

Exploring the Job Satisfaction of Public and Private Employers in Romania

MATEI ANI, FATACIUNE (BADALAN) MIRELA-NICOLETA
Faculty of Public Administration
National School of Political Studies and Public Administration
30A, Expozitiei Street, 4th floor, district 1, 012104, Bucharest
ROMANIA

Abstract:- Satisfaction at work is one of the most studied organizational variables and many studies show that it is extremely important for organizations. Closely related to work motivation and performance, satisfaction is an important factor for many attitudes such as absenteeism or intention to resign.

The aims of the present study is to measure the degree of job satisfaction of public and private employees in Romania and to analyze the differences between the two sectors.

In the present study participated a total of 120 full-time employees of various private enterprises and public organizations. The Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985) was used to collect data.

The survey results indicate a moderate degree of work satisfaction of respondents across most analyzed dimensions of job satisfaction. Two of the analyzed dimensions, one intrinsic (nature of work) and one extrinsic (communication) registered a high score of job satisfaction in both sectors. Instead, the biggest differences are found on dimensions "supervision" and the "co-workers" (both extrinsic factors) private sector employees showing a higher degree of job satisfaction than those in the public sector.

To enhance employee motivation, public-sector managers in Romania should improve their employees' extrinsic job satisfaction and help unsatisfied employees transfer to jobs they find more satisfying.

Key-Words: job satisfaction, public sector, private sector, two-factor theory, Job Satisfaction Survey

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the most studied variables in organizations (Spector, 1997). Although the job satisfaction phenomenon has been extensively researched, results are often different and even contradictory. At a first glance at the literature, diversity of results originates in the lack of a universally accepted definition of the concept of job satisfaction.

Spector (1997) describes job satisfaction as the way "people feel about their job and other issues related to the work they perform. It is the extent to which employees like or dislike their job" [1]. Locke claims that job satisfaction can be defined as "anything that may positively influence the employee in relation to his job and work conditions" [2].

Weiss (2002) states that job satisfaction is an attitude, as other resent research define it as behavior. Nevertheless, job satisfaction is the positive or negative evaluation of an employee regarding his job/work and work conditions.

Another problem in the study of this concept is the existence of many measuring instruments. In 1983, Locke emphasized that researchers had published approximately 3500 studies on job satisfaction without reaching a clear common ground [3]. However, job satisfaction continues to play an important part in recent research. Different ways of measuring job satisfaction illustrate different ways of defining it. Some studies use only two or three dimensions to measure it, such as:

- *In general, I like working here.*
- *Next year I intend to look for another job outside of this organization.*

The main goal of this study is to research job satisfaction among employees of the public and private sector in Romania.

2. Theoretical framework

For the purpose of this research, a specific theoretical framework and a methodological instrument were selected.

To build the theoretical approach, we have chosen the two-factor theory, also known as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, because it is one of the most specific and complete theories for understanding job satisfaction. Throughout the '60s and '70s several studies were conducted regarding job satisfaction [4]. These studies were based on theories attempting to explain the sources and causes of job satisfaction in Herzberg's two-factor theory. Also, Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model is one of the theories most specialized in understanding Herzberg's theory [5]. Based on Maslow's theory, Herzberg turned the two-factor theory into a comprehensive theory of motivation based on the concept of job satisfaction [6].

After completing a thorough literature review comprising over 2000 studies related to job satisfaction, Herzberg noticed that variables that contributed to satisfaction seemed to differ from those that contributed to dissatisfaction [7]. Herzberg and his associates have tried to answer the question of what it is that influences the behavior of an employee. After a series of studies, Herzberg and his collaborators have developed two separate lists of factors [8]. Authors referred to factors influencing job satisfaction as "motivating factors" and to factors causing dissatisfaction as "hygiene factors". Motivators include: achievement, recognition, responsibility, work itself, promotion and personal development. On the other hand, hygiene factors include: company policy and administration, interpersonal relationships, work conditions, status, security and salary.

