

## EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Employee motivation is an important factor affecting employee performance and thus one of the major concerns of today's management. It is imperative that a person in charge of motivating employees considers motivation from the point of view of the individual that needs to be motivated rather than from his or her own perspective. Motivational factors, i.e. the needs, desires and goals of employees must be identified and satisfied to motivate top performance. The paper seeks to identify and examine the motivational factors and give an overview of significant content and process theories of motivation for the purpose of exploring the motivation of civil servants. The paper starts with the theoretical background which is followed by the empirical section exploring the motivation of civil servants in the Customs Administration. The research results relating to the proposed hypotheses are intended to increase awareness of the importance of motivation and to inform of motivation techniques for the attainment of organisational goals in an effective and efficient manner.*

**Keywords:** *public administration, motivation, theories of motivation, motivators*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation plays a vital role in our life by directing our energy towards attaining our goals. Being such an important factor in the life of an individual, motivation has been the subject of many studies. The results and theories developed from these studies are of particular interest to managers because they help identify and develop motivational strategies aimed at improving employee performance. It is a well-known fact that motivated employees work more and perform better than those who are not motivated. The paper seeks to identify, explore and present the factors affecting employee motivation, in particular the motivation of civil servants. The result of the research are intended to increase awareness of the importance of employee motivation and inform of motivation techniques aimed at achieving organisational goals in a more effective and efficient manner. The paper starts with the theoretical background, which is followed by the empirical section exploring the motivation of civil servants in the Customs Administration. The paper concludes with the analysis of research results and the confirmation or rejection of the proposed hypotheses.

### 2. MOTIVATION

Motivation is a theoretical concept that explains why people choose to behave in a certain manner under certain circumstances. Motivation includes all internal factors that consolidate the intellectual and physical energy, initiate and organize individual actions, direct behaviour, and determine its direction, intensity and duration (Hunjet, Kozina, 2014, p.72). According to Robert C. Beck defining motivation presents the greatest challenge to motivational theorists.

He maintains there are two main approaches to motivation: regulatory and purposeful. The former is associated with biological adaptation which includes the following: internal needs → drive → activity → goal → satisfaction (Bobera, Hunjet, Kozina, 2015, p.78).

The regulatory approach focuses on the need or drive and the underlying physiological processes. The purposeful approach is rooted in philosophical notions about goals and behaviours as a choice between positive and negative. This approach explores the possible future outcomes of different behaviours of an individual seeking to attain goals that have the greatest value for him/her (Beck, 2003, p. 26).

## **2.1. Motivational factors**

Motivation as an inner force that affects the behaviour of people is driven by a series of factors, i.e. motivators which may come from within a person or from his/her environment. The importance of these motivators for a person changes over time, depending on the circumstances such as a person's character traits, workplace characteristics, as well as the characteristics of an organisation in which a person works. Motivators increase employee performance and enthusiasm and generally have a positive effect. In contrast, demotivators (hygiene factors) do not have a significant effect on employee performance and motivation; however, when unsatisfactory, they reduce employee performance and enthusiasm. Demotivators significantly weaken or destroy motivation, depending on one's personality traits. Removing demotivators alone is not sufficient for ensuring long-term employee satisfaction or motivation (Hunjet, Kozina, 2014, p. 73).

### **2.1.1. Most common factors affecting employee motivation**

Since motivation depends on whether certain physiological, material and social needs of an individual have been met and directly affects one's performance, an organisation must seek to satisfy these needs. Employees usually change jobs because of low salary, poor interpersonal relations, lack of challenging work, poor relations with superiors, etc. If an organization wants to improve employee satisfaction and performance, it has to remove factors which reduce motivation. Organizations should reassess the following motivators:

- salary,
- job security (Zupan, 2001, p. 51),
- praise, recognition and rewards,
- work organization and planning,
- growth opportunities,
- advancement opportunities,
- interpersonal relations,
- challenging and creative work,
- involvement and participation of employees,
- working hours.

## **3. THEORIES OF MOTIVATION**

Theories are developed to explain and analyze past observations and predict future ones. In order to find answers to specific questions we have to be familiar with some general psychological principles applicable to specific cases, and know how to include them into theory. Most of the theories of motivation are named after the persons who developed them and differ mainly in their assumptions about human needs. Research into motivation of an individual can be divided into research focusing on “what” motivates or causes individual actions and that which focuses on “how to” motivate individuals, i.e. how individuals are motivated to action.

