

MOTIVATION OF CIVIL SERVANTS WITHIN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION INSTITUTIONS. PILOT STUDY: FISCAL ADMINISTRATION OF BUCHAREST, DISTRICT 1

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Abstract: The present research identifies the most relevant motivation factors of the civil servants from the Fiscal Administration of Bucharest, District 1, Romania, but also the ways in which their motivation can be improved. The purpose of this research was achieved by adapting and combining three different instruments used in the literature in order to evaluate in what extent each factor influences the civil servants' motivation. The research is based on a quantitative approach, and it is an exploratory study that was carried out using a combination of methods: the analysis of the official records, plus published articles; and the opinion survey based on a questionnaire, employing a convenience sampling, in order to design a set of recommendations for improving the current level of motivation among civil servants. The results show the need for introducing new ways of motivating civil servants, in order to increase their satisfaction and involvement.

Keywords: public service motivation, civil servants, public administration, motivation factors.

JEL Classification: J28; J38; O15; H83.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The organizations' success, whether public or private, depends in part on the achievement of their objectives, making motivation a crucial factor. Employee motivation at work is a central concern in the field of public management in Romania and within the Fiscal Administration of Bucharest, District 1 (Administratia Sectorului 1 a Finantelor Publice – ASFP1). The constant concern for the motivation of employees in the public sector also results from the numerous studies in specialized literature that have demonstrated that there is a close connection between Public Service Motivation (PSM) and job satisfaction, individual performance, the performance of the organization as a whole, employee commitment toward the organization, turnover intentions, work effort, work motivation, work related stress, organizational behavior, organizational attraction, etc.

In this perspective, motivating employees is an essential task for all managers to complete in order to achieve superior results, and it may be viewed as an art form that managers must master. Because of this, academics and professionals have long considered motivation to be a relevant subject. The nature of employee motivation has been the subject of a wide range of theories and methodologies. Other research has been conducted to see if public sector personnel differ from their private sector counterparts in terms of their motivational backgrounds. In fact, a specific theory of motivation known as public service motivation (PSM) has been

developed to explain how personnel in the public sector are motivated differently from those in the private sector by the degree and nature of their innate desire to work and serve.

The environment in which personnel management is developed is different in public entities than in private organizations. These distinctions center on elements such as the shortening of political cycles, the challenges of assessing performance, the challenges of overcoming officials' lethargy, and the cultural quirks of the public contexts where public administrations emerge.

The main issue with motivation is figuring out how to get the organization's members, who all have different needs and personalities, motivated to work successfully and positively toward the achievement of the goals that have been set. The current study will focus on the idea of motivation in public service, which is a complicated and multifaceted notion (Public Service Motivation- PSM).

Next, the paper presents the main aspects analyzed in the specialized literature, followed by another part where the research methodology and research results are presented, and at the end of the paper, the conclusions are formulated accompanied by a set of recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The public sector has unique characteristics that make studies on human resource (HR) and performance challenging and different from those performed in a private sector setting. However, it is also true that experts in public administration can benefit a lot from the research being done in the private sector.

The efficacy of performance, the overall effectiveness of civil servants, and the conditions required to disclose their abilities and unrealized potential are currently problems to form of regulation. The human resource's motivational system must be enhanced in order to raise the effectiveness of institutional performance. It has been determined that in order to maximize results from human resource offices, it is crucial to examine not only current functions and procedures, but also factors that affect the motivation of human resources (Popescu et al., 2016).

Many researchers agree that currently one of the most important and popular dimensions in the public sector is employee motivation, a concept that is variously understood and defined (Paliduskaitė & Segalovičienė, 2008; Worthley et al., 2009; Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2010; Merkys & Brazienė, 2010; Nica & Popescu, 2010; Andersen & Pedersen, 2012; Park & Rainey, 2012; Andersen & Kjeldsen, 2013; Ciobanu & Androniceanu, 2015; Nica, 2016; Serhan, 2018; Vandenabeele et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2020; Ciobanu et al., 2019; Profiroiu, et al., 2021a; Profiroiu, et al., 2021b). Managers want the people they supervise to carry out the activities for which they were hired, to adhere to the policies and standards of excellence, to be proactive, involved, dedicated, and loyal, and to remain with the organization. Employees' reactions to the aforementioned expectations vary depending on their level of motivation.

