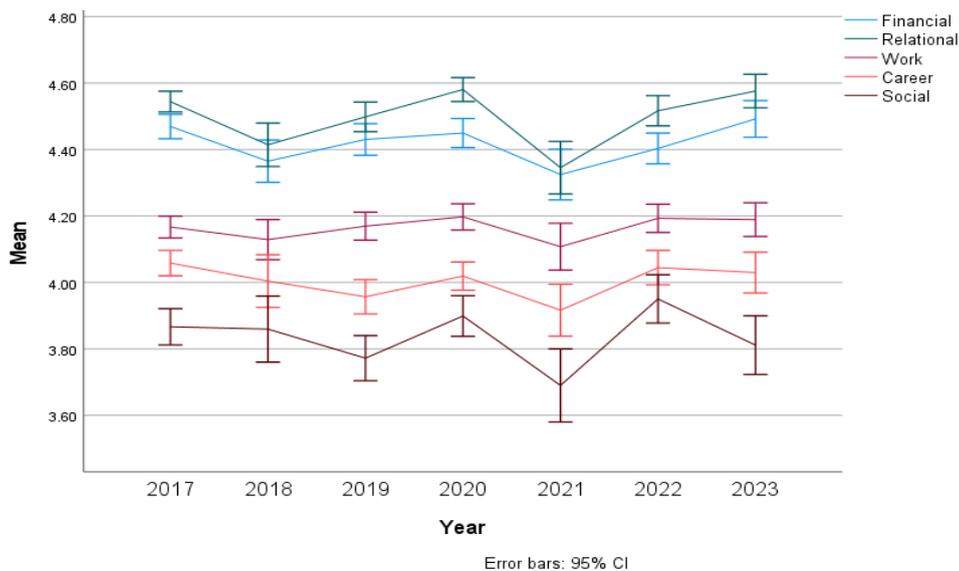


Fig. 1. Evolution of motivational preferences of factor groups in period 2017–2023.

ANOVA's test at the 1% significance level confirmed a significant change in job security significance, albeit with weaker substantive significance ($p=0.002$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$). The stated research hypothesis Research hypothesis 2 was ultimately not confirmed based on Games-Howell, as a significant change in the perceived importance of this factor was in the 2017 /2018 turn of the year ($p=0.025$) and was not identified from 2020 onwards at the 5% significance level. The arrival of the pandemic has clearly had an impact on insecurity and the need to rely on interpersonal relationships in the workplace. The assumption within WH2 is also that job security has gained importance. Therefore, this motivational factor is examined in terms of change in salience.

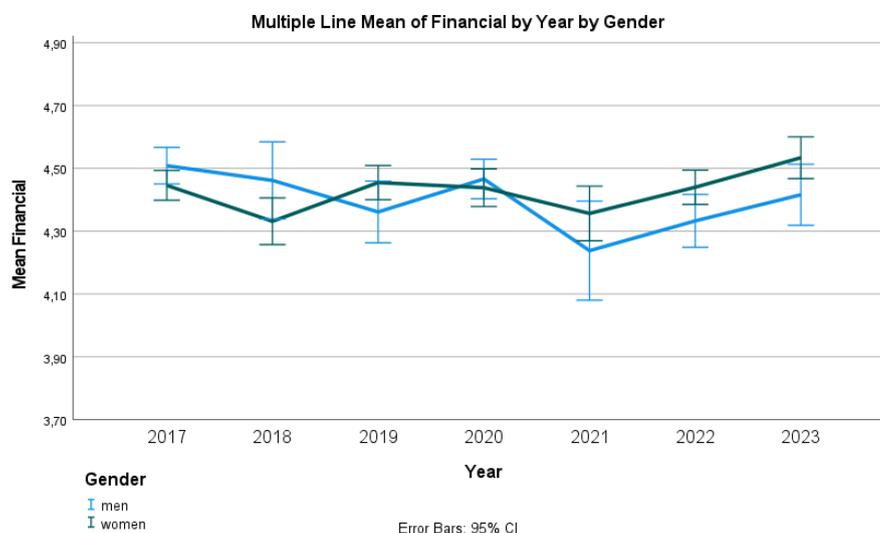
The next part of the analysis was to identify the different preferences of men and women, especially the different responses to the pandemic crisis in terms of preferences from 2020 onwards (Figs. 2-6 and Table 3). Table 3 reveals that for financial factors there was a moderate substantively significant change in preferences in 2022 and 2023 (increase in preferences for women), and there were differences in the perceived importance of relational factors in 2021 and 2022 (moderate substantive significance), for social factors in 2022 (again moderate substantive significance of difference), and in 2023 this difference was identified for work factors as well. Research hypothesis 3 is thus confirmed at the 5% significance level, although the differences did not occur directly in 2020 in either case for the groups of motivational factors.

