Connection between Job Motivation, Job Satisfaction and Work Performance in Romanian Trade Enterprises

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Accepted November 2012
Available online 27 December 2012
JEL Classification
M 12, O 15

Keywords:
Job motivation; Job satisfaction;
Work performance; Trade enterprises; Organizational culture

ABSTRACT

On defining the connection between job motivation and job satisfaction and between job satisfaction and work performance is still not complete agreement among experts, given the complexity of the phenomena studied. Over time, the relationship between job motivation and job satisfaction has been addressed in many ways in the organizational psychology. The issue of the connection between job satisfaction and work performance is also at least as controversial as the issues mentioned above with respect to these phenomena. Related to this connection, in the literature existed, over time, at least three points of view which held that: job satisfaction leads to work performance; work performance leads to job satisfaction; rewards are involved between job satisfaction and work performance. The paper aim is to present some aspects related to the connection between job motivation, job satisfaction and work performance. The issues presented in this paper lead to the conclusion that in the work process, the connection between job satisfaction and work performance or the connection between job motivation and job satisfaction are not constant or linear connection. These connections should be nuanced interpreted, depending on the conditions of occurrence. These conclusions are based on the results of a survey conducted among enterprises dealing mostly in trade sector, in Romanian Western Region.

1. Introduction

Most professionals and managers associated organizational performance with motivation of employees, with their participation and involvement in the organization. Why an employee possessing skills and competencies much higher than other achieve poorer results than another employee with lower skills? How can such an employee be stimulated in order to achieve results in line with its potential? These are the questions that managers and researchers have set over time, and they are still looking for plausible answers. Interest in the employees' motivation and satisfaction was born precisely from the need to understand and to use subjective factors explaining differences in behaviour and performance of those who work. Job motivation and job satisfaction and especially the connection of these variables to performance attracted the interest of researchers both in the field of social psychology and the organizational psychology. This issue has been addressed over time, differently from different perspectives and in different ways. Although experts have not reached a conclusion universally accepted and universally valid, however, certain specific features which explain these phenomena and their importance in organizational activity have emerged. In this paper I will try to summarize different views expressed in this regard by specialists and starting from them to shape an overview of how the degree of employees' motivation and satisfaction influences job performance and also organizational performance. Conclusions we have reached are based on a survey conducted among trade enterprises in the Romanian Western Region and on this basis we will try to outline a motivational system adapted to trade business.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Considerations on job motivation

Most of experts consider that the issue of motivation is essential for human activity and also for understanding and explaining behaviour and especially organizational behaviour. Therefore, this issue is frequently addressed. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, some aspects can not be captured or explained exactly. Although the concept of motivation was often used in order to explain what determines the adoption and the maintenance of a certain type of behaviour, however this concept is not sufficiently clearly defined in the literature. Etymologically, the word motivation stems from the Latin "movere", whose meaning is "to trigger, to push for action." According to the Romanian DEX (1998), motivation is "all the causes that make someone to take an action or to strive for certain purposes." [1]

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As I mentioned above, there is no universally accepted definition for the concept of motivation, by specialists. But there are many approaches on this topic from various perspectives: psychological perspective, psychoanalytic perspective, sociological perspective, and so on, which are centred either on the individual or the individual-environment relationship. Approaches that are centred on the person have a relatively low explanatory value, because motivation is viewed through the prism of individual internal characteristics (needs, instincts, personality traits and so on). These approaches fail to consider the context in which the person works and his influences. Therefore, under this approach motivation is only determined individually, from inside. This category includes authors like Maslow, Alderfer, McClelland, Freud, that interpret motivation from psychological and psychoanalytic perspective, as the factor which pushes the person to act according to its needs, a tension that puts the body in motion to reduce pressure, or the force that causes the body transition from sleep state to need state. Also this category includes American psychologists, Newcomb, Turner, Converse. They consider motivation as “the state of the organism in which the corporal energy is selectively mobilized and directed to a set of elements called purpose. The person becomes motivated only when he is simultaneously characterized by a state of energy mobilization and by behaviour directing towards a specific goal preferentially chosen of several possibilities “. [9] For other specialists, such as Ivancevich, Donnelly, Gibson motivation is “a process that is designed to influence the direction, persistence and vigour of an individual's behaviour directed towards a specific purpose”. [5] Approaches concerning motivation from the perspective of individual-environment relationship (situational perspective) take into account the influence of factors outside the individual: its business environment, nature of work, relationships with co-workers and bosses etc. In this category are mainly sociologists, for example Ph. Bernoux, who believes that “motives depend on the individual role that was assigned by the company or organization and also depend on the individual's relationship with the social context.” [2]