A person's motivation is the internal force that leads them to display a particular conduct (SIPOCA 136, 2021). Different motivational factors influence different people in different ways (SGG & Banca Mondială, 2020). The manager needs to know what drives each of his staff. The motivational variables must be understood in order to accomplish this. According to Frederick Herzberg (Miner, 2005), the factors that can influence the level of motivation of an employee fall into two categories. "Hygiene" variables are those whose lack causes negative emotions. If everything is working well, they often have no effect on motivation, but if something is wrong with them, motivation plummets quickly. Examples include institutional/organizational policy, operational procedures, working conditions, pay, employee relations, personal affairs, the law, and security. Motivating elements provide people positive feelings. When they do, they clearly have a beneficial effect and increase employee motivation. Examples include successful outcomes, acknowledgement, a job that is interesting in and of itself, accountability, a decision-making position, advancement, and development. Employees are affected by both types of factors at once, leading to four distinct motivational states: frustration, discontent, contentment, and motivation.

Based on this paradigm, a manager can see a list of motivating factors and talk to each employee individually about those they have within their control. The majority of managers, for example, have direct control over and the ability to make changes to variables like the working environment and team chemistry, but they have less influence over institutional politics or pay scales. The manager has more control over how to manage motivating aspects in all performance management procedures. For instance, when discussing performance definition, emphasize employee accountability and empowerment; when formulating performance and development goals, involve the employee; and when monitoring, reviewing, providing feedback, and evaluating performance, place a strong emphasis on recognizing the employee's accomplishments.

Motivation can be described as an innate and conscious process when a person tries to fulfill particular desires and needs. It can be viewed as an internal state or a driving force that propels someone to take action and accomplish goals. In a broader context, motivation refers to the desires, passions, plans, propensities, and aspirations that form the foundation of the human condition and encourage the achievement of particular acts, truths, and attitudes.

Researchers coined the phrase "motivational optimum" to explain the process by which an increase in motivational intensity results in improved performance. According to psychologists, the ultimate objective is to maximise both an individual's performance and their capacity for growth. The "golden triangle of motivation" is a method proposed by Zlate (1981) that differs from the motivational optimum. The strategy is comprised of three components, namely, identity, self-confidence, and legitimacy. According to the psychologist, all three are in a state of equilibrium. As a result, demotivation will take the place of motivation if one of these aspects is weakened, and the combination of the three elements will no longer be able to generate the optimal level of motivation. In light of the explanations provided by Zlate (2007), his method is simplified to the point where it is easy to comprehend because it focuses on fundamental ideas. The fact that he considers the level of satisfaction to be a marker of motivation tells us that the state of contentment is the outcome of motivating consumption, and that motivation is what leads to satisfaction in the first place. According to Porter and Lawler (1968), satisfaction does not lead to improved performance, nor does improved performance lead to increased satisfaction, unless specific conditions are fulfilled. Extrinsic or intrinsic rewards are not what produce the impression of satisfaction; rather, it is when an employee feels that the reward is reasonable in comparison to the work and rewards that other coworkers have received. As a consequence of this, the employee's motivation to put in effort is increased as a direct result of obtaining rewards that are commensurate with those received by peers (effort-reward ratio of those around). Wolf (1970), another figure who belongs to the realm of worldwide authors who have theories concerning methods to motivation and fulfilment, is of the opinion that the correlation should then be examined unilaterally. This time, motivation is not portrayed as an effort, but as a power whose ultimate goal is to achieve a feeling of satisfaction. When discussing motivation in public institutions, it is frequently studied as an independent variable, presuming that individual performance and motivation are linked in the field of public administration (Perry, Wise, 1990, p. 370).

In public administration, motivation is a factor that has a higher level of complexity due to the particular of how state organizations conduct their operations. The design of a motivation system within a public organisation enables civil servants to work more effectively and efficiently, which improves professional performance and fosters a sense of devotion to the public administration institutions, the status, and the society's interests. People arrive at their jobs influenced by motivation. It is crucial to comprehend that energising others is how you make an impression on them. The value system has a role in motivation, and through motivation at work, an individual can achieve things that bring him happiness and meet his needs. The impact of motivation on human behaviour varies depending on a variety of variables, is very individual, and can vary as a result of activity feedback (Egorshin, 2001).

