

Employee motivation and job satisfaction as a factor in enhancing company competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary business environment, human resources constitute a fundamental source of sustainable competitive advantage. The primary objective of this paper is to examine the interrelationship between employee motivation, job satisfaction, and the organization's competitive performance. The theoretical framework is grounded in both classical and contemporary motivation theories (Maslow, Herzberg, Vroom, Deci & Ryan), as well as in the concept of human resource management as a strategic organizational asset (Barney, Pfeffer). The empirical segment of the research was conducted within the company CIP Kraljevo through a structured employee survey designed to analyze key factors of motivation, job satisfaction, team cohesion, and perceived organizational support. The research findings indicate a high level of satisfaction with working conditions and interpersonal relations, while simultaneously revealing a need to enhance transparency in promotion procedures and reward systems. Overall, the results provide empirical support for the hypothesis that employee motivation and job satisfaction represent significant predictors of organizational effectiveness and long-term competitive advantage.

KEYWORDS

Motivation, Employee satisfaction, Human resources, Competitive advantage, Organizational effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

In conditions of global economic instability and accelerated technological change, the ability of organizations to retain and motivate qualified employees is becoming one of the most important factors of competitiveness. Traditional business models, which viewed employees as a cost or resource with limited capacity, have been replaced by a modern approach in which knowledge, creativity, and employee engagement are key elements of value creation. Employee motivation is no longer just a matter of personal initiative, but also a strategic management challenge. Managers must understand the internal and external factors that influence employee behavior, as well as the ways in which motivation and satisfaction affect organizational performance. In this sense, researching the relationship between motivation, employee satisfaction, and competitive advantage provides insight into how organizations can improve their processes and organizational culture.

The subject of this paper is the analysis of the relationship between employee motivation and satisfaction and organizational competitiveness. The aim is to identify key motivational factors that influence employee satisfaction and to assess their contribution to creating long-term competitive advantage. The theoretical part of the paper relies on classical theories of motivation (Maslow, Herzberg, McClelland, Vroom) and contemporary approaches such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan) and Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham), while the concept of

competitiveness is considered through the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) and the "people as competitive advantage" approach (Pfeffer, 1994). The empirical part of the research was conducted at the company "CIP" Kraljevo and aims to confirm the hypothesis that higher levels of employee motivation and satisfaction correlate with higher levels of organizational efficiency and competitiveness.

2. THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Motivation is an internal driving force that directs an individual's behavior towards achieving certain goals [1]. In the context of organizational behavior, motivation determines the intensity, direction, and duration of the efforts that employees invest in achieving the goals of the company. Deci and Ryan (2000), distinguish between intrinsic motivation (driven by internal satisfaction, self-realization, and learning) and extrinsic motivation (based on rewards, recognition, or avoidance of punishment) [2]. Effective organizations strive to develop both types of motivation, because their combination leads to long-term employee commitment and increases the organization's resilience to staff turnover. Motivation is, therefore, not only a psychological process, but also a strategic instrument of human resource management, which enables the alignment of individual employee goals with the strategic goals of the organization. Numerous studies confirm that high employee motivation increases productivity, innovation and the quality of business decisions [3], [4].

2.1. Classical and contemporary theories of motivation

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) identifies five levels of human needs: physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Employees are motivated to satisfy lower needs before they become more activated. Modern organizations are increasingly paying attention to higher levels of motivation (learning, recognition, self-actualization), because they create more lasting forms of engagement and loyalty.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg (1959) distinguishes between motivational factors (achievement, recognition, advancement) and hygiene factors (salary, working conditions, security). The presence of hygiene factors prevents dissatisfaction, but does not create motivation; true motivation comes from intrinsic factors that give employees a sense of meaning and significance in their work.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Vroom (1964) defines motivation as a function of three elements: expectancy (effort leads to outcome), instrumentality (outcome leads to reward), and valence (the subjective value of the reward). This theory shows that motivation increases when employees clearly understand the relationship between effort, performance, and rewards.

Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham)

Locke and Latham (1990) prove that clearly defined, specific and challenging goals, with adequate feedback, lead to higher levels of performance. Involving employees in the goal-setting process increases their accountability and self-control.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Deci and Ryan (2000) highlight three basic psychological needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness – whose satisfaction leads to a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. When these needs are met, employees become intrinsically engaged, more creative and more committed in the long term.

McClelland's Theory of Needs

McClelland (1961) identifies three dominant motivational drivers: the need for achievement, power, and belonging. Each of these needs has a different impact on employee behavior, which requires an individualized approach to the motivation process.

2.2. Employee satisfaction and organizational performance

Job satisfaction is defined as a positive emotional state resulting from an individual's appraisal of their work experience [5]. Empirical evidence suggests a positive relationship between satisfaction and employee performance [4]. According to the Job Characteristics Model [6], satisfaction stems from five dimensions of work: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Through job redesign and developing a learning culture, organizations can increase employee satisfaction levels, reduce turnover, and strengthen organizational cohesion.

2.3. Human resources as a source of competitive advantage

The competitiveness of modern organizations increasingly depends on human capital as a strategic resource. The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory [7] emphasizes that resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and well-organized are a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

It is highly motivated and satisfied employees who meet these criteria, because their knowledge, experience, and creativity constitute the unique intellectual capital of the organization. Pfeffer (1994) in his concept of "High Performance Work Systems" emphasizes that competitiveness is built through strategic human resource management selection, continuous development, fair remuneration, and active involvement of employees in decision-making [3]. Porter (1985) further emphasizes that the human factor influences all three competitive strategies: cost leadership (efficiency), differentiation (innovation), and focus (specialization) [8]. Job complexity, job autonomy, and feedback are associated with pay levels and the use of performance-based pay, and the effects of pay characteristics on motivation, performance, and well-being may disappear when these characteristics are taken into account [9].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Subject and context of the research

In the modern concept of human resource management, understanding the relationship between employee motivation, their job satisfaction and the overall effectiveness of the organization is one of the central research questions. Motivated and satisfied employees create an organizational culture that encourages innovation, collaboration, and sustainable competitive advantage, while a lack of motivation leads to lower productivity and increased staff turnover. Based on these assumptions, the research is aimed at analyzing the impact of various motivational factors on employee satisfaction and their perception of organizational success. Special attention is paid to identifying internal and external determinants that shape motivational patterns in a specific organizational environment.

The study was conducted at the company "CIP" Kraljevo, which operates in the engineering and design sector, and is characterized by a dynamic work environment and a high degree of technical specialization. Such a context allows for a realistic assessment of the impact of employee motivation and satisfaction on improving organizational performance and the company's competitiveness.

3.2. Research aims and objectives

The overall goal of the research is to examine the relationship between the level of motivation and satisfaction of employees and their perception of the efficiency and competitiveness of the organization. Specific research tasks include:

1. Identification of key motivational factors in the observed organization;
2. Assessment of the level of employee satisfaction with various aspects of the job (working conditions, communication, remuneration, development opportunities);
3. Determining the connection between motivation, satisfaction and perception of organizational effectiveness;
4. Formulating recommendations for improving motivational policy and strategic human resources management.

Research hypotheses

The initial hypothesis is:

H1: A higher level of employee motivation is positively associated with a higher degree of their job satisfaction and perception of the organization's competitiveness.

Three auxiliary hypotheses were derived from it:

H1a: Interpersonal relationships and the quality of communication significantly contribute to employee motivation.

H1b: There is a statistically significant correlation between employee satisfaction with working conditions and their perception of organizational effectiveness.

H1c: Professional development opportunities and the reward system positively influence the sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization.

3.3. Research variables

In accordance with the theoretical framework, the following groups of variables have been defined:

- Independent variables (motivational factors): salary level and fairness of remuneration, advancement opportunities, communication and relations with superiors, autonomy in work, working conditions and technical equipment.

