

## A Study on Factors Influencing the Level of Job Satisfaction of Public Servants. The Case of Lugoj City Hall - Romania

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**Abstract** – The purpose of this research is an exploratory one, namely, to study the factors that may influence the level of job satisfaction of employees with a public function who work in the Lugoj City Hall. The study first presents the relevant aspects in terms of job satisfaction as they appear in literature. Subsequently, a description of the concerned institution is being provided, as well as details regarding methodological aspects of the research and the results obtained. In the last part of the research are examined the advantages and disadvantages of the institution as far as job satisfaction goes, and a possible action plan that aims to improve the situation is presented, as well as the conclusions.

**Keywords:** civil servants, job satisfaction, perceptions, influencing factors

that employee satisfaction is negatively associated with turnover intention, meaning that satisfied employees are more likely to stay at their job (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

Research has shown that employee satisfaction is positively associated with job performance, including productivity (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005). In the public sector, where resources may be limited and demands for services provided in the interest of citizens are high, improving employee satisfaction can have a positive impact on productivity and the quality of services provided to the public.

Finally, the public sector is responsible for providing services that have a direct impact on the well-being of citizens. By studying public sector employees job satisfaction, researchers can identify strategies to improve the quality of services provided to the public and increase the well-being of citizens (Bhuian, Menguc & Bell, 2005).

### I. INTRODUCTION

Studying the level of job satisfaction among public sector employees is important for many reasons. Firstly, employee well-being is crucial to the success of any organization and is particularly important in the public sector, where employees are responsible for delivering citizen-oriented services. Research has shown that employee satisfaction is positively associated with employee well-being, including physical health, mental health, and job performance (Bakker, Demerouti & Verbeke, 2004).

Also, the high flow of employment and dismissal of public sector employees can be costly for organizations and is especially challenging in the public sector where there may be limited resources for recruitment and training (Joo, Lim & Lee, 2021). Research has shown

### II. MAIN ASPECTS REGARDING JOB SATISFACTION

#### 1. The concept of job satisfaction

According to Robbins & Judge (2009), job satisfaction can be defined as the positive emotional state of an employee, which results from the positive evaluation of the workplace or his work experience. The authors point out that job satisfaction does not only refer to the objective features of the job, but also to the subjective perception of those features by the employee. They suggest that job satisfaction can be influenced by various factors such as pay, promotion opportunities, working conditions, relationship with supervisors and colleagues, and the level of control and

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autonomy the employee has over his work. The authors argue that satisfied employees are more likely to be engaged in their work, demonstrate higher levels of commitment to the organization, and experience less stress and burnout. For organizations, job satisfaction is linked to reduced absenteeism, lower staff turnover rates and higher levels of productivity. The level of job satisfaction plays a crucial role in the success of the organization. In addition, work satisfaction can be viewed as a multidimensional construct that encompasses different aspects of work, such as job design, compensation, and social relationships (Ackroyd, Batt, Thompson & Tolbert, 2011).

## *2. Factors that may influence the level of job satisfaction*

Studies highlight the fact that the degree of employee satisfaction must be analysed in the context of the influence of several factors, such as job security, pay and benefits, work-life balance, promotion opportunities, job autonomy and social support (Ahmad, Shahzad, & Azam Roomi, 2019).

Numerous publications have addressed this subject, and in general there is consensus regarding the most relevant factors that may influence the level of job satisfaction among employees. Some of these factors, according to Jones & Joyce (2013), are the following:

- Job characteristics: the nature of the work itself, including the level of autonomy, variety, and complexity of tasks. Jobs that offer more autonomy and opportunities for skill development tend to lead to higher levels of job satisfaction.
- Social and organizational factors: relationships with coworkers, supervisors, and organizational culture can affect job satisfaction. A supportive and positive work environment can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction.
- Wages and benefits: Fair and competitive compensation can have a positive impact on job satisfaction.
- Opportunities for career development: Opportunities for growth can also have a positive impact on the level of job satisfaction.
- Work-life balance: flexible working schedules and other opportunities to maintain work-life balance tend to lead to higher levels of job satisfaction.