The first are referred to in the literature as content theories, and the latter are referred to as process theories of motivation. Content theories of motivation include:

1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs
2. Theory of three-level hierarchy
3. Theory of achievement motivation
4. Two-factor theory of motivation
5. Role motivation theory
6. McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (Bahtijarević – Šiber, 1999, pp. 559-560).

### **3.1. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs**

Abraham H. Maslow (1943) developed a theory of motivation that has undoubtedly had the greatest impact on research into organisational behaviour. This is still the most famous as well as the most popular theory despite engendering considerable controversy ever since it was developed and the fact that there is no clear empirical evidence of its assumptions. Research has shown that nearly every modern manager is familiar with this theory but considers it outdated. The theory posits that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy from basic physiological needs to more complex ones associated with social status of an individual and his self-actualization or self-realization. This theory seems quite straightforward and easy to understand which is why many managers seek to apply it in practice. According to this theory, there are five levels of needs that are arranged into a hierarchy. Higher level needs cannot be satisfied if lower level needs have not been gratified first. The need that is not satisfied influences behaviour and the lower it is in the pyramid of needs, the more dominant it will become in influencing behaviour.

In his later articles and reviews Maslow concludes that a person can advance to the next level of the pyramid only once the lower-level needs have been fully satisfied. He maintains that a person functions best when he/she seeks to achieve something, misses something or uses his/her abilities to achieve a certain goal (Bahtijarević – Šiber, 1999, p. 563).

Following Maslow's model, employees of an organization which is dedicated to employee motivation will satisfy their needs as follows:

- regular and fair salary will satisfy physiological needs;
- employment security, health and safety at work, and additional benefits will satisfy safety needs;
- teamwork with colleagues and superiors and working with clients will satisfy social needs;
- recognition of accomplishment, appointment to higher authority positions in the organization, and increased responsibility will satisfy esteem needs;
- advancement and growth opportunities as well as creative work will satisfy self-actualization needs (Hunjet, Kozina, 2014, p. 75).

## **4. STATE (PUBLIC) ADMINISTRATION - BUREAUCRACY**

The term “bureaucracy” was first coined in 1764 by a physiocrat V. de Gournay. Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century various authors (J. S. Mill, G. Mosca and others) defined the term differently, giving it mainly one of the following meanings:

1. bureaucracy is a hierarchically structured system of offices (administration);
2. bureaucracy is an abuse of power by civil servants; and

3. bureaucracy is a new type of governing by civil servants, i.e. professional administrators.

Early theories and definitions did not emphasize the difference between bureaucracy as an abuse of power and as a form of governing. Seeking to improve on the analysis of his predecessors Max Weber, a German sociologist, gave his contribution to the social study of bureaucracy and bureaucratic organizations which is considered by many to be more significant than the collective contribution of all authors before him. Weber points out that civil service is a profession in itself, for which civil servants have received education. As a result, the position of civil servants has become highly respected in the society, especially where there is a need for educated civil servants, where social differences are strong and where civil servants come from the higher social classes (Marčetić, 2007, p. 43).

#### **4.1. Motivation in a bureaucratic organization**

Public administration is a typical example of a bureaucratic organization, the opposite of which is a flexible private organization. Organizations that do not have a rigid hierarchical structure are oriented towards customers, teamwork, employee autonomy, creativity and accountability. Such organizations can motivate their employees in different ways. The bodies and organizations within the state administration are models oriented towards efficiency, obedience, prescribed procedures and rules, and performing routine tasks. Given that procedures are prescribed, the influence of an individual on work is minimal and creativity is almost unnecessary. This is welcomed by some employees because it gives them a sense of security. Others do not consider this sense of security to be as important as creative work which enables them to demonstrate their innovative skills, or the development of the organization, and as a result they are not motivated for working in bureaucratic organizations (Robbins & Judge P. A., 2009, p. 206). Today, public administrations everywhere in the world are faced with the pressure to increase efficiency. Global competition and the pressure by financial organizations have forced many countries to redefine the role of government and public administration. This is reflected in the criticism levelled at the existing concept of the public administration for being obsolete, too expensive, excessively bureaucratic and insufficiently flexible to meet the needs of a modern society (Marčetić, 2007, p. 43).

### **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

An organizational unit of the Ministry of Finance Customs Administration, Customs Office Varaždin was selected for the purpose of research into the motivation in the civil service.