According to Herzberg, the basic distinction between motivating factors and hygiene factors is that "factors causing job satisfaction (and motivation) are separate and distinct from factors leading to dissatisfaction." They emphasize that these separate factors must not be considered as opposites, but, like House and Wigdor [9], considered "two distinct continuums (constants)". Moreover, Herzberg clarifies that "the opposite of job satisfaction is not dissatisfaction, but rather non job satisfaction, and similarly, the opposite of job

dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but non job dissatisfaction" [10].

Herzberg's theory had a great impact on business administration practice, providing many novel ideas [11]. However, it was also heavily criticized, mainly for its methodology [12]. On the one hand, research using Herzberg's theory confirms the duality of the theory; on the other hand, studies based on different methodologies show different results. Many researchers have criticized Herzberg's methodology [13], assuming it is methodologically bound [14] and biased to be supported [15].

As a result, this theory was used in this study to understand the dual nature of satisfaction and motivation in the workplace. According to this theory, the specific dimensions of job satisfaction analyzed were divided into extrinsic factors (hygiene) and intrinsic factors (motivation).

3. Methodology

The methodological instrument is the "Job Satisfaction Survey – JSS", developed by Paul Spector [16]. This instrument was chosen because it is a common instrument in various studies, and, as Spector indicates, "it was specially designed for human service, public sector and non-profit organizations, although it is applicable to other types of organizations" [17]. Based on the above, researchers evaluate it as an adequate instrument for measuring job satisfaction in the public sector.

The most important reason was, however, was the attribution of nine facets of the JSS questionnaire, which make up job satisfaction together with a part of extrinsic factors (hygiene) and intrinsic factors (motivation), proposed by Herzberg. Therefore, there is a reasonable connection between the theoretical framework and the methodological instrument in the study of job satisfaction.

The above distinction was made in order to determine, by evaluating facets, which of the extrinsic factors (hygiene) or intrinsic factors (motivation) have high or low scores for extrinsic and intrinsic satisfaction, respectively.

The questionnaire includes 9 subscales and 36 items and the answers were obtained on a Likert scale from 1 to 6 (1-Strongly disagree, 6-Strongly agree). Internal consistency coefficient of the questionnaire proved to be very satisfactory, given that the Cronbach reliability indicator was 0.91 (max.1).

In this study 120 full time employees have participated from various organizations in the private and public sector in Romania. The research sample included 60 employees from the public

sector and 60 from the private sector, of which 68 women and 52 men (Figure 1). Throughout the entire research sample, respondents' age groups are distributed as follows: 4% are aged between 18 and 24, 76% are aged between 25 and 34, 18% between 35 and 44, and 2% aged over 44 (Figure 2). In terms of seniority in the organization, respondents fall into the following categories: 34% have a seniority of less than 3 years in the organization, 40% have a seniority of 3 to 9 years, and 26% have a seniority of over 9 years (Figure 3).