## *3. Consequences of the level of job satisfaction*

High levels of job satisfaction can lead to improved employee health and well-being. Studies have found that employees who are satisfied with their jobs report lower stress levels and better physical health than those who are less satisfied (Judge, Bono, Erez & Locke, 2001; Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979).

On the other hand, low levels of job satisfaction can have significant negative consequences. A major result is decreased performance at work. Employees who are less satisfied with their jobs tend to be less motivated and engaged, leading to lower levels of effort and performance (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Steel,

Griffeth & Hom, 2002). This can lead to lower productivity, lower quality of work and reduced capacity for innovation and creativity.

Another important consequence of low job satisfaction is staff turnover, the continuous string of resignations and new hires. Employees who are less satisfied with their jobs are more likely to leave their current positions, which will lead to bigger costs associated with recruitment, training, and lost productivity for the organization (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000). Additionally, high staff turnover can lead to decreased morale and engagement among remaining employees, leading to a vicious cycle of decreased satisfaction and increased staff turnover.

## *4. Improving the level of job satisfaction*

One of the most important strategies used to increase employee satisfaction is to provide job-appropriate compensation and benefits. In their study, Perry & Hondeghem (2008) found that compensation is the most important factor influencing job satisfaction of public sector employees. Employees who feel they are paid fairly are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Employers may also offer additional benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off to increase the level of job satisfaction.

In addition, according to Maslow (1954), who developed the most popular theory of needs, any person has the same needs, which are divided into the following categories:

- Physiological needs (water, food, oxygen, sex);
- Security and safety needs (the need to be protected, to live in a safe, predictable environment);
- The need for belonging (social relationships, belonging to a group, the need for affection);
- Social status and esteem (the need to be respected and appreciated by others, to hold a position in the social hierarchy, within the group);
- The need for self-actualization (personal development).

Employers should be aware of the theory briefly described above because every employee is a person who has these needs, which means that the work conditions, payment, and other aspects will succeed to fulfil these needs or not.

## *5. Cultural differences in terms of job satisfaction*

In the context of globalization, we must take into consideration the cultural differences that may lead to different levels job satisfaction, such as different values, expectations, and attitudes towards work. For example, in some cultures, work is seen as a necessary means to an end, while in others, work is seen as a source of fulfilment and personal identity.

Erez & Earley (1993) consider that in some cultures, such as Japan, employees tend to have a strong commitment to their organizations and a heightened sense of loyalty to their employers. As a result, these employees may be more satisfied with

their jobs when they feel that their work contributes to the success of the company entire. On the other hand, in some Western cultures, such as the United States, employees may be more motivated by personal goal achievement or recognition. Thus, employers who provide opportunities for growth and individual recognition may be more effective in increasing job satisfaction among American employees. In addition to these differences in terms of values and attitudes, there are also differences in communication styles that can affect job satisfaction. In some cultures, employees express their dissatisfaction indirectly through non-verbal cues, avoiding conflict. Employers who are aware of these communication styles can take steps to ensure that employees feel comfortable voicing their concerns. Additionally, in some cultures, there is a greater emphasis on work-life balance, while in others, work is seen as a priority. Employers who are sensitive to these cultural differences can create policies and practices that support work-life balance, which can lead to increased job satisfaction.

Finally, Erez & Earley (1993) also note that different cultures have different expectations about the employer's role in employees' personal lives. For example, in cultures such as India and China, employers are expected to provide more support and assistance to employees and their families, while in other cultures, such as the United States, employees are expected to manage their own lives personal independently.

### III. CASE STUDY – LUGOJ CITY HALL (ROMANIA)

#### 1. Description of the concerned institution

Lugoj City Hall is in the centre of the municipality, in Piața Victoriei, at the intersection of 20 Decembrie 1989, Ion Creangă, Victor Vlad Delamarina and Andrei Șaguna streets. The building, built between 1903 - 1905, housed the Financial Directorate of Caraș-Severin County in the past. Behind the City Hall is located one of the biggest parks of the city, and in the immediate vicinity there are numerous historical buildings.