In addition to those already mentioned, the list that follows includes the motivational factors that are frequently observed in public institutions. Sick days, vacation days, medical insurance, favourable loans, food subsidies in canteens, paid annual leave, medical insurance for civil servants and their families, reimbursement for business travel expenses, professional retraining, advanced training, and internships with maintenance of the replaced position and salary for this timeframe, and transportation services related to the event are examples of indirect rewards.

Increased interest in employment in the public sector is positively correlated with higher levels of public system motivation (PSM), according to Perry and Wise (1990). When it comes to public institutions and organisations, they describe motivation for public service as a person's tendency to respond to certain personally driven incentives (Perry, Wise, 1990, p. 368). According to them, there are three basic causes for this behaviour. Employees in the public sector are drawn to public initiatives and also want to be a part of the system that develops policies that serve the public interest. In other words, they want to have a positive impact on society.

In order to quantify the concept of public sector motivation (PSM), Perry (2000) created four dimensions: desire for public affairs (policy making), dedication to the common good, compassion, and self-sacrifice. However, according to other studies, the nature of employment is what has a higher impact than the industry as a whole (Christensen, Wright, 2011; Kjeldsen, Jacobsen, 2013). Regarding the influence of public sector motivation (PSM) on the process of recruiting and selecting workers, Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2013) could not identify a significant positive correlation between PSM and the actual attraction or hiring of employees in the public sector. They claim that PSM is a process that is more closely related to the characteristics of public services than it is to the public sector itself. Leisink and Steijn (2008) conducted a more in-depth investigation of this relationship and focused their attention on two primary directions: candidate-organization fit and candidate -job fit.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research focuses on employee motivation, since it has a special place in public administration, having a direct role in the development and performance of public institutions. Moreover, another reason why the study of human resource motivation was chosen is the fact that currently there are several public institutions that have implemented well-established motivation policies, and which can have certain advantages and disadvantages. For this study, we chose to carry out an analysis of these changes within the Fiscal Administration of Bucharest, District 1 (ASFP1).

The purpose of the research is to identify the level of motivation of civil servants, but also the ways in which their motivation can be improved within the Fiscal Administration of Bucharest, District 1. The study also intends to reveal what ASFP1 civil servants think about the ways in which they are motivated within the institution.

The specific objectives of the research are:

1. Identifying the civil servants' motivation level regarding the current motivation system within the Fiscal Administration of Bucharest, District 1.
2. Identifying the main motivational factors of civil servants within the Fiscal Administration of Bucharest, District 1.
3. Identifying the civil servants' opinion regarding the need to implement new ways of motivation within the institution.

The present study started from the following research questions:

1. What are the main factors that influence motivation among civil servants within ASFP1?
2. How satisfied are the ASFP1 civil servants with the current motivation methods from their institution?
3. How the civil servants' motivation system from ASFP1 can be improved?

Considering the particularities of the research, the institution received the questionnaire through authorized channels of contact and distributed it to civil servants who work within the institution. The research was carried out during May 2021 and took place on the premises of the Bucharest unit. Regarding the questionnaire's format, it consists of 9 questions that were created in accordance with the specified aims. The first part includes six questions designed to collect socio-demographic data about the respondents, and in the second part of the questionnaire was designed to identify the opinion of civil servants about the level of motivation within ASFP1, to identify the main motivational factors, as well as the way in which the motivation techniques are applied, the satisfaction and involvement in the institution, but also their opinion regarding all of those. The questions were constructed in order to determine which are the main ways to motivate the civil servants in the institution, but also to identify the main problems with the aim of formulating a set of recommendations.

The sample needed to have a characteristic called representativeness in relation to the general community presented. To determine the sample size, the following formula was used: $n = t^2 \times p \times (1-p)/e^2$. We wanted to determine a sample with a confidence level of 95%, so “e” will be 0.05. Also, the margin of error was 5% for a p value = 0.5. Considering that 229 civil servants are employed in the Administration of Public Finance District 1, the correct size of the sample was resorted to using the formula $n_c = n \times N / n + N$, resulting a number of 143 participants. The questionnaires were distributed on paper within the institution. At the end of May 2021, we managed to collect 62 questionnaires, of which we validated 59, and later the results were analyzed and interpreted.