Table 3. Results of ANOVA test for the difference of groups of motivational factors over time.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta-squared(η^2)
Financial	Between Groups	10.372	6	1.729	5.168	0.000	0.009
	Within Groups	1192.058	3564	0.334			
	Total	1202.430	3570				
Relational	Between Groups	22.444	6	3.741	12.418	0.000	0.020
	Within Groups	1073.613	3564	0.301			
	Total	1096.057	3570				
Work	Between Groups	3.459	6	0.576	2.053	0.055	0.003
	Within Groups	1000.522	3564	0.281			
	Total	1003.980	3570				
Career	Between Groups	7.570	6	1.262	3.170	0.004	0.005
	Within Groups	1418.351	3564	0.398			
	Total	1425.921	3570				
Social	Between Groups	21.812	6	3.635	4.835	0.000	0.008
	Within Groups	2679.849	3564	0.752			
	Total	2701.661	3570				

Table 4. Differences by ANOVA test in years by gender.

Year	Financial		Relational		Work		Career		Social	
	sig.	η^2	sig.	η^2	sig.	η^2	sig.	η^2	sig.	η^2
2017	0.105	0.003	0.310	0.001	0.004	0.010	0.000	0.014	0.004	0.010
2018	0.078	0.008	0.734	0.000	0.070	0.009	0.002	0.025	0.001	0.029
2019	0.091	0.006	0.014	0.012	0.001	0.023	0.052	0.008	0.237	0.003
2020	0.542	0.001	0.145	0.003	0.482	0.001	0.317	0.002	0.403	0.001
2021	0.176	0.006	0.020	0.017	0.374	0.003	0.346	0.003	0.962	0.000
2022	0.030	0.009	0.011	0.013	0.169	0.004	0.069	0.007	0.012	0.012
2023	0.044	0.011	0.350	0.002	0.020	0.014	0.492	0.001	0.412	0.002