- Dependent variables: employee satisfaction, perception of organizational effectiveness, sense of belonging
- Control variables: age, gender, level of education, length of service and position in the organizational hierarchy.

3.4. Research instrument

The data were collected through an anonymous survey conducted among employees of the company "CIP"Kraljevo. The questionnaire is based on a five-point Likert scale (1 - completely disagree, 5 - completely agree) and consists of three parts: Demographic characteristics (gender, age, experience, education, position), motivation segment (13 items measuring the perception of rewards, support, team spirit and development opportunities), satisfaction segment (10 items assessing working conditions, atmosphere, cooperation and advancement opportunities).The questionnaire was constructed based on validated scales from relevant literature [2], [4], [6] and adapted to the context of the observed organization.

3.5. Research sample

The survey included 70 respondents, representing approximately 80% of the total number of employees in the company. The sample included employees of different age groups, education levels and positions in the organizational structure (executive, middle and senior management). Given the scope and heterogeneity, the sample can be considered representative of the internal organizational population.

3.6. Research procedure and timeframe

The survey was conducted in the period April - May 2024, using an electronic platform (Google Forms). Respondents were informed in a timely manner about the purpose and nature of the research, as well as about the guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of the data. The results were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27, in order to test the hypotheses. The internal reliability of the instrument was checked using the Cronbach α coefficient, which in this study was 0.82, indicating a high level of internal consistency of the measurement scales. The collected data were analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Percent-ages were calculated by response categories and the results were presented graphically using bar and pie charts.

3.7. Research limitations

The research was conducted in a single organization, which may limit the generalizability of the results to the wider population. Also, the use of self-assessment methods (surveys) may contain elements of subjectivity. For future research, it is recommended to include more organizations from different sectors and supplement quantitative findings with qualitative methods interviews, focus groups, and analysis of organizational documentation, which would enable a deeper understanding of the process of employee motivation and satisfaction.

Presentation of research results

The results were processed and presented through a percentage graph, with a separate display, or graph, for each statement. Based on these percentages, a conclusion will be drawn as to how much emphasis is placed on motivating employees through knowledge acquisition, communication, and career advancement at the company "CIP". The distribution of employee responses regarding the general atmosphere in the company is presented in Figure 1.

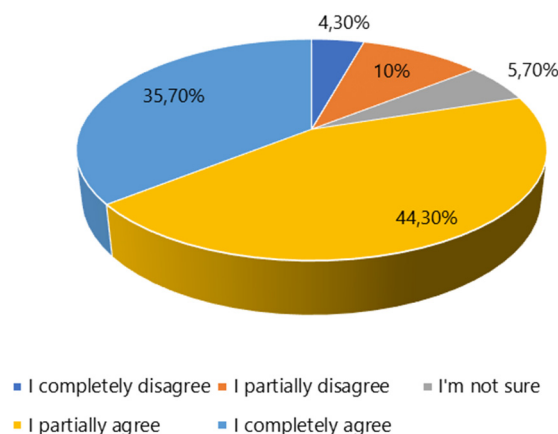


Figure 1: Distribution of employee agreement with the statement on organizational atmosphere

The pie chart indicates that the majority of respondents express a positive perception of the organizational atmosphere, with dominant shares of partial and full agreement. A comparatively small proportion of negative responses suggests that dissatisfaction is limited, while the presence of neutral responses points to potential areas for further improvement.

The largest number of respondents, 44.3%, partially agree with the statement that the atmosphere in the company is good, while immediately behind them, 35.7% (25 votes) of respondents completely agree. Only 4.3% do not agree with this statement at all, 10% (7 votes) partially disagree, while 5.7% (4 votes) of respondents have a neutral position, that is, they are not sure whether they agree or disagree with this statement. This result tells us that a large portion of employees are satisfied with the atmosphere in the company, but that there is room for improvement in this area.