Also in the same category are other authors: Roussel, Chiffre, Teboul etc. In the literature of our country we find numerous approaches to motivation, which explain it considering the internal characteristics of the individual and its external influences. Note in this regard, Professor Mielu Zlate contributions in addressing motivation of organizational-managerial psychology perspective. From such a perspective, the issue of motivation assumes a special importance since it refers not only to organizational behaviour in general, but to motivated organizational behaviour. [15]

Definitions considered relevant by Professor Mielu Zlate in terms of organizational-managerial approach motivation as follows: “motivation refers to those psychological processes that determine the onset, directing and maintaining voluntary actions oriented towards a goal” [8] or “job motivation is a set of energetic forces that originate both inside and outside the individual to initiate work behaviour, and to determine the form, direction, intensity and duration of behaviour.” [10]

Synthesis and explanations given by Professor M. Zlate help create a picture of the complex motivational phenomena. [15] Obviously, there are many other approaches on employee motivation. Most of these approaches emphasize that motivation is a set of forces, internal and external energies that initiates and directs human behavior for a particular purpose, or objective. Job motivation is a very important aspect both for employees - as work represents the central area of human activity, since people spend most of their adult life in a state of employment - and for employers, due to the direct implications of motivation on performance. Viewed in the context of work, motivation can be defined as the degree of availability of the employees to become involved in their work and to make sustained effort in order to meet some professional objectives, which can be defined individually or organizationally. In this context, motivation can be considered a result of the interdependence between the individual and the organizational context where he/she works, rather than a result of the prevailing individual motivations. It is certain that any manager looks for employees that are involved in their activity, but it is less obvious whether managers also look for properly motivated employees. Another major aspect is the fact that people are not always motivated in their work, although most people look for activities that will stimulate them from the point of view of professional fulfillment. Thus, there are also people who are motivated by many other activities, but not by the work they do as employees in a company. The place given to work may be a secondary one in the hierarchy of their individual motivations, even if work comes first in the order of material needs. This fact is rather generated by the attitude component of human behaviour, which is shaped through education and influenced by culture (the mentality towards work). This is one of the reasons for using some instruments for evaluating motivation in the professional context; these instruments can sense motivational dimensions located rather at the attitude pole of the personality, with a direct influence on individuals’ performance.

2.2. Connection between motivation and job performance

As concerns performance, it is obvious that there motivation and performance are mutually conditioned. It is believed that, when there is an overlap of individual expectations and organizational requirements, there is also a chance of obtaining professional performance; in the opposite case, performance is more difficult to obtain and/or maintain.

Psychological studies show that employee motivation within a company, for the purpose of obtaining high-performance results, contributes to the increase in work efficiency, but the rise in performance is not always directly proportional to the intensity of the motivation. Psychology researchers have come to the conclusion referred to as “the Yerkes - Dodson law”, according to which “the relation between motivation intensity and performance level depends on the complexity of the task to be fulfilled by the individual: in the
According to this law, excessively strong motivation can lead to nervousness, which in turn determines a certain degree of disorganization, thus hindering progress and even leading to a regress. The moment when decline starts depends on the complexity of the task: a difficult task speeds the arrival at the point of inflexion and therefore the decline, while in the case of simple, repetitive, routine tasks, this point is reached at a very late stage or not at all. Thus, the concept of motivational optimum emerges, meaning that degree of motivation intensity that makes it possible to obtain high performance. The motivational optimum can be obtained by working on two variables: on the one hand, getting the individuals used to perceiving the difficulty of a task as accurately as possible (by drawing attention to its importance); on the other hand, manipulating the intensity of the motivation so as to increase or decrease it, depending on the situation. In order to reach the motivational optimum, we must consider a permanent combination of positive extrinsic motivation with the intrinsic motivation, aiming not only at increasing performance, but also at developing the human potential of personal life.