**Fig. 2.** Evolution of motivational preferences of financial factors in the period 2017–2023.

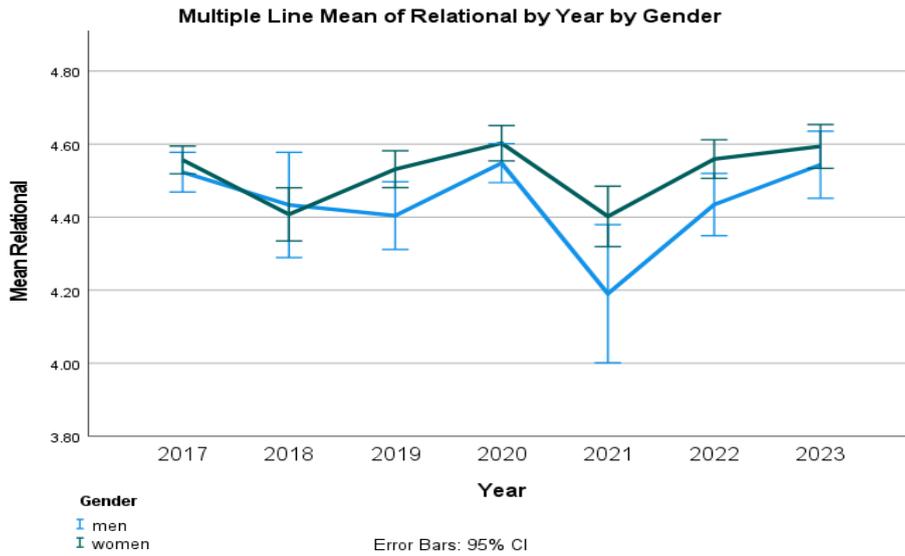


Fig. 3. Development of motivational preferences of relationship factors in the period 2017–2023.

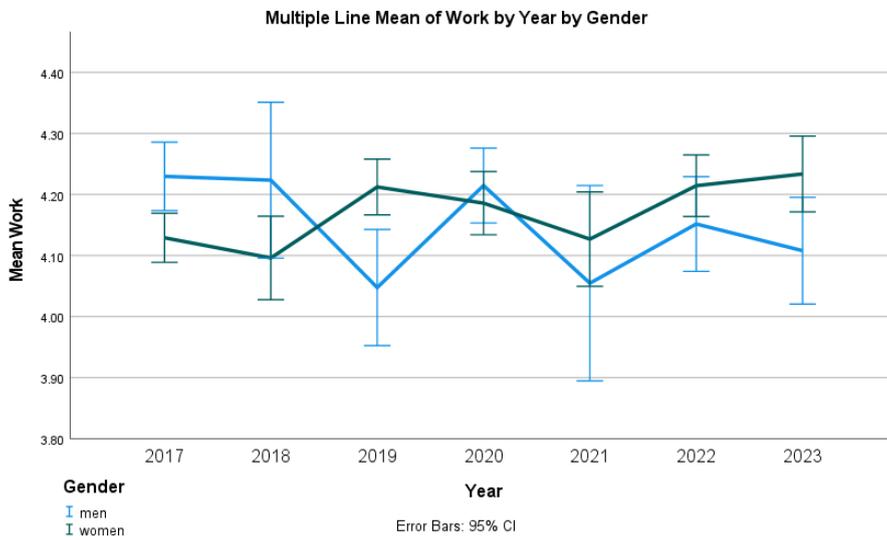


Fig. 4. Evolution of motivational preferences of labour factors in the period 2017–2023.

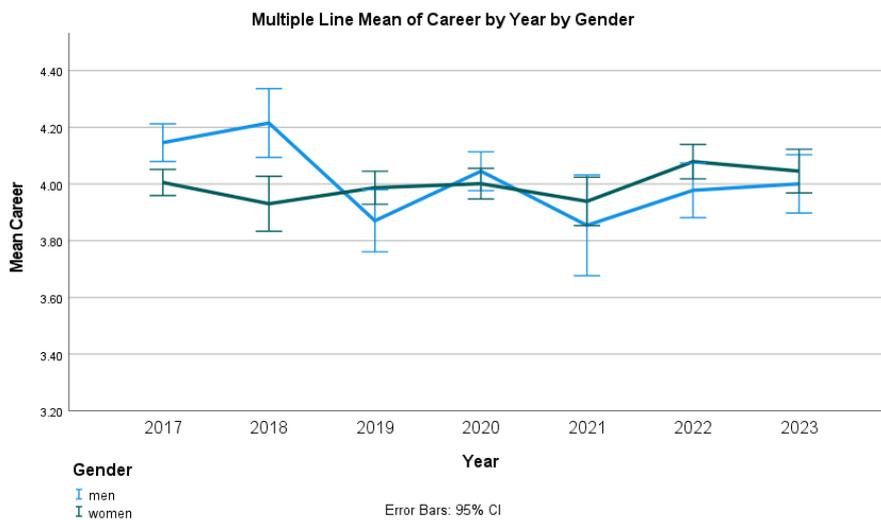


Fig. 5. Evolution of motivational preferences of career factors in the period 2017–2023.