The authorities of the local public administration are the mayor (executive authority) and the local council (deliberative authority). The headquarters of the Local Council of the Municipality of Lugoj is in Piața Victoriei, no. 4, and the plenary meetings take place at the Meeting Hall of the Local Council.

The subordinate structures of the Lugoj City Hall are: the local community public service for the record of persons; Voluntary service for emergency situations; Public service greenhouses and green areas; Medical assistance service, education; Public service markets, fairs and barns; Municipal library; Art gallery; House of culture; Popular school of arts; Sports club; The public administration and maintenance service of the

public domain; Museum of history and ethnography; Directorate of social and community assistance.

Regarding the employees with public functions within Lugoj City Hall, according to the latest organization chart displayed on the institution's official website, there are a total of 169 approved public functions, of which 130 are occupied (<https://primarialugoj.ro>).

#### 2. Methodological aspects

The study was carried out in the form of an exploratory research, aiming to assess the possible influencing factors of the level of job satisfaction of civil servants of the Lugoj City Hall. The design of the research was a non-experimental one, the respondents being provided with the same data completion conditions and the group being already predetermined.

**Participants** - The present research analyses the answers of a group consisting of 55 people with public management or executive positions, that agreed to participate in the study, and their job satisfaction level was tested using a self-report type of questionnaire. All the participants of this research have at least medium level education, their gender distribution is slightly uneven (58.2% are women), and the predominant age category is that of employees over 50 years old, as can be seen in the following figures.

**Tools** - The tool used in the survey process was a questionnaire developed to carry out this study and has a total of 29 dichotomous or multiple-choice items. Of course, to build the items of the questionnaire, both similar research approaches in the targeted field, as well as aspects that were considered relevant in the report with the chosen sample, were considered.

The content of the items aimed different demographic information, such as gender, age, level of education completed. A series of questions were related to the specifics of the workplace or the individual preferences of the participants regarding the workplace, and the last part of the questionnaire tried to capture some potential influencing factors of the level of job satisfaction in response.

**Research procedure** - The participants completed the questionnaire described above via Google Forms application, their answers being centralized in a Microsoft Excel type file and then analysed through descriptive statistics. The participants were informed in advance about elements such as the topic of the questions or the purpose of the research and were advised to take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. They were assured of the confidentiality of the collected data, being asked to be honest in the answers they provide.

The data collected from the respondents has been processed using the statistical program EVIEWS 12, which allowed the use of descriptive statistics techniques, as well as the cross-section analysis.

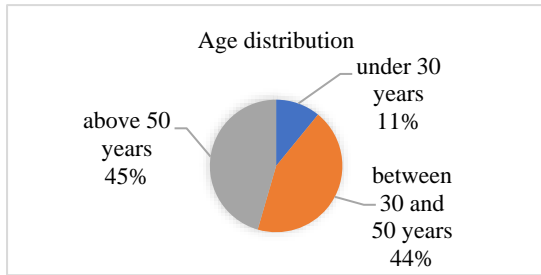


Fig. 1. Age distribution

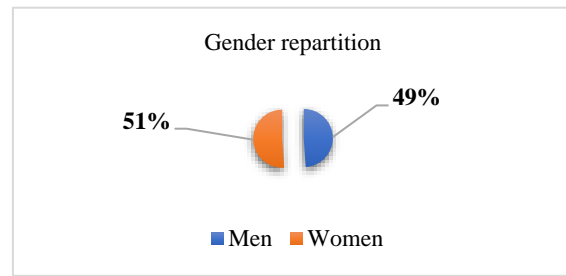


Fig. 2. gender repartition

Table 1. Cross-section analysis, Models 1 to 5

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
C	1.286*** [0.433]	0.664 [0.464]	4.049*** [0.284]	2.255*** [0.711]	1.669*** [0.406]
Salvsmd	0.368*** [0.137]				
Salvspr	0.339** [0.155]				
Dezv		0.326*** [0.082]			
Promov		-0.138 [0.101]			
Stabil		0.598*** [0.107]			
Nvrt (N)			-0.149* [0.079]		
Org (C)				0.163 [0.145]	
Detans (C)				0.693** [0.286]	
Sarech (A)					0.263** [0.108]
Supcapab (A)					0.277** [0.136]
Indech (E)					
Dact (E)					
Libvsreg (D)					
R <sup>2</sup>	0.355	0.569	0.062	0.113	0.355