A survey was conducted using a questionnaire in which respondents were asked to express their opinions by choosing one among several response options (Petak, 2015, p. 38). The survey was developed using the Google Form tool. It was anonymous and the respondents accessed it through the web site whose address was sent to them via e-mail. A total of 40 employees (20 female and 20 male) were notified about the survey by e-mail, of which 26 completed the questionnaire and sent it back. A limitation of the current study is the small and biased sample which does not allow generalizability of conclusions. In other words, the conclusions cannot be applied to the entire Customs Administration or the civil service in general. Survey questions pertained to the motivators, i.e. factors affecting the motivation and job satisfaction of civil servants. The survey entitled “Employee motivation” comprised 18 questions (Petak, 2015, p. 45-46).

#### **5.1. Research results**

1. Is going to work a pleasure for you? (taking pleasure in going to work)



*Figure 1: Taking pleasure in going to work*  
 Source: developed by authors

For more than half of the respondents, i.e. 57.7%, going to work is a pleasure. 26.9% say going to work is not a pleasure, while 15.4% are not sure.

## 2. Do you feel motivated in your current workplace?



*Figure 2: Motivation for work*  
 Source: developed by authors

Of the total number of respondents, 50% feel motivated in their current workplace, while the remaining 50% feel either not motivated or are not sure.

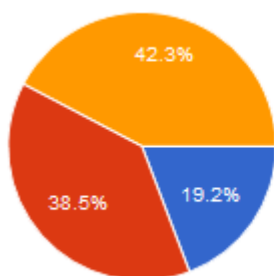
## 3. Were you assigned to your current workplace because of your preference?



*Figure 3: Assignment to your preferred workplace*  
 Source: developed by authors

57.7% of civil servants were not assigned to their current workplace as a result of their own preference, while only 38.5% of them were.

4. Would a transfer to your preferred workplace within the organization increase your motivation for work?



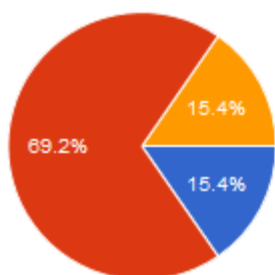
Yes	5	19.2%
No	10	38.5%
Not sure	11	42.3%

Figure 4: Motivation for work after a transfer to the preferred workplace

Source: developed by authors

As few as 19.2% of respondents would feel more motivated for work if transferred to the preferred workplace. 38.5% say they would not feel more motivated, while 42.3% are not sure.

5. Does your employer make efforts to motivate employees?



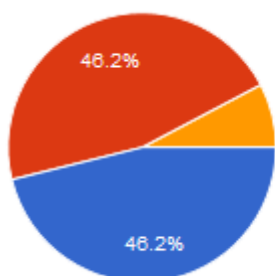
Yes	4	15.4%
No	18	69.2%
Not sure	4	15.4%

Figure 5: Employer's concern with motivation

Source: developed by authors

As many as 69.2% of civil servants surveyed cite that their employer does not make any efforts to motivate employees, while only 15.4% feel that their employer does make efforts to motivate them. 15.4% are not sure.

6. Does your immediate supervisor make efforts to motivate his/her subordinates?



Yes	12	46.2%
No	12	46.2%
Not sure	2	7.7%

Figure 6: Effort by immediate supervisor to motivate subordinates

Source: developed by authors

46.2% of survey respondents are of the opinion that their immediate supervisor does make efforts to motivate them. The same percentage of respondents think that their supervisors do not make any efforts to motivate them. 7.7% of them are not sure.

7. Do you think that you can improve your motivation or that of your co-workers?



Figure 7: Contribution to improved motivation of oneself and one's co-workers

Source: developed by authors

61.5% of civil servants surveyed believe that they can contribute to improving their own motivation as well as that of their co-workers. 26.9% are not sure, while 11.5% think they cannot.

8. Do you consider the motivation of employees to be important for achieving organisational goals?



Figure 8: The importance of motivation for achieving organisational goals

Source: developed by authors

As many as 96.2% of respondents agree that employee motivation is important for achieving the goals set by the customs service. Only 3.8% find that employee motivation is not important in this respect.

