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PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES' MOTIVATION: CAUSES AND EFFECTS

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the causes and effects of public sector employees' motivation. A qualitative interview is performed among Lebanese managers and employees working in public organizations to understand their standpoints in relation to the key dimensions which could affect work motivation and how these dimensions could affect their work effectiveness and involvement. In view of the above, this research identifies the dimensions that most affect motivation at work and highlights the related consequences. Results show that there is a strong support for pay and working conditions as predictors of public sector employees' motivation, work effectiveness and involvement. Finally, guidelines and recommendations for implementing research findings are provided.

Keywords

Public Sector, Motivation, Public Sector Motivation Framework, Lebanon

1. Introduction

One of the most essential elements of everyday life is work. How employees feel, consider and perceive their work is identified as work motivation. Many scholars and researchers (Friesen, 1987) pointed a range of dimensions supposed to have an impact on employee motivations and work effectiveness in the workplace. These dimensions are of a great interest for human resource managers (HRM) as being crucial for employment satisfaction and retention (Hsu & Chen, 2012). Motivation and work effectiveness are some of the attitudes that primarily affect the HRM performance. Pay, work circumstances, feedback from job, decision making, and work community relationships directly influence the level of work motivation (Hackman and Oldham, 1976, 1980; Zeytinoglu & Denton, 2005). Furthermore, work motivation increases the level of employment retention (Serhan et. al., 2016; Serhan & Tsangari, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017) and decreases the cost of new employments. Various determinants have been identified to understand work motivation such as labor market conditions, labor unions and work geographical location (ibid.).

In light of the above, this research seeks to investigate the dimensions that have the most impact on the motivation of employees working in the public sector of Lebanon. This study is unique and significant and this significance can be clearly explained by the fact that there are no Lebanese researchers who have formerly argued this topic despite the big necessity to determine the harmful consequences of the poor circumstances at work and to investigate the most likely impact of various negative work dimensions such as little disbursements, complicated work progress chances and complex and inequitable compensation methods and others on the effectiveness of organizations and mainly public ones (Chevallier, 1991; Crozier, 1987(a, b); Dagemais, 2005; Dagher, 2010; Dizgah et.al., 2012, Mercier, 2000). Taking into consideration this gap and due to the significance of the research topic, this study contributes to practice knowledge by offering suggestions aiming to increase public sector motivation and work effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

In this context, an overview of the extant theories associated with work motivation and the existing literature concerning the dimensions affecting employees' motivation and work effectiveness in addition to an explanation of the performance of the Lebanese public organizations were investigated. Related theories were mainly: "the need based theories" (Aldefe, 1969; McClelland, 1975) which focused on employees' needs as basics determinants of motivation; "the cognitive process based theories" (Locke, 1968); "the behavioral theories" and "the job matching theories" (Holland, 1973, 1997).

As per the aforementioned theories, key work dimensions affecting employees' motivation were extracted and the relations between these dimensions and motivation and work effectiveness were investigated. Research studies (Tourani & Rast 2012; Zakaria, 2012; Zeytinoglu & Denton, 2005) in relation to motivation stressed the significance of differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Besides, motivation and work effectiveness are two personal/work outcomes that affect employees' decision to stay at work (Serhan et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, various contradictions in literature were noticed. While most research studies considered organizational dimensions, only few stressed the impact of labor market conditions on internal work motivation (Reich et al., 1973, Serhan & Haritini, 2017). Indeed, labor unions which protect employees' right and geographical location of the work as well as others were deemed to affect employees' motivation.

3. Data and Methods

This research study followed the qualitative research technique. Interviews were conducted with Lebanese participants who work at Lebanon and more particularly in the public sector. Five participants (two managers and three workers) were chosen based on their professionalism in the subject of study and their willingness to discuss freely. Then themes and subthemes were extracted and analyzed. Data analysis followed the template analysis technique and used NVivo software.

4. Results

Analyses from the empirical findings enabled to assess the impact of various work dimensions on the motivation of workers. Certainly, managers and workers were able to perceive the importance of pay as a major determinant of employee motivation in addition to various

dimensions being work and non work dimensions such as social relationships at work and outside and work circumstances mainly work environment. Equitable pay laws and good work circumstances are essential to higher employee motivation and work effectiveness. Besides, progress opportunities, decision making, and community relationships at work and outside work have an effect as well.

Furthermore, research findings allowed the identification of some other dimensions that were considered by workers as dimensions having an impact on motivation but were not given the same importance by managers. These dimensions are the labor market conditions such as geographical location of the work, unionization in addition to the type of the job (formal or informal, private or public, etc.).

More particularly, managers emphasized the importance of supporting employees through listening to their needs and allowing easy communication possibilities in addition to offering clear job designs where tasks and missions are clearly stated and pay is equitable. Workers stressed the significance of equitable pay as the most important determinant of work motivation at the public sector as well as work conditions, the geographical location of the work, unionization and the type of the work.

In addition, managers and workers agreed that social relationships at work are essential in creating a friendly environment and allowing easier communication.

5. Knowledge Contributions and Recommendations

This research analyses added to knowledge by suggesting various recommendations aiming to increase workers' motivation and work effectiveness at the public sector organizations. These recommendations concern various practitioners being mainly (1) the legal authorities of Lebanon and (2) the managers at the public sector organizations. More particularly, legal authorities are asked to update the extant laws and to enforce the laws' application and mainly the labor laws. Besides, managers are asked to work on creating a healthy environment at work in addition to provide positive dimensions that affect the motivation of workers, and as already stated, these dimensions increase the public organizations' work effectiveness. Suggested recommendations can be: 1) Setting up a self-regulating institute which is able to protect the workers' rights at work; 2) Hiring workers at the right work positions; 3) Raising pay; 4) Adopting well-built job designs; and finally 5) Working on ensuring sufficient funds for the developing public sector organizations.

6. Conclusion

This research identified the work dimensions that predict motivation at work. An investigation of the extant theories and literature related to employee motivation in addition to an examination of the public organizations' performance were investigated. Afterwards, interviews were carried out. Data analysis of findings collected from interviewees enabled to compare the research outcomes. Some research limitations were detected such as time limit and shortage of available research funds. Besides, suggestions for future research were scoped such as carrying interviews with participants from other countries so as to verify the validity and generalizability of the findings.

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