4. DISCUSSIONS. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

Table 1 presents the main characteristics of the sample, which resulted from the centralization of questions 1 to 6. As it can be observed, regarding the respondents' distribution by gender, the majority of the civil servants participating in the research - 54,10% were male and 45,90% were female.

It is evident that the sample reflects the age pyramid of civil servants, with the majority of them being between the ages of 31 and 55, when it comes to the distribution of respondents by age. In order to draw new individuals into the system, Romania has to replace its ageing civil servant population. Most of the respondents in the current study were between the ages of 31 and 45 (38,24%) and 50 and 60 (47,52%).

In terms of the educational level of civil servants, the majority of respondents (58,17%) had master's degrees, 35,76% had bachelor's degrees, and only 6,07% had finished post-university training.

The majority of civil servants (41,5%) spent more than 7 years working in the ASPF1, occupying execution positions (88.41%), with a salary between 2501 - 40000 lei (49.72%).

Table 1. The main characteristics of the sample

Item	Categories	Percent
Gender	Feminine	45,90%
	Masculine	54,10%
Age	18 – 30 years	13.12%
	31 – 45 years	38.24%
	45 – 55 years	26.43%
	55 – 65 years	21.09%
	over 65 years	1.12%
Education	Bachelor degree	35.76%
	Master degree	58.17%
	Post - university training	6.07%
Tenure in the analysed public institution (years)	0 – 1 years	3.14%
	1 – 5 years	31.09%
	5 – 7 years	41.55%
	over 7 years	24.22%
The hierarchic levels	Management level	11.59%
	Execution level	88.41%
Salary	Less than 1500 lei	0.70%
	Between 1501 – 2500 lei	37.56%
	Between 2501 – 4000 lei	49.72%

Source: Authors results, 2021

Next, the responses of civil servants regarding the present motivation methods used within the institution were analysed. To begin with, we wanted to see what factors motivate them, what interests they have, and what causes them to be more efficient at work. For this reason, we adapted Perry's (1996) 24-item PSM scale and added a number of factors that can determine civil servants' motivation, adapted from Herzberg Two-Factor model (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959) and (Schermerhon, 2008). The following statements were

presented to the study participants, who were asked to rate their agreement with each one from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 2. Civil servants' motivation factors and interest

Factors/ Interest	Items	Mean	Ave. mean
Salary	Comparatively speaking to other professional categories, my salary is adequate.	3.87	3.89
	I consider the compensation I receive for my labour to be fair.	3.32	
	My pay is fair for the function I hold.	4.13	
	My salary is reasonable with my level of education.	4.25	
Job Security	The changes to the management structure won't have any impact on me.	3.89	4.20
	As civil servant, my job is secure	4.52	
Job Satisfaction	The sense of satisfaction I experience at work	4.32	4.05
	Being able to act in a manner that is morally right.	3.74	
	The opportunity to perform an action that requires my skills.	4.11	
Acknowledgement	When I perform a good job, I am recognised.	3.53	3.47
	Employees are appreciated for their good work performance.	3.42	
Career	The organization has presented my career path	2.13	3.07
	I have a career established within this organization	4.02	
Relationship with colleagues	In my work group, tasks and responsibilities are fairly distributed.	3.49	3.18
	I'm comfortable speaking frankly and honestly with colleagues.	2.84	
	My colleagues effectively collaborates to achieve the objectives of our organisation.	3.22	
Self-sacrifice	Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements	3.77	3.21
	I believe in putting duty before self	3.42	
	Serving citizens would give me a good feeling even if no one paid me for it	3.05	
	I feel people should give back to society more than they get from it	3.49	
	I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of society	2.34	
Compassion	I am rarely moved by the plight of the underprivileged	1.21	3.09
	It is difficult for me to contain my feelings when I see people in distress	4.13	
	To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others	4.33	
	I have little compassion for people in need who are unwilling to take the first steps to help themselves	2.27	
	There are few public programs that I wholeheartedly support	3.54	
Public interest	It is hard for me to get intensely interested in what is going on in my community	3.99	3.85
	I unselfishly contribute to my community	3.24	
	Meaningful public service is very important to me	4.76	
	I consider public service my civic duty	4.27	
	I would prefer seeing public officials do what is best for the whole community even if it harmed my interest	3.01	
Public-policy making	Politics is a dirty word	4.23	3.75
	The compromises that are involved in public policy making don't appeal to me	3.84	
	I don't care much for politicians	3.19	