Figure 2 illustrates employee perceptions regarding organizational care: 38.5% completely agree that “The company shows care and interest in all employees,” and an additional 42.9% partially agree. A small minority—4.3%—strongly disagree, while 10.0% partially disagree and 4.3% are undecided. Overall, the data suggest that the company’s efforts to demonstrate concern for its workforce are largely recognized, although some employees may require clearer communication of these initiatives.

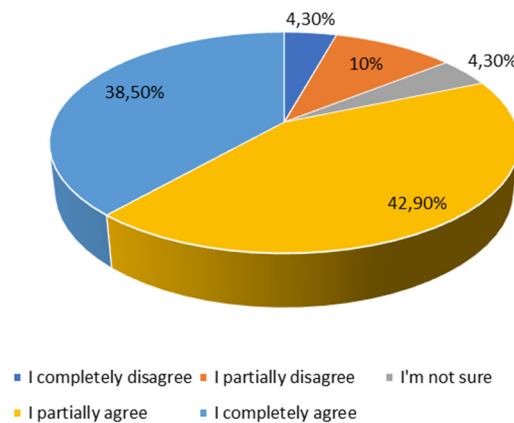


Figure 2: The company shows care and interest in all employees

As shown in Figure 3, employee satisfaction with technical resources is notably high: 60% completely agree that “The company ensures that employees have the necessary equipment for work,” and 21.4% partially agree. Only 4.3% are neutral, 10.0% partially disagree, and 4.3% strongly disagree. This confirms that the organization effectively fulfills basic hygiene factors related to workplace infrastructure.

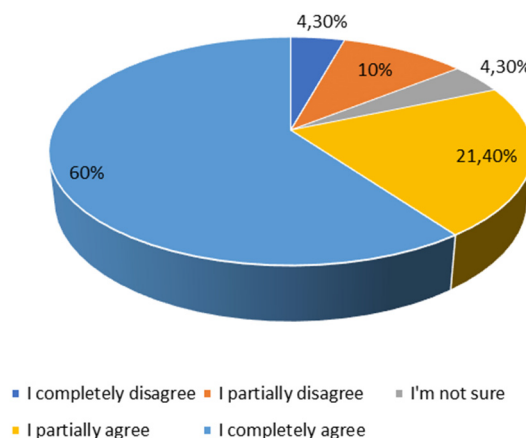


Figure 3: The company ensures that employees have the necessary equipment for work.

Figure 4 presents responses to the statement “The company constantly invests in employee training and education.” Here, 34.3% completely agree and 31.4% partially agree. However, 14.3% remain undecided, 15.7% partially disagree, and 4.3% strongly disagree. While the majority acknowledge the company’s commitment to development, the notable share of uncertain or negative responses suggests inconsistencies in the visibility or accessibility of training programs across departments.

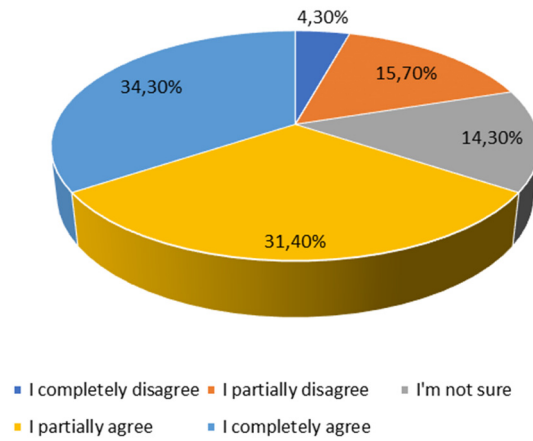


Figure 4: The company constantly invests in employee training and education.

As shown in Figure 5, perceptions of recognition are more divided: 36.2% completely agree that *“The company rewards the work and effort of its employees,”* and 31.9% partially agree. Yet, 11.6% are neutral, 5.8% partially disagree, and a relatively high 14.5% strongly disagree. This indicates a gap in perceived fairness or transparency in the reward system—a potential demotivating factor that warrants managerial attention.

