

MOTIVATION OF HEALTH CARE EMPLOYEES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract:

Human resources are without a doubt the most important and most specific resource used by contemporary organizations in general and health care organizations in particular. Obviously, human resources engaged in providing health care services are quite specific in terms of characteristics, scarceness, knowledge and skills etc. But, even besides this, in terms of the process of human resource management they share several common characteristics with human resources in other organizations. The paper is mostly research based, and presents the main findings of a survey of 450 health care employees in the Republic of Macedonia. The paper identifies the main factors influencing the level of motivation of health care employees in the Republic of Macedonia, determining some of the main sources of their satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Keywords: human resource management, employee motivation, health care institutions

1. THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Motivation is one of the most written about, complex, contradictory and, it has to be said, dry topics in organizational and management studies. Theories of motivation and empowerment are largely grounded in the field of psychology where hedonism is seen as an important component of motivation: people, quite naturally, seek to maximize pleasure and minimize discomfort in their daily lives. The more pleasure they experience, the more motivated they should be and vice versa. Dozens of theories and models have been developed and tested over the last 50 years, purporting to describe employee motivation, empowerment and performance. While the empirical support for most of these theories is mixed, they can provide leaders and managers with useful insights into ways of improving employee motivation and performance.

When talking about employee motivation making a differentiation between employee motivation and usage of managers formal authority. These differences can be understood easily from the following quote: »For many managers, their definition of motivation is “to get you to do what I want you to do, with a minimum of trouble from you.” That is authority, pure and simple. It is definitely not motivation. It is using your positional power to get people to do things not because they want to but because they have to. Motivation is getting people to want to do what they are supposed to do, willingly and not by force. The best managers spend time finding out what motivates their employees, and they try to create an environment that will help their employees become self-motivated. There are many ways to find out what motivates your employees. You can observe their behavior, get to know them after a few months, or have them fill out a survey or questionnaire. There is one other method: Ask them!« (Forster, 2005, p. 161)

Motivation is a modulating and coordinating influence on the direction, vigor, and composition of behavior. This influence arises from a wide variety of internal, environmental and social sources and is manifested at many levels of behavioral and neural organization.(Wilson&Kail, 1999, p.556). A simple model of motivation is presented in picture 1 .

Picture 1: A model of employee motivation



Source: Daft, Marcic, 2009, p. 445

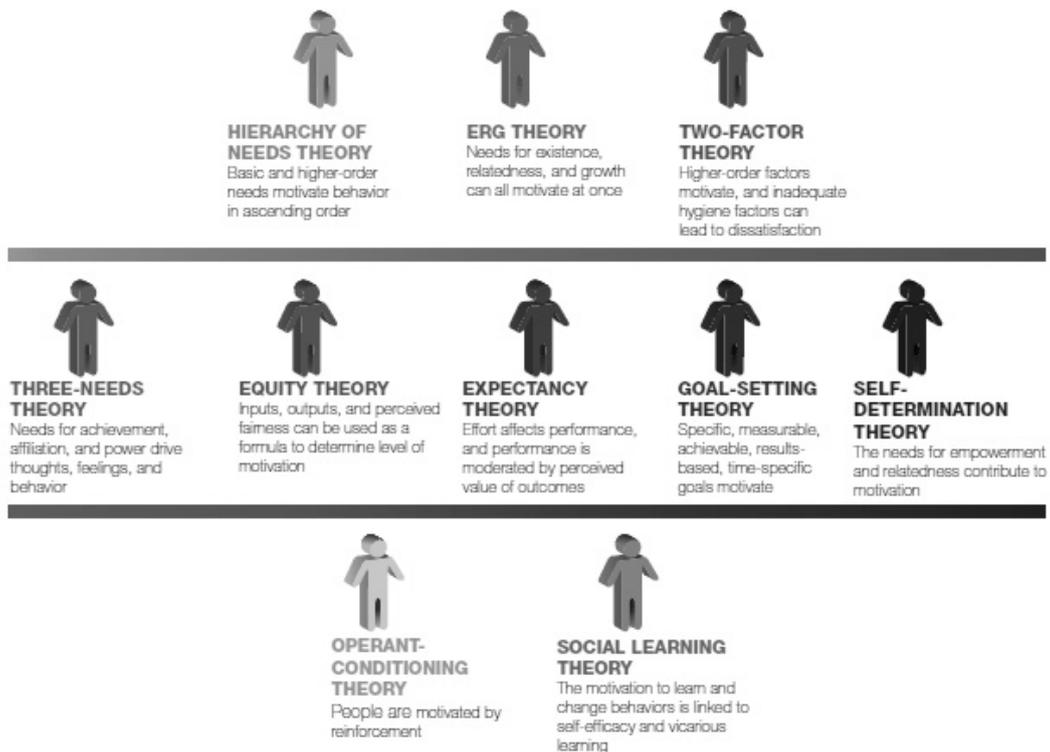
To motivate employees, managers need to set challenging goals, reinforce desired behaviors, satisfy employees' needs, design jobs that are interesting and offer opportunities for incumbents to use their talents, provide performance-contingent rewards that people value, and be fair. There are several well-known theories that focus on different aspects of motivation. Together they help explain what makes people work harder and what managers can do to facilitate and stimulate high performance.(Mejia&Balkin, 2012, p. 362).