Source: Authors results, 2021

The first part of question 7 consists of a 16 items scaled, adapted from from the Herzberg Two-Factor model (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959) and (Schermerhon, 2008), and distributed as follow: salary, 4 items; job security, 2 items; job satisfaction, 3 items; acknowledgement, 2 items; career, 2 items; and relationship with

colleagues, 3 items. The second part consists in Perry’s (1996) 24-item PSM scale and it was reduced to 18 items, as follow: self-sacrifice, 5 items; compassion, 5 items; public interest, 5 items; and public policy-making, 3 items.

The answers of the civil servants showed which of the current factors motivates them the most in their opinion and what exactly influences them to work in this public institution, what causes them to be more involved, more determined, and more efficient at work.

Mainly, the civil servants within ASFP1 are motivated by factors such as job security (4.20), job satisfaction (4.05); salary (3.89); and acknowledgement (3.47). These results reveal a medium to high level of civil servants’ motivation overall. As it can be seen, the career factor scored 3.07, which shows that civil servants have little opportunities to improve their path in the organization.

The findings of the second section of question 7 revealed that the majority of the respondents have a moderate level of PSM. When asked about their level of interest in the PSM subcategories, such as: self-sacrifice (3.21), public policy-making (3.75), and public interest (3.85), more than 56% of those who participated in the survey either somewhat agreed or agreed with the statements. The respondents’ interest in the compassion subcategory of PSM was obviously lower (3.09) than the other subcategories. Two statements from the public interest subcategory registered some of the highest scores, namely: “Meaningful public service is very important to me” – 4.76 and “I consider public service my civic duty” – 4.27, along with “To me, patriotism includes seeing to the welfare of others” – 4.33, from compassion subcategory.

From the analysis of the results, we were able to identify the main motivational factors within the institution, answering research question two. Thus, intrinsic motivation, generated by non-financial rewards, takes precedence, such as: where job security and satisfaction take precedence; followed by extrinsic motivation, namely salary (material benefits).

Question number 8 of the questionnaire aims to find the respondents’ perception regarding the degree of satisfaction of the current motivating ways for civil servants within the institution. To evaluate the degree of satisfaction, we used the Likert scale, where 1 - very unsatisfied, and 5 - very satisfied.

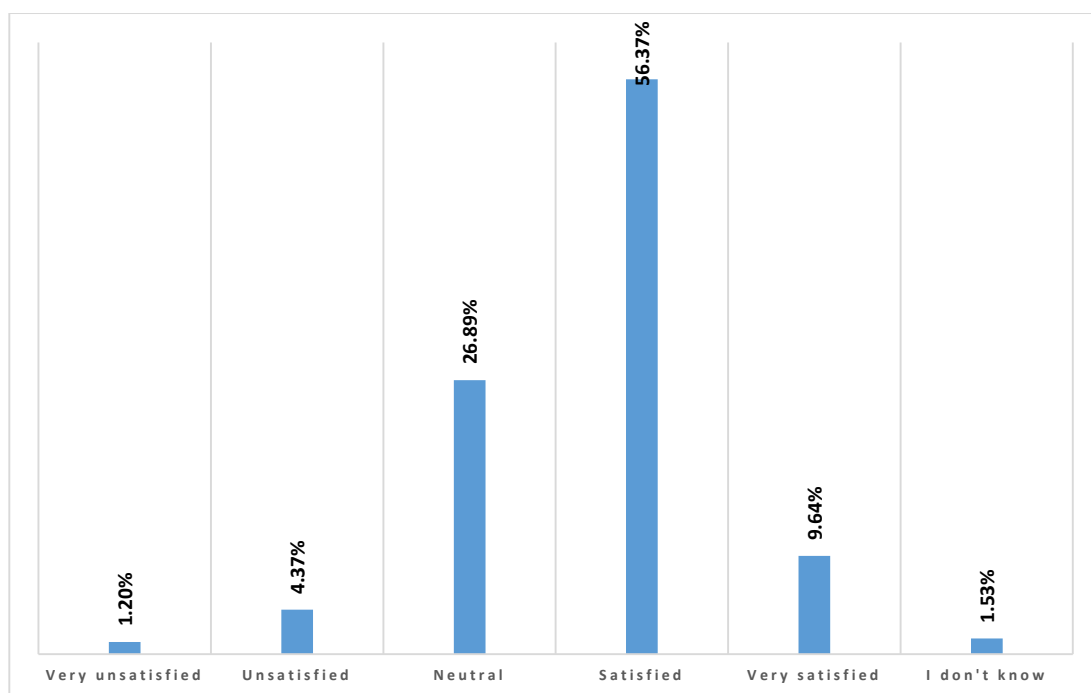


Figure 1. ASFP1 civil servants’ satisfaction level regarding the current motivating ways from the institution