9. In your opinion, how important are the following motivators in GENERAL?

9.1. Challenging and creative work



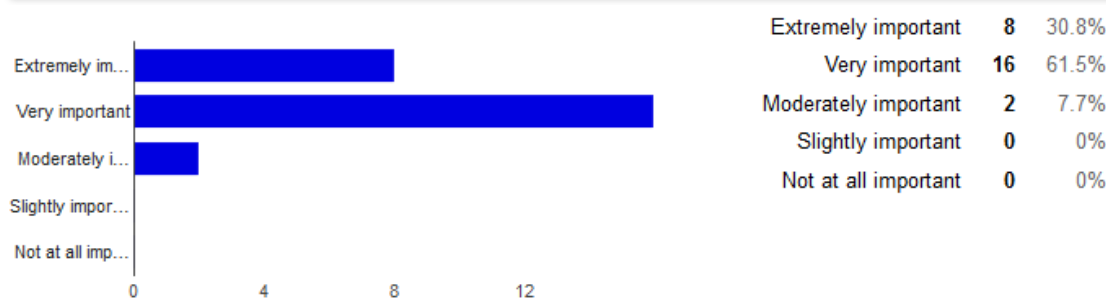


Figure 9: The Importance of challenging and creative work as a motivator

Source: developed by authors

61.5% of respondents cite that challenging and creative work is a very important motivator, while 30.8% find it extremely important.

## 9.2. Job security

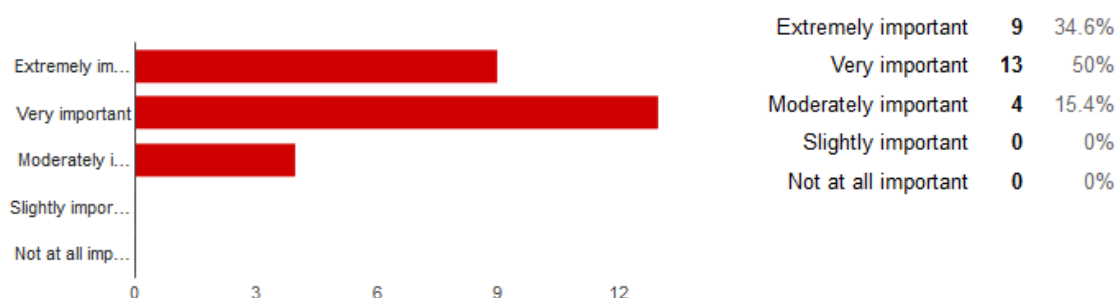


Figure 10: The importance of job security as a motivator

Source: developed by authors

A total of 84.6% of respondents consider job security to be very important or extremely important, while only 15.4% of respondents find it only moderately important.

## 9.3 Opportunity to participate in decision-making

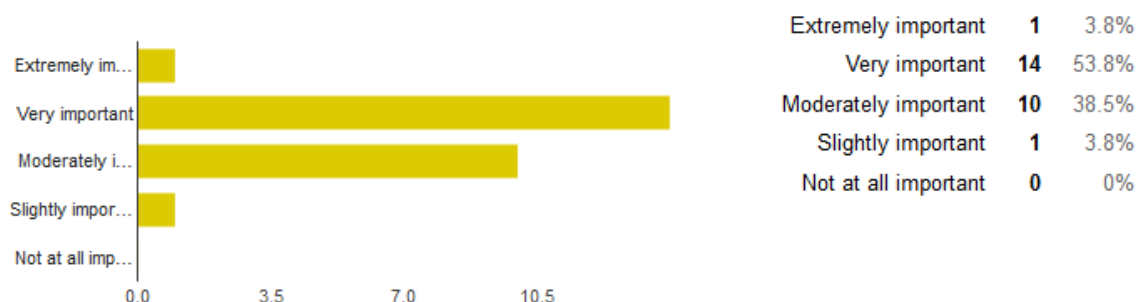


Figure 11: The importance of opportunity to participate in decision-making as a motivator

Source: developed by authors

Opportunity to participate in decision-making is considered to be very important by more than half of those surveyed, i.e. 53.8%, while 38.5% find it moderately important. Only 3.8% cite it is slightly important.



#### 9.4. Salary

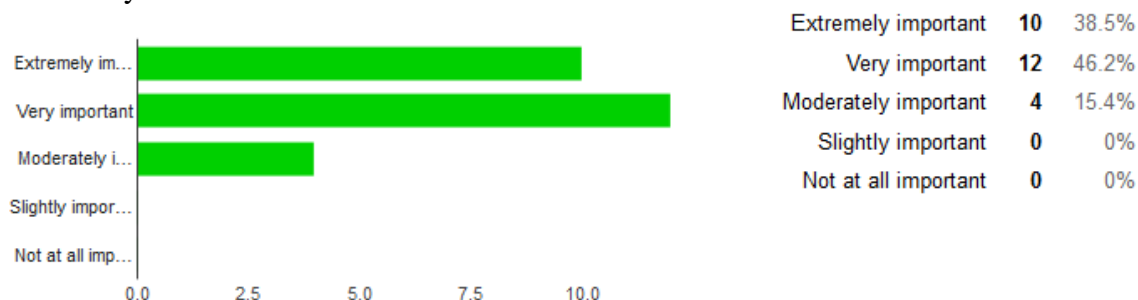


Figure 12: The importance of salary as a motivator

Source: developed by authors

Salary is considered to be extremely important by 38.5% of respondents, very important by 46.2% and moderately important by 15.4% of them.