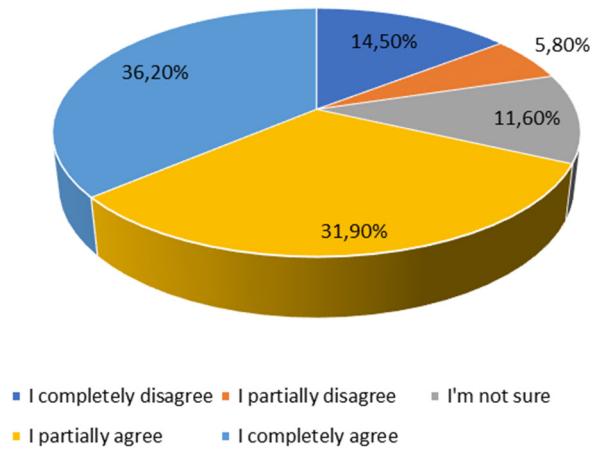


Figure 5: The company rewards the work and effort of its employees

Figure 6 reveals that team spirit is moderately developed: 37.1% partially agree and 34.3% completely agree with the statement *“Team spirit is developed.”* Meanwhile, 12.9% are neutral, 11.4% partially disagree, and 4.3% strongly disagree. The results imply strong cohesion within teams but possible weaknesses in cross-departmental collaboration.

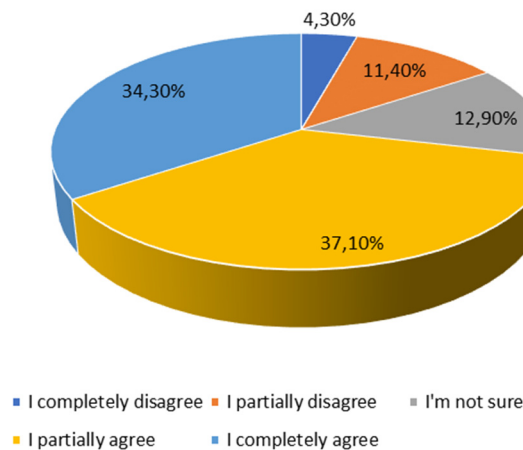


Figure 6: Team spirit is developed

The respondents' complete agreement with the statement is most expressed within this statement, where we have 51.4% (36 votes) who completely agree with this statement, followed by 34.3% (24 votes) who partially agree with this statement. A high level of agreement with this statement indicates a high degree of employee satisfaction with working conditions, which leads to the conclusion that the company is making efforts to provide employees with fair and safe working conditions.

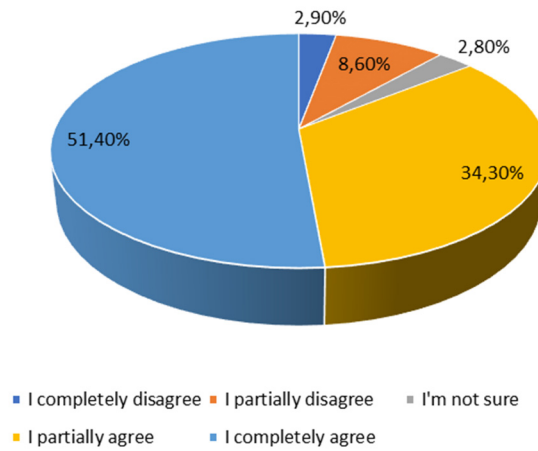


Figure 7. I am satisfied with the working conditions

Figure 8 indicates strong trust in leadership: 47.1% completely agree and 34.3% partially agree that “Cooperation with superiors is extremely correct.” Only 7.1% are neutral, 8.6% partially disagree, and 2.9% strongly disagree. These findings reflect effective vertical communication and managerial approachability.