Source: Authors results, 2021

According to Figure 1, 56.37% of the respondents declared themselves satisfied with the existing methods of motivation, while 5.57% declared themselves unsatisfied and very unsatisfied. Only 1.53% declared "I don't know". From the data presented above, it emerges that the civil servants from ASFP1 are mostly satisfied with the existing motivation methods within the institution. Thus, we managed to achieve our first objective, namely to identify the degree of satisfaction with the current motivation system within ASFP1, among civil servants, and we answered research question number one. We could observe the fact that the vast majority of employees are satisfied with the current motivation system within the institution. The results were clear in this regard, the proportions being clearly in favor of this answer.

Question 9 sought to discover to what extent, in the opinion of civil servants, they would be more motivated at work in the situation of introducing new ways of motivation in the institution. The respondents had to choose between several ways, which they appreciated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1- represents to a very small extent and 5 – represents to a very large extent (multiple choice).

Table 3. The level of civil servants' motivation in the case of new methods implementation

Crt.no.	New motivational factor (way/ method)	Average
1	Salary increases	4.36
2	Correct assessments from direct superiors	4.92
3	A better distribution of tasks between colleagues	3.67
4	Diversification of human resource training programs	4.12
5	Involvement in the decision-making process at the level of the institution	3.04
6	A higher level of transparency regarding the activities at the institution level	4.21

Source: Authors results, 2021

From the answers obtained to question 9, it can be seen that most of the employees stated that they would be much more motivated professionally if the institution adopted new ways of motivation. The results of these questions helped us to reach objective 3 and to answer research question number 3, thus identifying the opinion of employees regarding the need to implement new ways of motivation within the institution.

As it can be seen in Table 3, most civil servants from ASFP1 would be better motivated if they would receive: better/correct assessments from their direct superiors – 4.92, a salary increase – 4.36 or human resource training programs – 4.12. Thus, it can be concluded that civil servants from ASFP1 would perform their tasks more efficiently in case of new motivation methods' implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

In the end, it can be concluded that civil servants within ASFP1 are predominantly satisfied with their current motivation methods, but at the same time, they would appreciate the diversification of motivation methods at the level of the institution. The civil servants appreciated the fact that the introduction of new motivation methods, such as: correct evaluations from their superiors, but also salary increases would represent new methods of motivation that would stimulate them to work more efficiently than at present.

According to the numerous studies published on this subject (Profiroiu, 2011; Nica et al., 2021), salary increases were not the main and preferred method of motivation by civil servants within ASFP1, indicating that they would be much more efficient and productive if the relationship with the direct hierarchical superior would be improved, and the evaluations would be fair and transparent.

Another identified motivating factor is the diversification of training programs for civil servants. The possibilities of self-development or personal growth would motivate the civil servants questioned to a very large extent. Personal growth refers to how the organization develops the civil servants' knowledge, skills and abilities, and what new opportunities they have to learn and grow.

The salary increase depends entirely on the top management of the organization and their ability to distinguish different degrees of competence. When it comes to performance appraisal, few are unbiased in issuing

subjective ratings. For this reason, unions rarely accept merit-pay plans. When evaluating the employee's level of motivation at work, there are civil servants who take into account other elements, such as: a good work environment, the ability to develop their skills and abilities, having a program that allows them to -balance their family life with their professional lives, as well as job stability, the last factor being salary.

Research limits. First of all, this study was carried out at the level of a single public institution, on a small sample. This is the way, for future research it is recommended to extend the study to a larger number of public institutions from local, territorial and central public administration. In future studies in this area, a research design should be developed that provides a greater level of transparency regarding the causal linkages among the different variables. Also, in-depth statistical analysis is recommended.

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