Notes: (i) \*\*\*, \*\*, \* means significance at 99%, 95% and 90% significance level; (ii) standard errors in squared brackets.

## IV. RESULTS

### 1. Descriptive statistics

The dichotomous items have provided a lot of information regarding the respondents' options in terms of the way the work is carried out, as follows:

- Preferred way of carrying out the activity: 69.1% of the respondents said that they prefer to carry out their activity physically, in the office, while only 30.9% would prefer the home-office arrangement;
- Accomplishing a task: 29.1% of respondents declare that they would prefer to perform tasks that involve individual work, while 70.9% would prefer to work as a team member;

- Way of working: 83.6% of respondents declare that they usually focus on details, in order to work without errors, while 16.4% consider the overall picture, in order to work faster;
- Preference for clear rules/individual freedom: 63.6% of respondents state that they prefer to have clear rules and norms at work, while 36.4% expressed their preference for freedom in carrying out daily work tasks.

### 2. Empirical analysis

In order to observe the impact that the variables taken into account as potential influencing factors have on the level of job satisfaction of civil servants who agreed to participate in the research, we tested 9 models,

according to the following logic: through models 1 to 8, we tested the influence of each category of factors, and then, in model 9, we included all the factors

considered as exerting a possible influence on the level of job satisfaction of civil servants. Tables 1 and 2 present the main findings of the empirical analysis.

Table 2. Cross-section analysis, Models 6 to 9

	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
c	3.000*** [0.196]	3.475*** [0.183]	0.720 [0.791]	-0.127 [0.700]
Salvsmd				0.318** [0.141]
Salvspr				0.047 [0.147]
Dezv				0.234** [0.115]
Promov				-0.269** [0.110]
Stabil				0.357*** [0.130]
Nvrt (N)			-0.011 [0.087]	-0.012 [0.077]
Org (C)			0.120 [0.140]	0.087 [0.117]
Detans (C)			0.360 [0.289]	0.172 [0.238]
Sarech (A)			0.142 [0.150]	0.044 [0.154]
Supcapab (A)			0.347** [0.140]	0.170 [0.127]
Indech (E)	0.622* [0.312]		0.130 [0.308]	0.004 [0.257]
Dact (E)	.0163 [0.306]		0.193 [0.288]	-0.015 [0.244]
Libvsreg (D)		0.125 [0.229]	0.055 [0.235]	0.104 [0.188]
R <sup>2</sup>	0.176	0.005	0.443	0.685

Notes: (i) \*\*\*, \*\*, \* means significance at 99%, 95% and 90% significance level;  
(ii) standard errors in squared brackets.

First, we notice that the most significant models are Model 2 and Model 9. Consequently, the data obtained by testing Model 2 indicate that the perception of self-development offered by the institution (variable *Dezv*), as well as the perception of stability at work (variable *Stabil*) are influencing factors as far as the level of job satisfaction among civil servants that work in the Lugoj City Hall is concerned.

On the other hand, the data obtained by testing Model 9 indicate that the perception of the salary range in relation to the work performed (variable *Salvsmd*), as well as the perception of equity in terms of the promotion of each employee (variable *Promov*) are also influencing factors of the level of satisfaction among respondents.

Other factors that influence the level of job satisfaction of civil servants that work in the Lugoj City Hall seem to be the increased levels of the variables by which the *Agreeableness (A)* trait of the personality was measured, namely the perception of fairness regarding the way that responsibility is shared among

colleagues (variable *Sarech*) and the perception of the capability of hierarchical bosses (variable *Supcapab*).