Several motivation theories have been proposed over the years. Most of these theories can be categorized into two basic types: process theories and content theories. A process theory of motivation is an explanation of motivation that emphasizes how individuals are motivated. Process theories focus, essentially, on the steps that occur when an individual is motivated. A content theory of motivation is an explanation of motivation that emphasizes people's internal characteristics. Content theories focus on understanding what needs people have and how these needs can be satisfied. For years, industrial and organizational (I/O) psychologists have worked to integrate the many theories of motivation and identify where each has an effect in the motivation process. (Certo&Certo, 2012, p. 400).

A **content theory** addresses the needs a person is trying to satisfy and what features of the work environment seem to satisfy those needs. Such theories try to explain motivation by identifying both (1) internal forces, that is, particular needs, and (2) external forces, particular job and work situation characteristics that are presumed to cause behavior. Two content theories—need hierarchy and acquired needs theories—focus on identifying internal forces. A third theory, the two factor theory, focuses on identifying external factors. (Hitt et. Al, 212, p.242).

A visual summary of the main theories of employee motivation is represented in Picture 2.

Picture 2: A visual summary of the main theories of employee motivation



Source: McKee, 2012, p. 66

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The health care sector in the Republic of Macedonia is one of the most important aspects in organizing the Macedonian society. The health care system of the Republic of Macedonia is based on a vertical and geographical organizational structure. This makes health care services easily available for all citizens of the country. In less than an hour they get access to health care services. All cities have health care institutions, and many villages have small hospital that offer medical services. Besides this hundreds of private ordinances function all over the country.

The Republic of Macedonia, with the independence gained in 1991, inherited a large and well-established health care system with good geographical and financial accessibility, long positive experience with health insurance covering nearly the whole population, qualified staff, good control of infectious diseases, and almost full coverage of the population with the national immunization programme. The health status of the population is similar as in the other countries of South-Eastern Europe, but is lagging behind the EU countries. However, the health care sector is faced with several challenges associated with the improvement of the population's health status, the provision of basic benefits package, delivery of health services, public health, planning, management and development of human resources, quality assurance, health financing, and provision of a sustainable system of health care. (Kjosev&Nedanovski, p.71).

The main providers of health services in the country are public and private health organizations. The private health sector is continuously grows. With recent health reform the public primary health care (PHC) organizations were privatized. General practitioners, gynecologists, pediatricians, occupational medicine and school medicine physicians being part of the PHC got premises, equipment and devices under concession. Shift from fix salary to per capita payment system of those physicians is introduces. The reform intended to bring better quality service by introducing competition. There is growing private hospital sector with an outflow of qualified medical personnel from public to private sector. For the time being, privatization has brought no significant changes to patients regarding services of PHC which is contrary with services from private hospital where costs for users are significant if private hospital is not HIF contracted. (WHO, p.1).

The health care system in the Republic of Macedonia is comprised of three main segments: primary health care, secondary health care and tertiary health care. Primary health care in Macedonia is provided by different types of private and public health care organizations: doctor's offices, health stations and health houses. Preventive, promotional and curative services are provided in the primary health care. The latter is provided by many different types of health workers and co-workers: general physicians, specialists in general medicine, pediatricians, specialists in school age medicine, gynecologists, and specialists in occupational medicine. The health workers mentioned above do not provide comprehensive primary health care except in villages with only one doctor. This system performs well in some areas (for example when providing immunization and antenatal care) and less well in others (for example non-rational prescribing, high referral rates, lack of co-ordination between various treatments, and prevailing medicament treatment of the patients with mental health problems without paying sufficient attention to the psychosocial dimensions of the treatment). Too many patients are being seen by emergency care services or by secondary and even tertiary level physicians that could have been treated well at primary care level if the conditions there would have been better, or if gate keeping had been respected better. Secondary health care is provided in specialist-consultative services, general and special hospitals, offices and institutes. Tertiary health care is provided in clinical hospitals and in the University Clinical Centre. Preventive, curative and rehabilitation health services are provided at these two levels, and health care is provided by different types of specialists and sub-specialists. (Health Strategy of RM 2020, p.46).