Fig. 1 Identification by gender

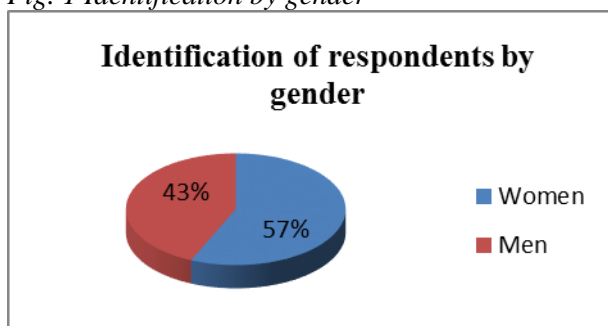


Fig. 2 Identification by age

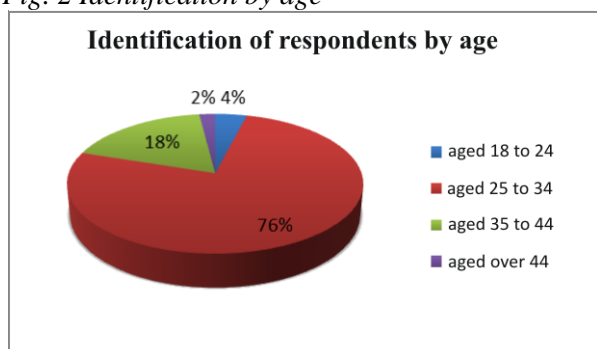
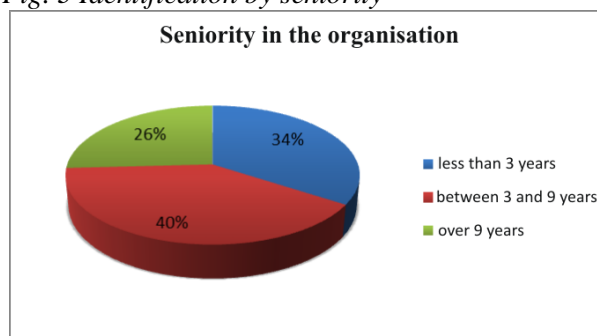


Fig. 3 Identification by seniority



The questionnaire aimed to evaluate the following job satisfaction dimensions: pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work and communication.

Scores corresponding to the 4 questions for each of the 9 dimensions were added up, and scores obtained for satisfaction related to each work component were interpreted according to the author's instructions (Spector, 1991) as follows:

Table 1. Satisfaction scores

Between 4 and 12 points	DISSATISFIED
Between 12 and 16 points	AMBIVALENT
Between 16 and 24 points	SATISFIED

Given the differentiation made by Herzberg between motivating extrinsic and intrinsic factors in an organization, the 9 items analyzed are grouped as follows:

Table 2: List of motivating factors

Motivating extrinsic factors	Pay
	Supervision
	Fringe benefits
	Operating conditions
	Relationship with co-workers
Motivating intrinsic factors	Communication
	Promotion
	Nature of work
	Contingent rewards

4. Research Results

The main objective of the study is to identify the total job satisfaction, as well as in terms of each of its components regarding employees in the public and private sectors, respectively.

4.1 Job satisfaction of employees in the public sector

The first observation is that employees in the public sector were ambivalent or moderately satisfied with their job (as shown in Table 3). In terms of the individual dimensions tested, it is noticed that "nature of work" got the highest score, respondents being most satisfied intrinsically with the work they perform. The other intrinsic factors, "contingent rewards" and "promotion" are situated very differently, indicating that employees are rather dissatisfied with promotion opportunities, appreciation – work recognition and rewards for a

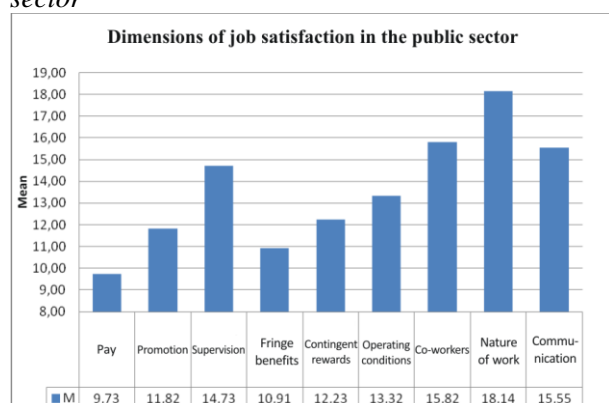
well-done job. In terms of extrinsic factors of satisfaction pertaining to “hygiene factors”, it is noticed that the “relationship with co-workers” dimension gained the most points.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of various dimensions of job satisfaction in the public sector