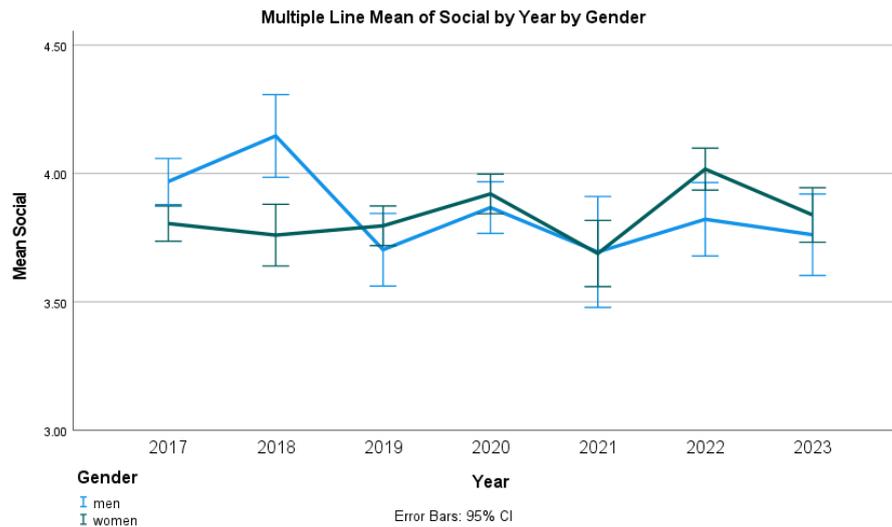


Fig. 6. Evolution of motivational preferences of social factors in the period 2017–2023.

Discussion

The motivation process is based on an unsatisfied need, which causes a certain tension in the employee's body and psyche, possibly even stress. Then, to get rid of these feelings, the employee takes actions that help to provide a solution and satisfy the needs. By satisfying the needs, the employee also achieves the fulfilment of his/her/their needs and desires, thus losing tension and stress. He, she, or they return to equilibrium and gains a sense of satisfaction (Locke, Latham, 2002). At the same time, several of the indicated motivational processes may be going on in the employee because he may be experiencing several interests and needs at the same time at a given stage of his life. Because each of these demands and interests may be at a different stage of the employee's development, the motivating process is made more complex. The continuous addressing of the above issues is made possible by an organization's motivation program. It is aimed at the optimal use of the workforce in the performance of the tasks of the organization, and at the same time, the optimal satisfaction and development of the personality of the person in the work process. Effective design of the motivation program assumes that the organization can single out those areas that are low at a given time or for some other reason that is significant for the work activity of people (Hitka, 2009). At the same time, it is necessary to focus attention on continuous monitoring of their transformations in the next period. It aims to create such conditions at the organizational level that will promote optimal work motivation of all employees of the organization. Motivational programmes have psychological and economic aspects. In terms of elaboration, both aspects are equally important. The development of an incentive programme should therefore be preceded by an understanding and assessment of all the factors that have an impact on the performance of employees and the operation of the organization. The above analysis can be short-term, but a long-term analysis is preferable (Ližbetinová et al. 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has hit organizations and employees in every sector worldwide in unprecedented ways. It became extremely difficult for organizations and employees across sectors to operate under increased mobility restrictions. The pandemic effectively disrupted previous operational models and imbued changes such as telework and digital adoption that are pervasive and may potentially last beyond the pandemic (Raghavan et al., 2021). The public administration sector has also been significantly affected by COVID-19. However, since it is a recent event, its impact on employee productivity, especially the individual and organisational outcomes, is not well-studied. In addition, the public administration sector faces further digitization through a gradual process (Agostino et al., 2021).