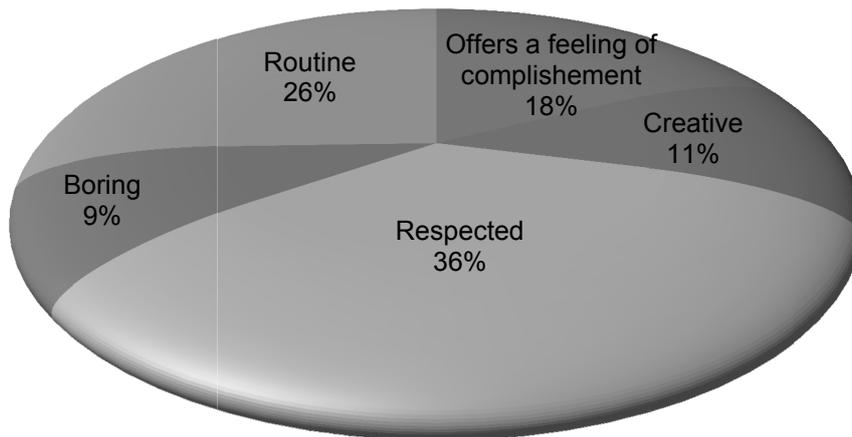
3. HEALTH CARE HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The Republic of Macedonia has had a permanently growing number of doctors. Studies point to a surplus of health personnel. This seems to be partly the result of the relatively high obligatory number of medical doctors per 1000 citizens, for example, as defined in the system established prior to 1991, and partly the result of the absence of a strict quota for professional training. Furthermore, analysis of data on the employment of medical personnel confirms that the 1990s saw no significant policy changes in this field. Accordingly, the sector experiences difficulties in employing all qualified personnel and there is therefore unemployment among doctors and nurses. However, the recent reduction in admission numbers to the Medical Faculty aims to take account of these difficulties. On the contrary, unemployment among pharmacists is rare. (Health System in Tranzition:Rm, p.46). Since the independence of the country in 1991, a permanent growth in the number of physicians can be noticed starting from 4396 in 1990 up to 5649 in 2011. In parallel with the increase of number of doctors in the Republic of Macedonia, there has been of process of improving the structure of doctors. While in 1990 more than half of the total number of doctors in the country belonged to the category of general physicians in 2011 this number fell to only 37%. Similarly the number of dentists and pharmacists in the Republic of Macedonia has grown rapidly over the years although not with the same intensity. While the number of dentists has grown from 1112 in 1990 to 1622 in 2011, the number of pharmacists has doubled during the same period going from 372 up to 782.

4. EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

In order to determine the level of employee motivation in the health care sector in the Republic of Macedonia, 212 doctors were interviewed with a questionnaire prepared specifically for this task. Several job dimensions were included in the research. As can be noted from Chart 1 not surprisingly over 90% of respondents have preferred to describe their job in positive terms and only 9% of respondents have described their job as boring.

Chart 1: Job description



The research proves that the level of salary is the most important factor influencing employee motivation in the health care sector in the Republic of Macedonia. In fact, 40% of employees have declared that for them salary is the most important aspect of their job, Table 1.