In this context, the employees’ individual psychological features play an important role (nervousness, balance, self-control, etc.), these being elements which can both stimulate and hinder task fulfilment. That every manager wants employees motivated and engaged in the work they perform is a certainty. The question is how managers motivate employees and to get them to engage in activities they perform in order to achieve organizational performance expected from them and at the same time, employees get satisfaction that they want.

2.3. Connection job motivation- job performance- job satisfaction

The issue of job satisfaction and the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance and between job motivation and job performance has been a constant concern for researchers but also for practitioners. There have been, over time, different views on satisfaction and its role in obtaining job performance. During the 1950s, is considered that satisfaction is the direct and immediate cause of the job performance. Today, thanks to the evolution of society and science, it is considered that although satisfaction is related to performance, it is only one of its possible causes.

G. Johns made some comments on this issue that come to clarify this phenomenon: “Job satisfaction refers to a collection of the workers attitudes towards their work,” showing two related concepts: “satisfaction facets” - the tendency of an employee to be more or less satisfied with various facets of his work (the work itself, salary, recognition, working conditions, colleagues, organizational politics, etc.) and “overall satisfaction” - an average or a total attitudes that individuals have toward different facets of their work. [6]

Once accepted that satisfaction has several facets, researchers have questioned their count, making numerous studies in this regard. They have shown that there are between five and twenty facets of job satisfaction and subsequently, their number was limited to five: the work itself, pay, supervision, co-workers, promotion. Determining the relationship between motivation and satisfaction and between satisfaction and performance is still not a complete agreement among experts, given the complexity of the phenomena being studied. Over time, the relationship between motivation and satisfaction was addressed by organizational-managerial psychology from multiple perspectives.

The first belongs to authors considered that only motivation leads to behaviour change, representing the impulse in this respect, while satisfaction no involves such change, it is a subjective state of pleasure. It is thus inferred that only motivation affects work performance, but not the satisfaction. Research has shown a clear link between satisfaction and productive behaviour. Other authors insist on the relationship between motivation and satisfaction, which is presented unilaterally, only from the motivation to satisfaction, which is considered as an effect of motivation. Human relations movement generalize inverse relationship from satisfaction to motivation, considering satisfaction as the direct cause of motivation. Each of the three perspectives emphasizes one aspect of the phenomena analyzed without explaining the interaction between them and without regard to their unit. In the literature of our country, a clear approach to the problem of interaction between motivation and satisfaction is given by Professor Mielu Zlatewitch who shows that [15]:

- The Status of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is an indicator of motivation;
- Motivation and satisfaction appear in a double capacity: cause and effect which means that motivation leads to satisfaction and vice versa;
- Both motivation and satisfaction relate to job performance and they can influence it either positively or negatively; the satisfaction obtained as a result of the participation of individuals in organizational life is not only an individual problem but also one of their organizational repercussions on its; the influence of motivation and satisfaction on job performance is essential for managers to pay particular attention of these elements.