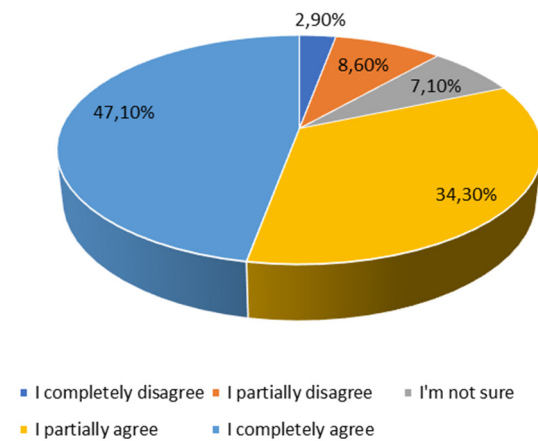


Figure 8: Cooperation with superiors is extremely correct

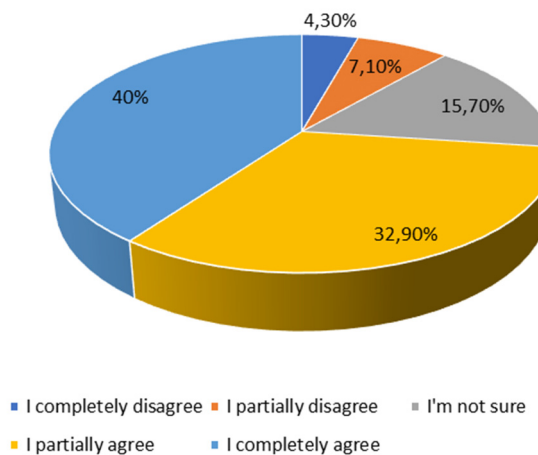


Figure 9: We are constantly working to improve and advance communication within the company

As shown in Figure 9, continuous efforts to improve internal communication are widely acknowledged: 40.0% completely agree and 32.9% partially agree with *“We are constantly working to improve and advance communication within the company.”* A minority - 15.7% - are neutral, 7.1% partially disagree, and 4.3% strongly disagree, suggesting broad alignment with the company’s communication strategy.

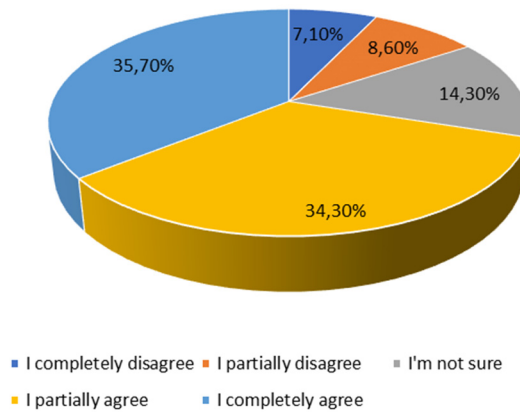


Figure 10: Management strives to ensure that everyone is familiar with the company's strategy

Figure 10 shows mixed awareness of strategic direction: 35.7% completely agree and 34.3% partially agree that *“Management strives to ensure that everyone is familiar with the company's strategy.”* However, 14.3% are neutral, 8.6% partially disagree, and 7.1% strongly disagree. This implies that strategic messaging may not reach all levels of the organization equally.

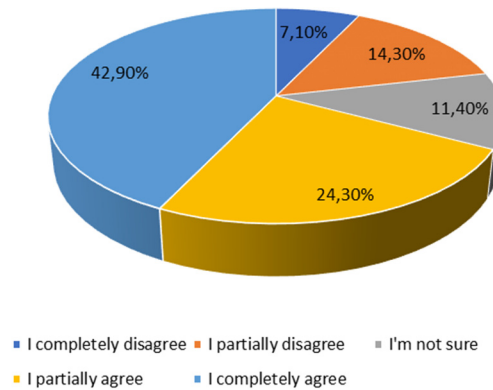


Figure 11: The company provides me with the opportunity to constantly improve and acquire knowledge and skills

As shown in Figure 11, opportunities for professional growth are generally recognized: 42.9% completely agree and 24.3% partially agree with *“The company provides me with the opportunity to constantly improve and acquire knowledge and skills.”* Nevertheless, 11.4% are neutral, 14.3% partially disagree, and 7.1% strongly disagree - highlighting uneven access to or awareness of development pathways.