#### 9.5 Advancement opportunities

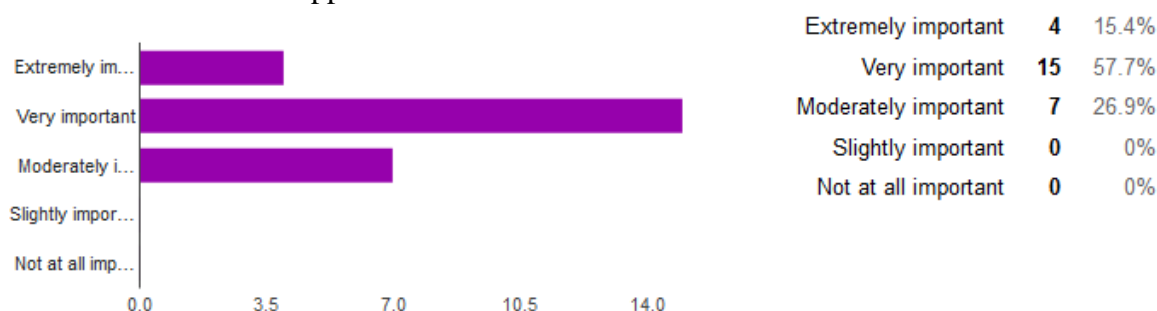


Figure 13: The importance of advancement opportunities as a motivator

Source: developed by authors

Advancement opportunities within the organization are found to be an extremely important motivator by 15.4% of respondents. 57.7% consider them to be very important, while 26.9% believe they are moderately important.

#### 9.6. Growth opportunities

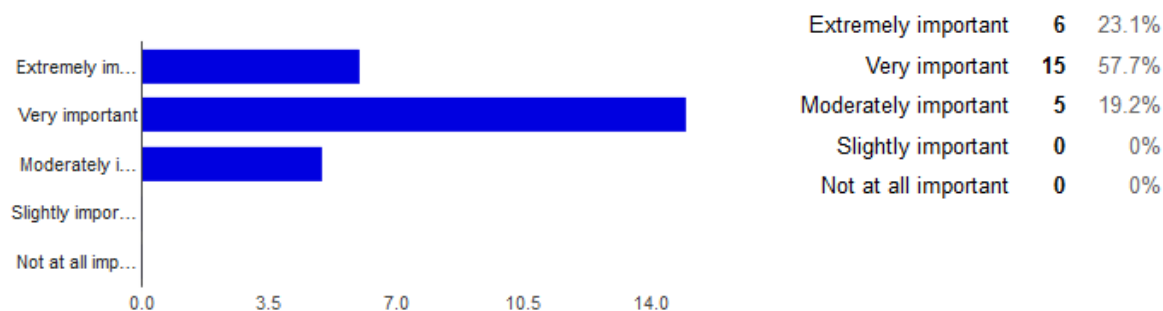


Figure 14: The importance of growth opportunities as a motivator

Source: developed by authors

Growth opportunities are considered to be very important or extremely important by a total of 80.8% of the respondents, while 19.2% consider it to be moderately important.

#### 9.7 Respect for employee opinion

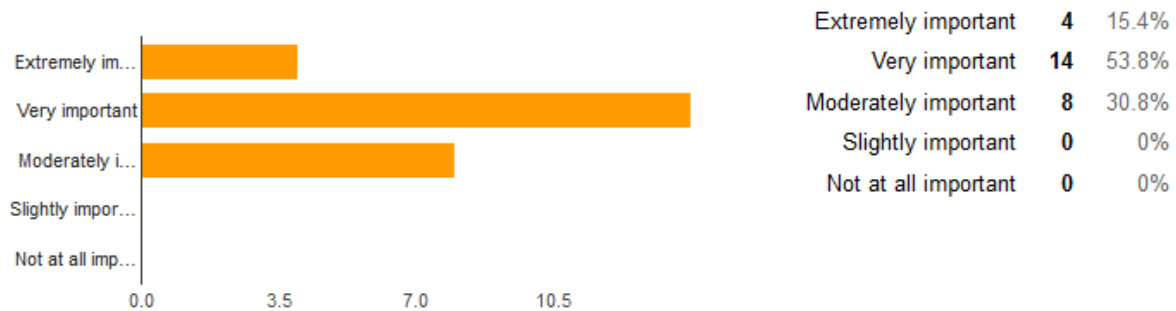


Figure 15: The importance of respect for employee opinion

Source: developed by authors

53.8% of civil servants surveyed consider respect for their opinions to be a very important motivator; 15.4% of employees find it extremely important, while only 30.8% think it is moderately important.