Dimensions of job satisfaction and total satisfaction	M	SD
Pay	9.73	4.82
Promotion	11.82	3.62
Supervision	14.73	5.19
Fringe benefits	10.91	4.65
Contingent rewards	12.23	5.02
Operating conditions	13.32	2.66
Coworkers	15.82	4.34
Nature of work	18.14	4.94
Communication	15.55	4.32
Total satisfaction	122.33	26.38

The “supervision” dimension follows, both indicating a moderate extrinsic degree of job satisfaction. In contrast, it is noticed that the lowest score is for pay – 9.73 followed by fringe benefits, understood both as financial benefits (money) – bonuses, meal vouchers – and non-financial benefits (medical insurance, life insurance, private pension, disability protection, holidays, free access or discounts to various service) – 10.91.

Fig. 4. Dimensions of job satisfaction in the public sector



Employees appreciate the payment and benefits system provided by the organization as unsatisfactory, which rises two frequent issues of the public institutions in Romania: a poor pay system, extremely low wages, that does not encourage the access of highly trained people to public administration, and on the other hand there is

a certain subjectivity of hierarchical superiors in giving bonuses and incentives etc. in public institutions, in the absence of criteria that would lead to a correct rewarding of the work performed and therefore encouraging effort and a job well done.

4.2 Job Satisfaction of Employees in the Private Sector

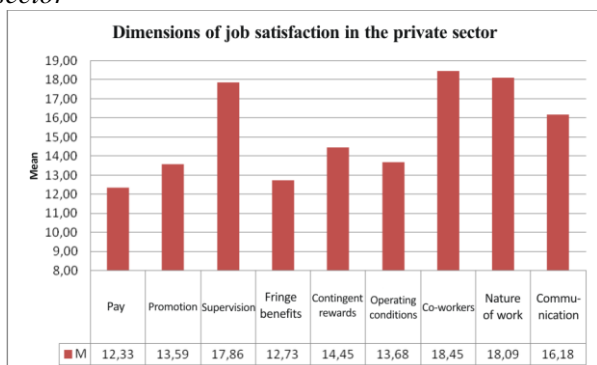
According to the table below, the score obtained for total job satisfaction indicates that employees from the private sector are moderately satisfied with their workplace. As for the hygienic factors, the “coworkers” dimension scored the highest level of extrinsic satisfaction (18.45). It is followed by the “supervision” dimension, which indicates a high level of extrinsic satisfaction (17.86).

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of the various dimensions of job satisfaction in the private sector

Dimensions of job satisfaction and total satisfaction	M	SD
Pay	12.33	6.01
Promotion	13.59	3.29
Supervision	17.86	5.30
Fringe benefits	12.73	4.89
Contingent rewards	14.45	5.07
Operating conditions	13.68	3.46
Coworkers	18.45	4.03
Nature of work	18.09	5.18
Communication	16.18	3.97
Total satisfaction	137.05	31.14

The communication component is also among the factors that generate a high job satisfaction score for employees from the private sector (16.18). Aside from the two above-mentioned dimensions that obtained a high job satisfaction score and that belong to the “hygiene factors” (extrinsic factors), the only “reason” (intrinsic factor) that generates a high score for intrinsic satisfaction turns out to be the “nature of work” (18.09). The “promotion” component is located at a significant distance. Here, the lowest scores are obtained by pay and fringe benefit satisfaction.

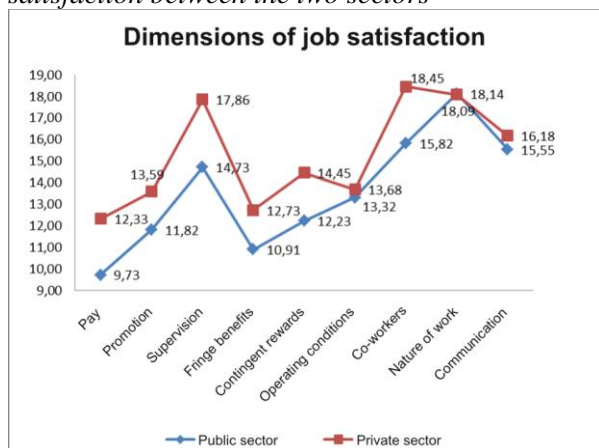
Fig. 5. Dimensions of job satisfaction in the private sector