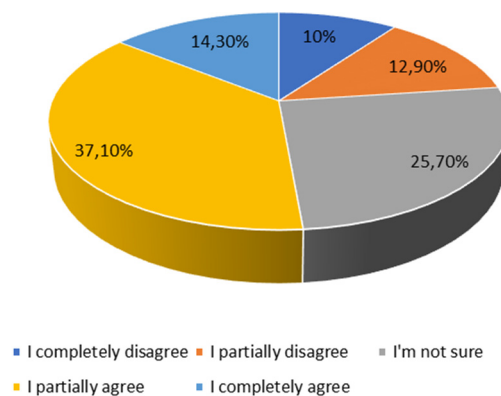


Figure 12. All employees participate in ideas for the company's development

Figure 12 reveals a significant gap in participatory culture: only 14.3% completely agree that *“All employees participate in ideas for the company's development,”* though 37.1% partially agree. A substantial 25.7% are neutral, 12.9% partially disagree, and 10.0% strongly disagree. This suggests that many employees feel excluded from innovation and decision-making processes.

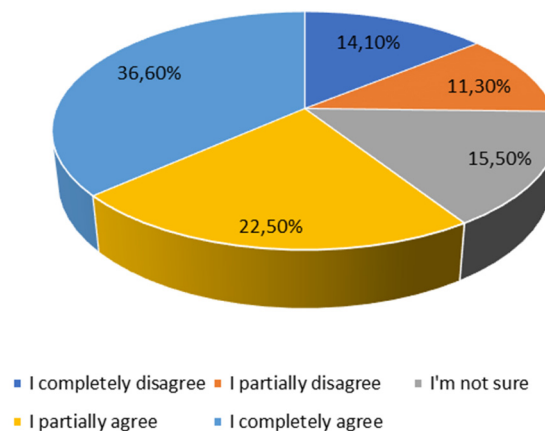


Figure 13: The company provides opportunities for advancement and rewards for employees in accordance with the level of knowledge, skills and commitment

Finally, as shown in Figure 13, perceptions of advancement fairness are ambivalent: 36.6% completely agree and 22.5% partially agree with *“The company provides opportunities for advancement and rewards for employees in accordance with the level of knowledge, skills and commitment.”* However, 15.5% are neutral, 11.3% partially disagree, and 14.1% strongly disagree - the second-highest rate of strong disagreement among all items. This points to a need for greater transparency in promotion criteria and reward allocation.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Communication and feedback enhance intrinsic motivation and improve performance quality. The research encompassed thirteen statements addressing various aspects of employee motivation and satisfaction, including workplace atmosphere and communication, the reward system, team spirit, opportunities for professional development and advancement, as well as the overall perception of the company's relationship with its employees.

The analysis of responses indicates that the majority of participants express a high level of satisfaction in the domains of interpersonal relations and working conditions. More than two-thirds of employees rated the company's atmosphere as good or very good, suggesting the presence of a positive organizational climate and functional communication between employees and management. These findings support the premise of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which posits that hygiene factors (such as working conditions and relationships with colleagues) serve as prerequisites for stability and the prevention of dissatisfaction. In the area of employee care and managerial support, the results show that most respondents believe that the company CIP pays attention to human resource development, provides adequate equipment, and encourages teamwork. However, a notable proportion of employees (approximately 20%) perceive insufficient involvement in decision-making and idea generation processes, indicating a need for greater employee participation in managerial activities. This directly aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes autonomy as a key source of intrinsic motivation.

Regarding the reward and recognition system, the results reveal a moderate level of satisfaction - slightly more than half of the respondents consider their efforts to be adequately valued. At the same time, about one-fifth of employees express reservations or dissatisfaction with this aspect, consistent with Herzberg's conclusion that material rewards alone do not generate long-term motivation, but may influence perceptions of fairness and organizational loyalty.