The issue of the relationship between satisfaction and performance is also at least as controversial as the issues discussed above with respect to these phenomena. In connection with this relationship existed in the literature, over time, at least three points of view which held that: a) satisfaction causes performance; b) performance causes satisfaction; c) rewards are involved between satisfaction and performance. The first and second terms have not been confirmed by empirical research, they actually demonstrating that satisfied workers are not more productive than dissatisfied. This led to the hypothesis that the performance when it is
followed by rewards, causes satisfaction. Porter and Lawler showed that satisfaction does not lead to job performance and job performance not lead to satisfaction unless certain conditions are met. [11]

Thus, employees’ performances lead to extrinsic or intrinsic rewards. The rewards themselves do not lead to the emergence of satisfaction, but only if they are perceived as fair in relation to the effort and to the rewards of others. Therefore, the rewards perceived as fair, resulting in drivers of employee satisfaction to make a new effort, to obtain new achievements. The conclusion reached by researchers is that “job satisfaction and job performance are virtually unrelated, a significant relationship only emerges when considering the role of rewards and the circumstances in which they are granted.” [14] We believe that this view is quite real and can be verified by each of us. The implication of this conclusion is very important for the organization management and it is about ensuring a rigorous results assessment and rewards based on fairness, transparency, openness, leading to fair rewards for employees, coupled with the results obtained.

Experts have questioned the type of relationship existing between job satisfaction and job performance. Between the two variables there is a divergent relationship, or a convergent relationship? Thus, there are some researchers who claim that there is a negative, divergent relationship between the two variables, which can be explained as follows: increased productivity (that is, high performance) can be achieved only by increasing human strain over the accepted level for a human being. This means that obtaining performance would result in lower satisfaction. In this respect, increased job satisfaction could be obtained by decreasing productivity and thus, economic profitability.

The research reached the following conclusion: “divergence or convergence of two factors, job satisfaction and job performance, is not a matter of principle, but depends on the methods of work organization, social and psychological conditions in the organization, which means that in some circumstances the two factors are actually divergent while in the others circumstances they are converging.” [15]

Thus, the thesis of divergence between job satisfaction and job performance is valid in exploited labour conditions, conducted in a socio-cultural environment in which the people and the quality of human life have a lower value and in the organizations that use predominantly extrinsic and negative forms of motivation. The thesis of convergence is valid in organizations that promote employees’ participation, cooperation and use complex and varied forms of motivation. Relationship of convergence between job satisfaction and job performance is much higher if the work is complex, involving a high degree of responsibility, unless simple work, repetitive, poorly qualified. The issues presented in this section lead us to conclude that the connection between job motivation, job satisfaction and job performance is not a linear connection or a constant connection and must be interpreted nuanced, depending on the conditions under which it manifests itself. This indicates the importance of work environment in increase both performance and satisfaction, and in terms of management, the need to develop an organizational culture that promotes values, creativity, fairness and justice, aimed to obtain both the organizational performance and employee satisfaction. These conclusions are verified with a survey conducted among trade enterprises in the Romanian Western Region, and on this basis we will try to outline a motivational system adapted to trade specific business.

3. Empirical framework
3.1. Research methodology
Based on theoretical considerations presented above, the objective of this research is, firstly, to illustrate the impact of employees’ motivation level and employees’ satisfaction on their job performance. Secondly, the research highlights the connections between the three variables: job motivation, job satisfaction, job performance. The research was performed among the 52 companies in Romanian Western Region, dealing mostly in trade sector, during the year 2011. We used as the research method the survey (inquiry), and as the research instrument we used the questionnaire. [3]

We obtained answers from 311 employees, all belonging to the executive area. In order to processing data we used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and EXCEL software for Windows.

Based on correlation analysis [12] the research has underlined the existence of statistical relations between job motivation-job performance-job satisfaction.

The main hypotheses of the research are:
H1. Employees’ motivation level connects to employees’ job performance.
H2. Employees’ motivation level connects to employees’ satisfaction level.
H3. Employees’ satisfaction level connects to employees’ job performance.
H4. There is a direct and convergent link, between employee job satisfaction and the performance of the organization in which they work.
H5. Different facets of employees’ satisfaction influence the overall satisfaction level of employees.

3.2. Research results
The questions addressed to employees have been designed to meet the requirements and objectives set out above.