#### 9.8 Autonomy

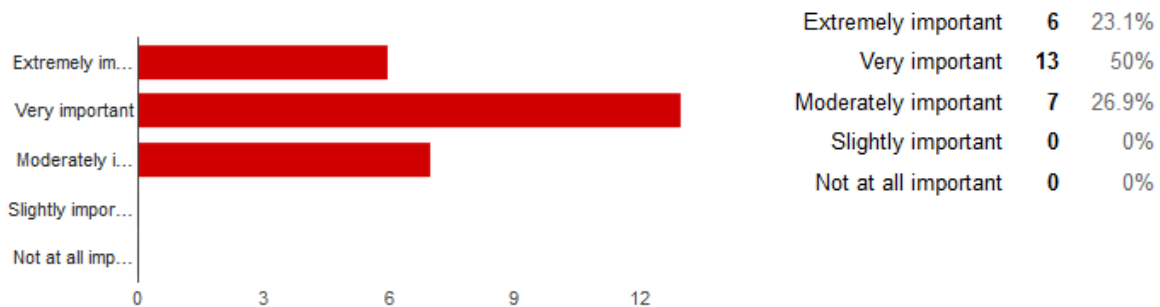


Figure 16: The importance of autonomy

Source: developed by authors

A total 73.1% of respondents believe that autonomy is an extremely important or a very important motivator, whereas only 26.9% consider it to be moderately important.

#### 9.9 Fair performance review by managers

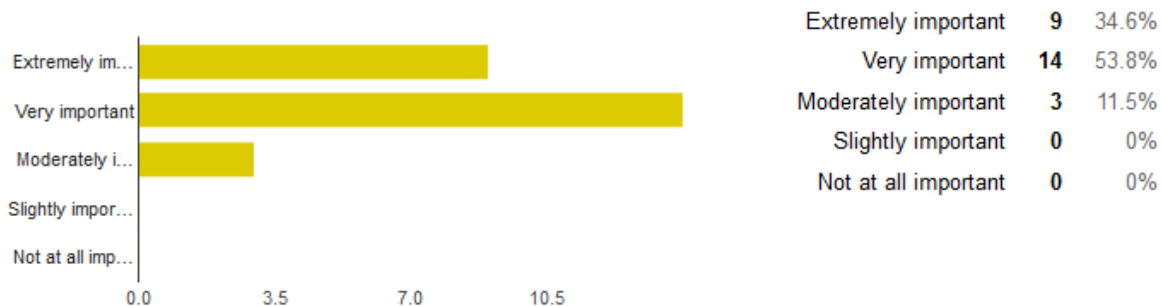


Figure 17: The importance of fair performance review by managers

Source: developed by authors

Fair performance review by managers is considered to be an extremely important motivator by 34.6% of the respondents; very important by 53.8% and moderately important by 11.5% of them.

#### 9.10. Good relations with co-workers

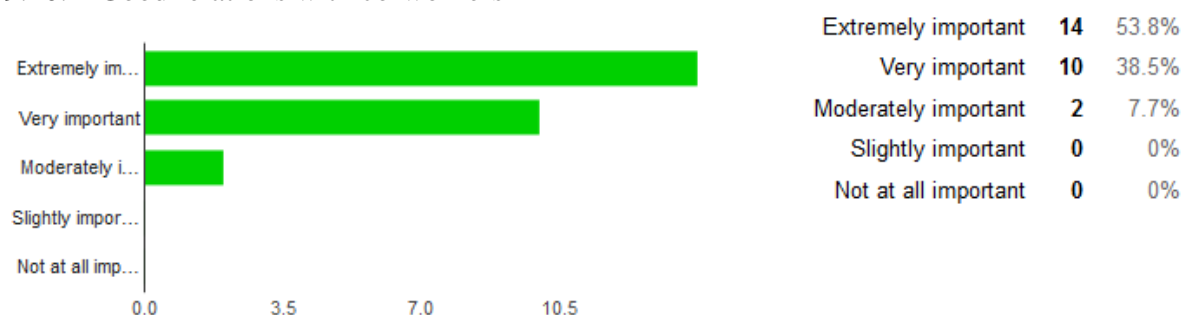


Figure 18: The importance of good relations with co-workers

Source: developed by authors

Good relations with co-workers are cited as an extremely important motivator by 53.8% of respondents, while 38.5% find them very important, which means that a total of 92.3% of those surveyed consider them to be one of the most important motivators.