4.3 Differences between the two sectors

As noticed in Figure 6, employees from the private sector express a high level of satisfaction with most of the analyzed dimensions. As for the operating conditions – the operational procedures, employees from the private sector and those from the public sector expressed a similar score, being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their existence and the impact of the rules and work procedures imposed by the organization on their activity. We know that unlike many organizations from the private sector, organizations from the public sector have a complex bureaucratic machine, subjected to constraints that consist of various objectives, according to the governing program, increased control and monitoring measures, less autonomy and more formalization.

Fig. 6 The distribution of scores according to job satisfaction between the two sectors



However, for this study, the very close scores between the two sectors are explicable: most of the respondents from the private sector work for a multinational company, which has a complex bureaucratic structure, a well-defined hierarchy similar to that of public institutions. The nature of

work is invariably the strongest encouraging factor of the job for both categories of employees. A similar score is noticed for the two sectors as far as the “communication” component is concerned, both categories of employees being relatively satisfied with communication within the organization, the clarity of the tasks they have to fulfill or the level of knowledge of the organization’s objectives. To identify if there is a real difference between the scores obtained for every dimension between the two sectors, we applied the T test (statistical).

Table 3: Dimensions of satisfaction by motivating factors

Dimensions of satisfaction	T Test for Equality of Averages			
	t	df	p	Average difference
Pay	-1.384	42	.17	-2.273
	-1.384	40.122	.17	-2.273
Promotion	-1.700	42	.09	-1.773
	-1.700	41.621	.09	-1.773
Supervision	-1.982	42	.04	-3.136
	-1.982	41.982	.04	-3.136
Fringe benefits	-1.264	42	.21	-1.818
	-1.264	41.892	.21	-1.818
Contingent rewards	-1.464	42	.15	-2.227
	-1.464	41.997	.15	-2.227
Operating conditions	-.391	42	.69	-.364
	-.391	39.430	.69	-.364
Coworkers	-2.088	42	.04	-2.636
	-2.088	41.777	.04	-2.636
Nature of work	.030	42	.97	.045
	.030	41.905	.97	.045
Communication	-.509	42	.61	-.636
	-.509	41.711	.61	-.636

There is a statistically significant difference as far as the satisfaction of employees in the two sectors is concerned, when we refer to the dimensions “supervision” (p=0.049) and “coworkers” (p=0.043). The differences between the scores obtained for every sector are visible in the table above as well. Employees from the private sector are much more satisfied with the relation with their direct supervisor, with their competence level and the treatment applied to the subordinates, with the availability and interest expressed for the problems of the employees.

Employees from the private sector turn out to be much more satisfied with the relation with their coworkers than those from the public sector, which indicates more harmony in the team, a compatibility of characters and personalities in the team, and a low frequency of tensions and conflicts in the team. As for the pay satisfaction, the chart above (Figure 4) indicates a difference between the scores. If employees from the public sector are dissatisfied with their salary (9.73), those from the private sector turn out to be moderately satisfied with their salary (12.33).

We expected the differences between the two sectors to be much higher. However, the low scores obtained in the two sectors are not correlated with the salary. One or more employees from the private sector who do the same job as the interviewed employees from the public sector can obtain a much higher salary than the latter and say they are as dissatisfied with their salary. This aspect is explicable, on one hand, through the fact that employees from the private sector make a comparison, when saying if the salary is satisfactory or not satisfactory, between them and their colleagues from organizations of the same sector, renowned organizations that are among those that offer the maximum salary for the same position on the market. Employees from the public sector, on the other hand, are perhaps accustomed to the idea that salaries in the public sector have always been non-competitive and lower than those from the private sector, so they think about an average salary for the same position from the private sector.