Thus, here are some of the most relevant questions that I have formulated:
Q1. If you have to self-asses, how productive you think you are at your job?

This question, respondents were asked their assessment on the basis of the results obtained (very productive, medium productive, low productivity). Most of respondents, regardless of their company size,
were self-assessed as medium productive (78.5%), while 19% of them being very productive. Only 2.5% of respondents had a bad opinion of them, considering that they are low productive.

Q2. How do you assess the results of the organization where you work: very good results; good results; weak results?

This question aimed to get employees assessment on performance of the organization in which they work. Again, most of respondents – 68.8% - considered organizational results as good, 21.4% of them – very good results and 9.8% of respondents considered organizational results as weak results.

Q3. What is the motivation level that currently characterizes you?

This question attempted to identify the level of employees’ motivation. Regarding this issue, the majority of 68.9% of respondents believe that the level of motivation is low and only 21.5% of them think that is high, which is absolutely unfavourable situation. Average of 2.15 indicates a low level of job motivation for the questioned employees, on a scale from 1 to 4, the value 1 indicates a very low level and value 4 – a very high level of job motivation.

Correlating answers to the question Q1 with answers to the question Q3, we see that respondents with a higher degree of motivation were self-assessed as being more productive.

This means that there is a statistical link between the two variables: motivation level and job performance (Hypothesis no. 1 is confirmed). Correlation coefficient obtained in this case show a significant positive value of 0.583 (for a significance threshold of 0.001), indicating that increased motivation level correlates with increased productivity level.

Q4. What is the satisfaction level that currently characterizes you?

Regarding the satisfaction level of employees, the situation is similar to the motivation level, that is the majority of the respondents are less satisfied (70.3%).

Satisfaction level is influenced by the following variables (in descending order of the correlation coefficient): managers' interest for employees' aspirations and their professional development (0.575); the extent to which employees are consulted about establishing the level of performances that need to be attained (0.537); institutional transparency (0.485); the level of satisfaction about the earned income (0.434), work content (0.425), working conditions (0.419), relation with the hierarchic manager (0.411), hiring system and hierarchical accession system (0.407).

Therefore, we can say that the different facets of employees’ satisfaction influence the overall satisfaction level (Hypothesis no. 5 is confirmed).

Correlating Q3-Q4 answers we see that the higher the motivation level of respondents, the higher the satisfaction level; in this case the value of correlation coefficient is one of the highest identified during our research (0.873). We can say that statistical link between satisfaction level and motivation level is confirmed (Hypothesis no. 2 is confirmed).

Correlating answers to the question Q1 with answers to the question Q4, we can say that respondents with a higher degree of satisfaction were self-assessed as being more productive. This means that there is a statistical link between satisfaction level and job performance (Hypothesis no. 3 is confirmed). Correlation coefficient obtained in this case show also a significant positive value of 0.405, not very higher. This value indicates that increased satisfaction level correlates with increased productivity level, although the employees declared themselves dissatisfied of rewards received.

Correlating Q2-Q4 answers:

In order to analyse the impact of employees’ satisfaction level on the organization results where they work and also to identifying a connection between two variables, we are correlated answers to the question Q2 with answers to the question Q4. Because correlation coefficient value obtained in this case is rather low (0.207) we don't say that there is a statistical link between satisfaction level and organisational performance. (Hypothesis no. 4 is not confirmed). We can say that the theoretical considerations related to this issue are confirmed because the specialists concluded that "job satisfaction and job performance are virtually unrelated, a significant relationship only emerges when considering the role of rewards and the circumstances in which they are granted."

4. Conclusions and discussions

As the results presented above show, four out of five hypotheses are confirmed:

H1. Employees’ motivation level connects to employees’ job performance.
H2. Employees’ motivation level connects to employees’ satisfaction level.
H3. Employees’ satisfaction level connects to employees’ job performance.
H5. Different facets of employees’ satisfaction influence the overall satisfaction level of employees.