#### 9.11. Good relations with superiors

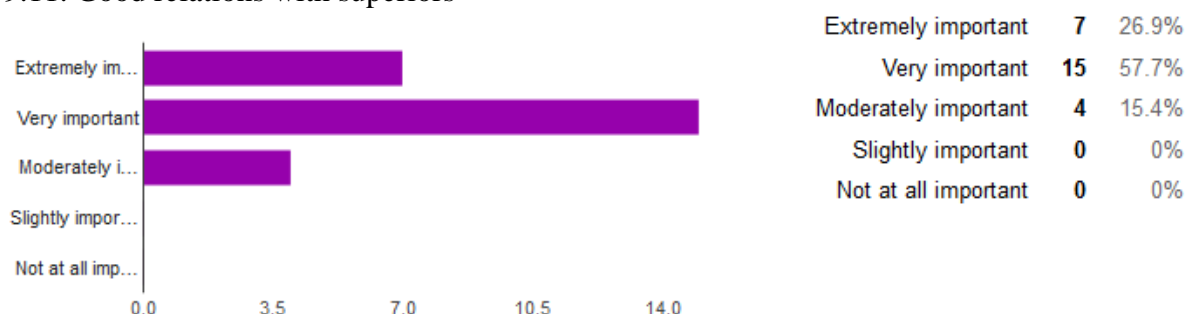


Figure 19: The importance of good relations with superiors as a motivator

Source: developed by authors

Good relations with superiors are considered to be very important by 57.7% of respondents, extremely important by 26.9% and moderately important by 15.4% of them.

#### 9.12. The knowledge, abilities and organizational skills of superiors

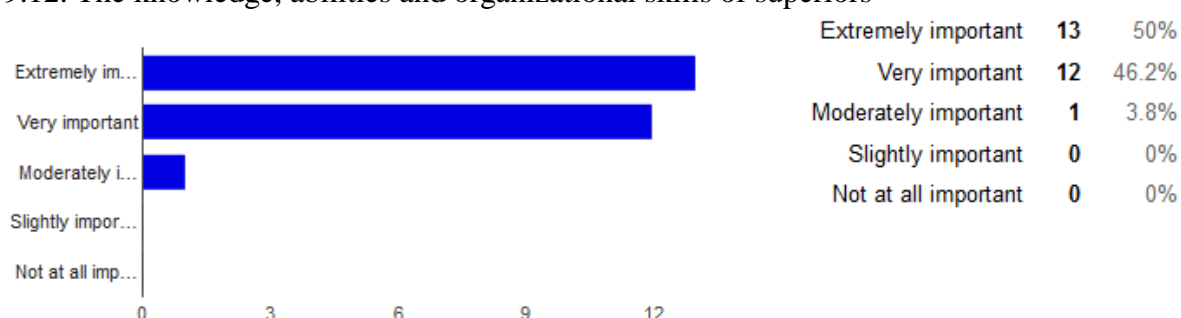


Figure 20: The importance of the knowledge, abilities and organizational skills of superiors

Source: developed by authors

As many as 96.2% of respondents cite that they are motivated by the competencies of their superiors. Only 3.8% of employees consider this factor to be moderately important.