When it comes to professional development and opportunities for advancement, the findings indicate that employees generally recognize the availability of training and educational programs; however, some respondents lack a clear understanding of the criteria for promotion. This may point to the need for a more transparent career development system and clearer managerial communication with employees.

A particularly significant finding relates to internal organizational communication - over 70% of respondents believe that continuous efforts are being made to improve communication channels. This suggests the existence of a well-developed feedback system and a high level of internal cohesion.

These results correspond with the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which posits that clear.

4.1. Discussion of Results in Relation to the Proposed Hypotheses

H1: A higher level of employee motivation is positively associated with greater job satisfaction and the perception of organizational competitiveness.

The results confirm this hypothesis. Employees who reported a higher degree of satisfaction with working conditions and communication also demonstrated stronger identification with the company's goals. This finding is consistent with the research of Judge et al. (2001), which confirms a strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and work performance.

H1a: Interpersonal relations and the quality of communication significantly contribute to motivation.

This hypothesis is confirmed. A high level of perceived collegiality and managerial support acts as a strong non-material motivator. This supports Herzberg's assertion regarding the importance of "motivators" related to recognition, belonging, and meaningfulness of work.

H1b: There is a correlation between satisfaction with working conditions and the perception of organizational efficiency.

This hypothesis is also supported by the obtained data. Employees who have a positive attitude toward physical and technical working conditions simultaneously express greater trust in management and a more favorable assessment of organizational efficiency. This finding aligns with the Resource-Based View theory (Barney, 1991), which treats the organizational environment and human capital as inimitable strategic resources.

H1c: Opportunities for development and the reward system positively influence the sense of belonging and loyalty.

This hypothesis is partially confirmed. Although most employees acknowledge the company's efforts in human resource development, a portion of respondents do not perceive a clear connection between personal advancement and the reward system. This suggests a need for a clearer talent management strategy and an improved internal recognition system, which is consistent with Pfeffer's (1994) recommendations on the development of High-Performance Work Systems.

4.2. Key interpretations and implications

The research results indicate that a positive organizational climate has been built in the company "CIP", based on cooperation, mutual respect and support. However, parts of the system related to rewarding and employee participation in decision-making show room for improvement. From the perspective of the theoretical research model, the following can be concluded:

- motivation acts as an initiator,
- satisfaction as a mediating factor,
- and organizational competitiveness as the final outcome.

This finding confirms the concept of the Motivation–Satisfaction–Performance–Competitiveness model, according to which employee satisfaction has a mediating role in achieving competitive advantage.

The practical implication for management is the need to develop an integrated motivation policy that combines: transparent reward system, professional development programs, regular communication meetings and feedback, as well as a recognition system for innovations and collective successes. In this way, the organization can transform employee motivation into a stable source of human capital as a competitive advantage.

5. CONCLUSION

In conditions of intense market competition and technological change, organizations increasingly recognize that sustainable competitive advantage is based on the knowledge, motivation, and satisfaction of employees. The results of the research conducted at the company "CIP" Kraljevo confirm that motivation and satisfaction are key drivers of organizational efficiency and the basis for creating long-term competitiveness. Research has shown that the most significant motivational factors are those related to interpersonal relationships, communication, development opportunities, and recognition of achievements. Employees who feel supported, trusted, and treated fairly show higher levels of engagement, which confirms the theoretical assumptions of Herzberg, Deci & Ryan, and Pfeffer. Conversely, insufficient transparency in the reward and promotion system can reduce the sense of fairness and act as a demotivator, which indicates the need for a clearer human resources management policy. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to deepening the understanding of the relationship between motivation, satisfaction and competitiveness in the context of domestic organizations, confirming that human resources are not only a factor of production but also a key strategic capital of every company. Future research should expand to more organizations and

different sectors, as well as combine quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of motivational mechanisms in real-world work environments.

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