The results of the paper show, that public administration employees in the Slovak Republic have a stable level of motivational needs in terms of the ranking of groups of motivational factors. In the long term, relational factors are the most important for these employees, followed by financial and other factors (Fig. 1). However, their degree of importance changes over time (Fig. 1, Tab. 2). From the end of 2019, there are significant changes in the perception of the importance of relational, financial, and social factors between 2020 and 2021. Subsequently, relational and career factors in 2021 and 2022. According to a study by Hitka et al. (2021), motivational preferences tend to change with an annual response after changes in external factors. This would explain changes in incentive preferences as late as 2021, which is a year since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Relational and financial motivational factors are dominant in their hierarchy of needs. According to Figure 1, it can be concluded that despite the long-term significant preference for relational factors over time, the year 2021 changed the perception of relational and financial factors at the same level, which could be explained by a change in the economic situation in Slovakia and thus a certain short-term shift towards the basic sub-categories within Maslow's hierarchy. Research Batarliené et al., (2017) Huang, Xu and Van De Vliert (2003) and Inglehart (1997) confirms the significant role of the economic level of the region, its cultural setting and the safety factor on motivation, when in conditions

of economic scarcity the preference for basic (lower factors according to the hierarchy of needs) increases and, conversely, in an economically more secure environment, the emphasis on higher needs increases. However, in the case of an increase in the need for job security, the assumption did not prove to be justified (research hypothesis 2 was not confirmed), which may explain the fact that the public administration was not so affected in terms of layoffs (Dujava and Peciar, 2020, Harman, 2021, Statistical Office of the SR, 2021). Camilleri (2021) same as Mamatoglu & Aksoy (2021) draws attention to the increase in fears about job loss with the arrival of the covid pandemic, which significantly affects subsequent internal motivation.

Research by Pruneda (2014) also shows results on motivational needs comparable to our research, where the most important motivational factors affecting performance include the demeanour of the supervisor and the work environment. Our findings are also supported by research conducted by Casuneanu (2011). It demonstrates that leadership style and supervisor's attitude are responsible for increasing motivation and engagement in work. At the same time, this also supports the fact that in the conditions of Central Europe, the importance of the trend of mutual knowledge sharing and networking is emphasized (Baksa & Branyiczki, 2023). Other research conducted in Southern Indonesia (Andriani, Kesumawati, & Kristiawan, 2018) also leans towards the preference for relational factors in managing employees and shows the association of a supervisor's demeanour with motivational performance. Contrary to the results of the paper, research of Sánchez-Sellero et al. (2018) shows, that financial motivation is the most significant motivational factor in the long term. The same results are presented by the research of Al-Madi (2017), who also concluded that financial and relational motivational factors are considered the most important motivational factors.

The differences in the preferences of employees in terms of gender from 2020 (in the case of relational, financial and work group motivational factors) presented in the paper are not only justified in gender differences as such (Saether, 2019), but also in the fact that covid brings a higher risk of job loss for men even with higher education than for women (Harman, 2021, Dujava and Peciar, 2020, Statistical Office of the SR, 2021). The research of Paredes-Aguirre et al. (2022) also shows different responses to stimuli in the conditions of the corona virus crisis in men and women. According to their results, the male population mainly needs the satisfaction of internal motivators to compensate for their burnout syndrome, while women are more demanding in this regard and more willing to leave their work in case of physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion.