The Pearson correlation coefficients were used to study the relations between the individual dimensions of satisfaction in the workplace for the two sectors.

From the results of the indicators, a statistically significant correlation for $p < 0.01$ was identified for the following dimensions:

- Pay and promotion: if the employee is satisfied with his salary, he will also be satisfied with the promotion opportunities. It is debatable and it requires additional investigations.
- Pay and supervision: Satisfaction with the relation with the direct supervisor influences greatly the level of satisfaction with the pay. If the direct supervisor is competent, he gets involved actively in solving the various activity issues faced by the employee, treating them with fairness and equality, the subordinates will express a high level of satisfaction with supervision,

implicitly expressing a higher level of satisfaction with the pay.

- Pay and benefits – pay and contingent rewards: one of the strongest correlations identified. It is explicable, as a satisfactory system of financial benefits involves economic satisfaction with the pay. If the contingent rewards, such as the payment of performance, are used, satisfaction with the pay increases.
- Promotion and fringe benefits
- Supervision and contingent rewards
- Contingent rewards and operating conditions

5. Conclusions of the study

The first objective of this research was to measure the level of professional satisfaction of employees from the public sector, namely the private one, and its different dimensions. For both sectors, the average level of satisfaction at the workplace of the participants was found.

The nature of work is invariably the strongest encouraging (intrinsic) factor of the job for both categories of employees. A similar score is noticed for the two sectors, in the “communication” component, both categories of employees turning out to be relatively satisfied with the communication within the organization, with the clarity of the tasks they have to fulfill or the level of knowledge of the organization’s objectives. More precisely, as far as the nature of work is concerned, high levels of satisfaction were found among the employees in similar surveys from abroad (Steijjn, 2004; Peklar, 2010). In USA, public employees are those who are motivated more by factors related to the nature of work because it seems interesting work is an important stimulant for those who choose to work in a certain sector.

On the other hand, it is noticed that the lowest score obtained in the public sector is related to the salary – 9.73, followed by fringe benefits, understood both as financial benefits (in money) – bonuses, food vouchers, and non-financial benefits (medical insurance, life insurance, private pension, protection for invalidity, vacations, free access or discounts to various services) – 10.91. The employees say the system of remuneration and benefits offered by the organization is not satisfactory, a result that raises two frequent issues of public institutions from Romania: a scarce remuneration system, extremely low salaries, which do not encourage the access of persons who are very well-trained in public

administration, and on the other hand, we can talk about a certain subjectivity of the hierarchal superiors in offering bonuses, incentives etc. in public institutions, in the absence of criteria that leads to a fair reward for the work and, therefore, encourages the effort and job well done.

From the things described throughout the analysis of the data, several recommendations for the management of the organization in the public sector are drawn.

- Given the limited financial possibilities of the public institutions to ensure a satisfactory pay raise for their employees, it is useful for the management of these organizations to focus on techniques to increase satisfaction and motivation regarding other aspects of the work. Building a balanced system of benefits, comparable to the one used in organizations from the private sector, could involve:

1. Offering gifts for holidays, birthdays or important events from the life of the employee (marriage, childbirth).
2. Benefitting from free medical services (in addition to those offered by the medical insurance) offered by medical institutions that service the public organization
3. Organizing entertainment programs for the children of the employees during the winter holidays, etc.

To consolidate the relation with coworkers, create a spirit of collaboration and understanding in the team and consolidate the organizational culture, team-buildings can be made, the team can go out on various occasions, the employees can get involved in group projects, etc.

Private companies, active on a competitive market, guided by the logic of profit, understand to a greater extent the importance of human resources and their potential in the organization. They have several financial means to extrinsically motivate their employees, to invest in their training and development and to offer them the benefits that ensure an economic comfort.

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