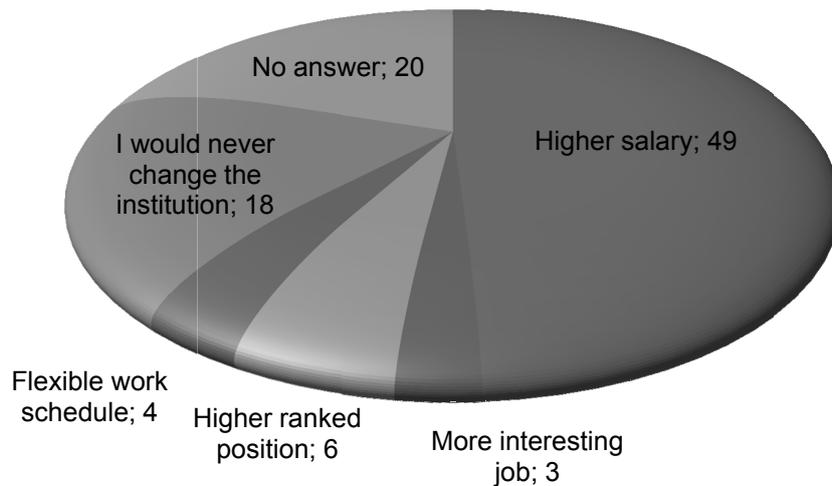
Table 1: The highest ranking factors of employee motivation

Factor of employee motivation	n	%
Salary	85	40.09
A sense of value	22	10.37
Job safety	31	14.62
Mutual respect	7	3.30
Job autonomy	14	6.60
Opportunities for skill development	12	5.66
Opportunity to be creative	9	4.24
Opportunity to learn and improve	10	4.71
Being praised for a job well done	7	3.30
Working in a growing profession	12	7.07

The fact that the level of salary is a dominant factor influencing employee motivation in the health care sector in the Republic of Macedonia is proved once more when employees are asked to determine the preconditions that would lead to their fluctuation and when they are asked to determine the most important aspects of their job.

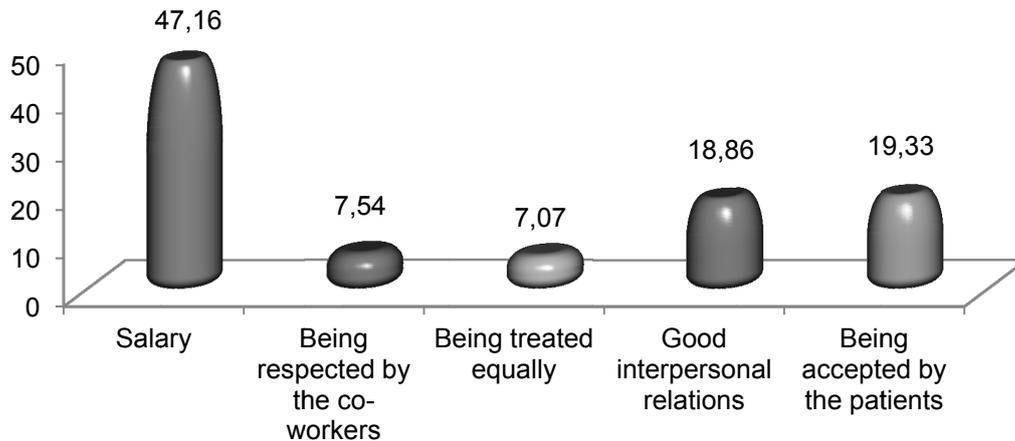
As can be noted from the data presented in chart 2 around one half of respondents have declared that they would be willing to leave their organization if another hospital offers them a higher salary and only 18% of respondents have declared that they would not leave their organizations regardless what they are offered by other hospitals.

Chart 2: Reasons for employee fluctuation (in %)



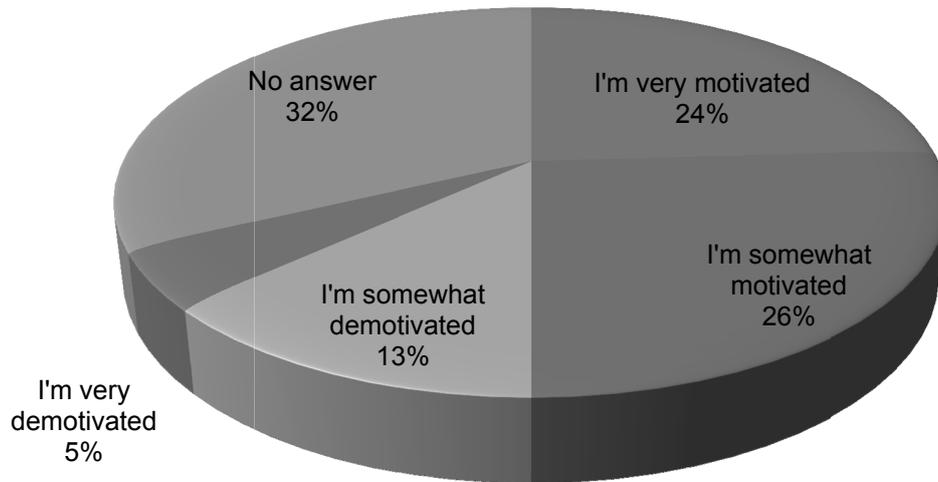
As can be noticed from the data presented in chart 3, most respondents have declared that the most important thing for them is salary. The other important issues for the respondents are being able to maintain good interpersonal relations with their colleagues and being well accepted by the patients.