Conclusion

Designing and implementing an effective cost-efficient motivational program is one of the key tasks of any business. Improperly designed and applied motivational programs have a negative impact on employees and do not motivate them to perform at their best. Employees, on the other hand, respond to well-intentioned praise and appropriate rewards with higher work devotion and a more diligent approach to the organization's goals. By analyzing motivational factors and then designing incentive programmes in this way, it is possible to effectively tailor employee motivation programmes to the level of management and the needs of the business. In the event of a change in the value orientation of the employees, the motivation programmes can be changed and modified by computer, or individual employees can be reassigned within the framework of the already created motivation programmes. In our analyses, we can conclude that even in the long-term perspective, public administration employees maintain their motivational requirements at the same level without significant changes. The relationship and financial factors we can consider as the most important attributes from a longtime point of view. The sequence of the importance of motivational group factors is stable. Despite the fact, that the order of factors does not change over time, the value of the importance of all motivational factors use to change. Since 2020, when the pandemic crisis began, we identified decrease in relationship, financial and social factors requirements in 2021. In 2022, there is a significant importance increase of relationship, career, and social factors. Looking at the differences in the importance of motivational factors perception by gender, we can see the distinction in 2021 and 2022 in relationship factors (middle level of importance), financial factors in 2022 and 2023, social factors in 2022 and labour factors (2023). It is possible to state, that there were no differences in financial and relationship factors until 2020. This has changed during the pandemic time. One possible reason is the bigger threat of women in labour market in crisis.

The results, degree of results generalization and findings interpretation can be influenced by research limits. Firstly, it is a partial concentration of research on the conditions of one country. Despite of the sampling the population, the research sample is not fully consistent in the case of gender, age, job, or qualification. This can influence the comparison of the results in time. These limits are caused by the questionnaire response rate and limited information in respondent sample specification.

The results presented in this article are enriching not only the theoretical knowledge base but provide information for HR experts and managers of public administration sector organizations. Continuing the current research could bring a better view of the development of motivation in the field of public administration. A possibility to expand the research is the stratification of public administration entities and their mutual comparison.

The prerequisites for the necessary long-term employee performance, willingness and satisfaction include the fact

that employees perform work that is meaningful and interesting, while at the same time providing opportunities for personal development. If employees have a perspective and concrete opportunities for professional development and career progression and are evaluated for their work in a way that is commensurate with the quantity and quality of the work they perform, we can expect them to deliver long-term, high-quality performance. However, to maintain this, employees need to be motivated on an ongoing basis.

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Appendix A: Question form

Dear colleagues,

I would sincerely appreciate if you could complete the enclosed questionnaire in order to acquire knowledge about the importance of individual motivation factors and your satisfaction with actual state of motivation in the company.

Information in the questionnaire is anonymous and will be used only to conduct the analysis.

Many thanks for your participation in advance

Sex:

- male
 female

Age:

- up to 30
 31 - 40
 41 - 50
 50 and older

Completed education:

- primary
 lower secondary
 upper secondary
 higher

Seniority – the amount of time you have worked for the company:

- less than 1 year
 1 - 3
 4 - 6
 7 - 9
 10 and more

Position:

- supervisor
 blue-collar worker
 white-collar worker

5	4	3	2	1
very important	important	neutral	slightly important	unimportant
very satisfied	satisfied	neutral	somewhat satisfied	dissatisfied

Nos.	Motivation factor	Desired state (motivation you need to propel you forward)	Actual state (motivation you are satisfied with)
1.	Atmosphere in the workplace		
2.	Good work team		
3.	Further financial reward		
4.	Physical effort at work		
5.	Job security		
6.	Communication in the workplace		
7.	Name of the company		
8.	Opportunity to apply one's own ability		
9.	Workload and type of work		
10.	Information about performance results		
11.	Working time		
12.	Work environment		
13.	Work performance		
14.	Moving up corporate ladder		
15.	Competences		
16.	Prestige		
17.	Supervisor's approach		
18.	Individual decision making		
19.	Self-actualization		
20.	Social benefits		
21.	Fair appraisal system		
22.	Stress /elimination of stress in the workplace/		
23.	Mental effort		
24.	Mission of the company		
25.	Region's development		
26.	Education and personal growth		
27.	Company relation to the environment		
28.	Free time		
29.	Recognition		
30.	Basic salary		