#### 9.13 Praise/rewards or punishment

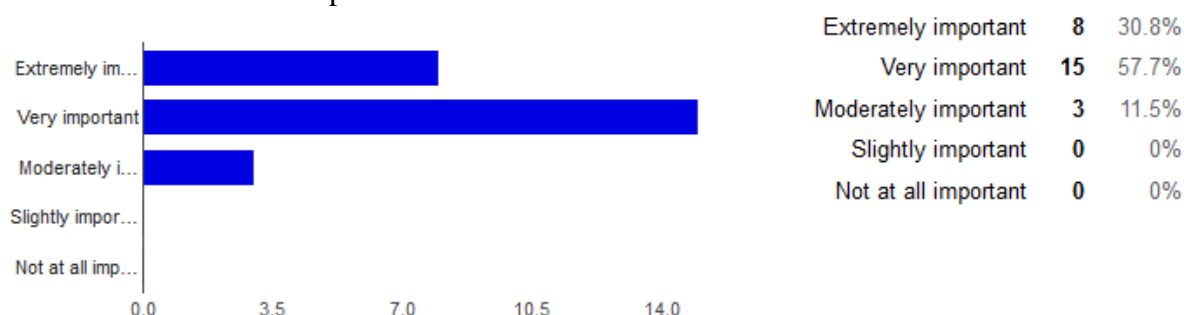


Figure 21: The importance of praise/rewards or punishment

Source: developed by authors

Praise and rewards and punishment are cited as very important motivators by 57.7% of civil servants surveyed, while 30.8% of them find that these factors are extremely important.

## 5.2 Analysis of the research results

HYPOTHESIS 1: Civil servants are not sufficiently motivated for work – REJECTED. Most civil servants surveyed say that coming to work is a pleasure and that they feel motivated in their current workplace although most of them were not assigned to it as a result of their preference.

A majority of the respondents, i.e. 61.5% find that challenging and creative work is an extremely important motivator and the same percentage of the respondents find that the work they currently perform is challenging and creative. Moreover, challenging and creative work would be a very important if not an extremely important motivator were they to consider a change of job.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Salary is an important motivating factor – CONFIRMED. Civil servants surveyed consider salary to be a very important or an extremely important motivator. Only a small number of employees are satisfied with their salary at the customs service. Were they to consider a change of job, salary would be the most important factor to think about.

Although salary is a very important motivator, it is difficult to satisfy the wishes of the Customs Administration employees and motivate them with a better salary because the remuneration system of civil servants, as well as allowances, benefits and bonuses, are clearly defined in the regulations.

HYPOTHESIS 3: Job security is an important motivating factor – CONFIRMED. The hypothesis that job security afforded by the civil service sector is a good motivator is often discussed in contemporary theories of motivation as well as by the public. The research has shown that job security is a very important motivator. However, a large percentage of the respondents surveyed were not satisfied with job security at the Customs Administration. Job security is one of the main conditions they would seek to satisfy were they to look for another job.

HYPOTHESIS 4: Superiors do not make sufficient efforts to motivate their subordinates – CONFIRMED. Nearly all respondents agree that employee motivation is important for achieving organisational goals, but think that the Customs Administration does not make sufficient efforts to motivate their employees. Only half of the respondents believe that their superior makes efforts to motivate his/her subordinates. The survey has shown that the

respondents find good relations with co-workers to be much more important than good relations with superiors. Respondents are not really satisfied with the knowledge, abilities and organizational skills of their superiors and cite this factor as the greatest demotivator.

HYPOTHESIS 5: Low motivation is caused by poor advancement opportunities – CONFIRMED. Advancement opportunities are cited as a very important motivator. However, survey respondents are dissatisfied with advancement opportunities at the Customs Administration because they are clearly defined in the relevant regulations which allows for the possibility of advancement only in terms of one's formal qualifications and provided that there is a need within the customs service. Furthermore, for the majority of survey respondents autonomy is a very important, but not an extremely important motivator. They are mostly satisfied with autonomy afforded to them in their current workplace. The results indicate that the majority of respondents surveyed want to be “led” by their superiors, i.e. do not want accountability.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Job satisfaction is the most powerful motivational factor. Having said that, providing job security and a fair and regular salary alone is not enough to improve civil servant satisfaction with their workplace. It is important to provide some other basic motivational factors such as good relations with co-workers and superiors, career advancement opportunities, regular feedback from superiors with clear guidelines for future actions, as well as to clearly explain praise for a job well-done and punishment for undesirable behaviour.

Since Croatia is undergoing a period of transition in terms of the transposition and implementation of EU legislation to national legislation, civil service employees are required to perform much more work in a very short period of time. The possibilities for motivating civil servants are limited by laws and regulations and reduced to a minimum, whereas in the private sector there is a much larger range of rewards and incentives that can be used to motivate employees. Consequently, managers are faced with a great challenge and carry the responsibility for motivating their employees under existing circumstances using all of their creativity and knowledge of psychology to improve employee performance and provide job satisfaction at the same time. Therefore, managers have to stay attuned to the different needs of their employees by regularly checking in with them, rather than distancing themselves, and by fostering good communication. To ensure the attainment of organisational goals motivators need to be well-coordinated. For this reason, it is necessary to make radical changes to the human resources policy in the civil service sector, as well as to the system for rewarding civil servants according to their competencies, performance and the amount of effort and enthusiasm for their job.

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