Chart 3: The most important aspects of the job (in %)



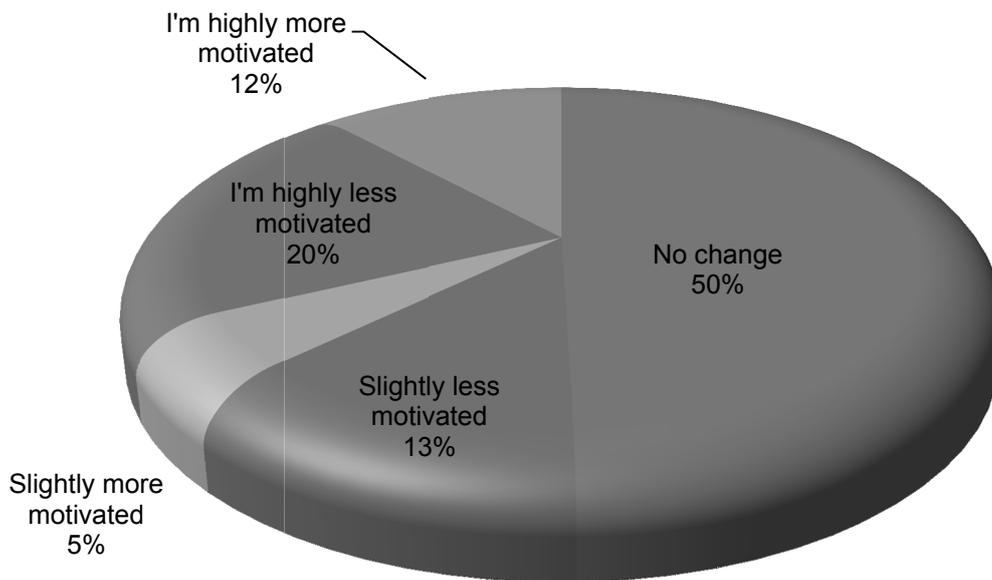
The research shows that almost 49% of respondents prefer to describe their salary as low, around a third of the total number of respondents prefer to describe their salary as simply regular. No respondents have declared that their salary is high or that it provides luxury. But, even besides the fact that 47% of employees believe that their salary is the most important aspect of the job and that salary is the most important factor determining their level of motivation and 49% of employees treat salary as low, again the results gained when asking respondents to declare their general level of motivation are not very discouraging, chart 4.

Chart 4: The level of overall motivation



When asked to evaluate their current level of motivation compared to last years level of motivation, respondents gave the following opinions, chart 5.

Chart 5: The level of overall motivation compared to the previous year



As can be noted from chart 5, respondents report a fall in the general level of motivation. Although half of the total number of respondents has declared that their general level of motivation has remained the same, it can be noted that at the other half the trend has been decreasing instead of increasing. In fact, while 17% of the total number of respondents have declared that their level of motivation has increased to some extent compared to last year, around 1/3 of the total number of respondents have reported decreased motivation compared to the previous year.

5. Concluding remarks

Employee motivation is without a doubt one of the most important issues that contemporary managers are faces worldwide. Although the business world offers sufficient data regarding ways on how to motivate employees, the situation is more complex when it comes to the health care sector in general and the healthcare sector in the Republic of Macedonia in particular, due to the specifics of the very profession of being a doctor.

The direct conclusions that can be drawn from the research show a rather low level of motivation of healthcare employees in the Republic of Macedonia. The reality, gained through the direct interviews conducted with health care personnel show that this is the results of many factors, the low levels of salary being only one of them. The low level salary, compared even to other sectors financed by the central budget of the Republic of Macedonia, has in time resulted in a feeling that the medical profession is being undervalued by the society and this on the other hand results in low levels of employee satisfaction and motivation.

Having in mind the general situation in the health care sector in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the recently undertaken reforms and the opposition to them, one might conclude that a total change in the approach towards this vital sector for the society should be undertaken, a more in-depth analysis should be performed and a more efficient system of the health budget should be implemented.

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