## V. SWOT ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN

The data obtained from responses of the participants in this research revealed quite conclusive information regarding the possible strengths and weaknesses of the institution when we refer to the ability to affect the level of job satisfaction among employees with public functions.

Starting from the identified strengths and weaknesses, we have considered a list of opportunities to which the institution could have access, as well as possible threats to which it is subject, as follows:

### Strengths:

- The possibility of work promotion, considering only individual traits;
- Increased ability to organize work by employees;

- Stability of the workplace;
- The salary in relation to the work done;
- Respect offered by colleagues and superiors.

**Weaknesses:**

- Working conditions;
- Salary earnings in relation to salaries in the private sector;
- Dividing work duties in a way perceived as not being fair;
- Preoccupation with work duties outside working hours;
- Small possibility of professional development.

**Opportunities:**

- Personalized communication with employees, to identify their needs;
- A campaign to promote the institution and its goals;
- Offering financial rewards and facilities for contributions to the institution;
- Allocating more financial resources to improve working conditions.

**Threats:**

- National unstable economic situation;
- An increase in the inflation rate (the risk that salaries cannot be increased in proportion to advancement in rank);
- Opportunities offered by employers in the private sector (salary, flexible work schedule, holiday bonuses or others).

**Action plan** – The way of approaching and solving the needs of the personnel within the organizations can have a positive or negative influence on the individual or group performance of the employees, which means that to a large extent, the management of an organization can influence by encouraging them, but it can also lead to the annihilation of the desire for initiative, self-improvement, and low performance among employees.

Although it is possible that the methods of action in terms of motivating employees in the institution that we analysed may seem limited, in the context of small budgets allocated for the payment of salaries, there are still a lot of possible approaches, which would allow to increase the level of job satisfaction of civil servants, that imply allocating minimal financial costs, since the focus falls on other types of resources that would need to be allocated.

For example, as mentioned by Perry & Hondeghem (2008), compensation is the most important factor influencing the job satisfaction of public sector employees. This can be achieved by the management of the institution by providing salary-related benefits, considering, on the one hand, the limitations the institution faces and, on the other hand, the advantages it has, according to verbal or non-verbal feedback of employees.

Furthermore, considering the results obtained after analysing the data collected from the respondents, we suggest the following series of measures that could be put into practice by the people with decision-making capacity, to increase the level of job satisfaction of Lugoj City Hall civil servants:

- Ensuring good working conditions: in accordance with the needs of the employees, after discussing with them individually;
- Giving each one's employee credits in front of his colleagues when he successfully completes a project in which he was involved or which he coordinated;
- Providing benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, paid time off and discounts available for employees only;
- Providing performance-based bonuses: public institutions, in this case the Lugoj City Hall, should be able to provide bonuses to employees based on their performance or the overall performance of the institution;
- Opportunities for professional development: the institution could offer employees more opportunities to develop their skills and advance their careers, such as training programs, mentoring or other opportunities for growth and self-development;
- Offering flexible working options/flexible schedule: as happened during the Covid-19 pandemic, employers, whether in the public or private sector, can establish flexible working arrangements, such as home-office or flexible work schedules;
- Creating a positive work environment: this can be done by promoting teamwork, encouraging open communication, and recognizing achievements among colleagues.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate different aspects related to the level of job satisfaction of civil servants who work in the Lugoj City Hall, with an emphasis on discovering the factors that may influence the level of satisfaction among respondents.

The obtained results reveal a high level of job satisfaction of employees, and some of the influencing factors of it are the perception of self-development offered by the institution, the perception of stability at work, the perception of the salary range in relation to the work performed, the perception of equity in terms of the promotion of each employee and the level of agreeableness personality dimension.

However, there are certain aspects related to the institution, such as the non-competitive salary in relation to that in the private sector, or the working conditions, as well as threats arising from outside the institution, such as the national unstable economic situation, or the opportunities offered by employers in

the private sector, which can endanger the level of job satisfaction of employees, thus, we consider that further research may be necessary.

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