The hypothesis H4 that "There is a direct and convergent link, between employee job satisfaction and the performance of the organization in which they work" is not confirmed in our research. Following the analysis and the results obtained we can confirm that the connection between job motivation, job satisfaction and job performance is not a linear connection or a constant connection and must be interpreted nuanced, depending on the conditions under which it manifests itself. The issues related to these variables and to their impact on organizational performance are more complex and require a special attention from managers and their involvement in developing an organizational culture that promotes values, creativity, fairness and justice, aimed to induce both the organizational performance and employee satisfaction. In this respect, taking in to account the low motivation and satisfaction level of employees questioned, I consider that it is necessary to
change motivation strategy of employees in Romanian trade enterprises, in order to increase the weight of the subjective dimension of labour, so that, in addition to paying substantial and fair salaries as a reward for the contribution to the organizational performance, participation should also be stimulated through non-financial means.

In Romanian enterprises, motivation is too often associated (both by the managers and the employees) with a high salary, and too little with non-financial rewards. It is time for the Romanian employers to understand that there are other means, besides financial motivation, that can be used to motivate employees and keep them in the company. As I showed in other studies [7], non-financial motivation is a viable alternative and, at the same time, a complementary alternative to stimulate employees and make them more faithful, more efficient, and better performing. Moreover, for small-sized trade enterprises, whose economic and financial power is rather small, this type of motivation becomes a necessity in the attempt to generate employee loyalty and decrease staff turnover, to increase individual performance and, finally, the competitiveness of the company. There are multiple instruments for non-financial motivation, including: the presence of a set of clear rules and well-defined and realistic individual objectives, the highlighting and rewarding of special merits, the creation and maintaining of a friendly attitude among the employees, based on cooperation and mutual respect, consultation and involvement of the employees in the setting of individual goals and of the means of rewarding results, as well as in the solving of some problems connected with the current activity, the leaders’ interest in the employees’ professional and personal development, the existence of a transparent system of rewards and promotion, etc.

The financial means of motivation, of an extrinsic nature, are efficient especially when one aims at increasing productivity in a short time, but also for a short time. The decrease or removal of these motivational means almost automatically leads to the decrease of productivity. For this reason, obtaining high and lasting performance is done, in the context of the increase in work complexity and degree of professionalism, by creating a motivational complex based primarily on intrinsic motivation, and only secondly on the extrinsic one. This aim involves mentality and attitude changes on the managers’ part, as well as on that of the employees: on the one hand, managers or company owners need to have a long-term broad vision of the company evolution and a clearly shaped managing strategy, in which human resources should be given a central place and role; on the other hand, employees need to adopt the set of norms and values specific to the culture of the company for which they work.

Although the general reward system has an overall influence on the behaviour and performance of employees within a company, one must take into account the individual motivation as well, considering the unique character of the human being, each person’s different wishes, aspirations, and objectives. A very important role in this respect is played by the system of assessment the employees’ professional performance, which needs to be rigorously conceived, transparent, and most of all to allow the differentiated highlighting of individual performance and merits, rather than one standard evaluation for all employees.

The problem connected with the non-individualised motivational system is not characteristic only for trade. The human resource management in Romanian companies is still largely influenced by the old approach, deeply rooted in people’s conscience, but employers are not the only ones promoting such a system; the law sometimes enforces standard evaluations for all employees, without taking into account the personality factor. Employees can only be efficiently motivated by knowing their needs (or rather need hierarchy) and allowing them to satisfy these needs. To this end, the owners or managers of trade companies can resort to different motivational theories, adapted to each employee’s situational context and motivational structure. Given the application of the research methodology and specifically the fact that research has been conducted on a relatively small sample (only 52 trade enterprises agreed to be part of the research), we don’t claim that it is representative for the entire Romanian trade sector, and the findings can not be extrapolated at the macroeconomic level. We believe that this research allowed us immediate proximity to the practical reality, and its results can be a starting point for further national research.

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