Analysis of the motivation of agricultural workers in Bulgaria and Hungary

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Abstract

Karacsony, P. & Vinichenko, M. V. (2021). Analysis of the motivation of agricultural workers in Bulgaria and Hungary. *Bulg. J. Agric. Sci., 27 (3)*, 479–486

Every organization wants to be successful and have desire to get constant progress.

Motivation is one of the most important factors that can help us achieve organizational goals. Human motivation can be seen as a never-ending process due to the uncertainties of the business environment. The main aim of this study is to examine and introduce the motivational characteristics, problems, and opportunities of Bulgarian and Hungarian agricultural organizations based on our own research. The research was conducted by using a quantitative method by means of a questionnaire survey as the main source of getting the primary data. Although our research does not allow conclusions to be drawn across for the whole agricultural sector, it can be generally concluded that salaries and working conditions have a strong motivational effect on agricultural workers in both countries. Furthermore, the study also showed that the majority of employees satisfied with job security and their work. For the first time, a comparative analysis of the motivation of agricultural workers in Bulgaria and Hungary was carried out, which allows a more systematic look at the problem of motivation in agriculture.

Keywords: agriculture; Bulgaria; employee motivation; job satisfaction; Hungary; working conditions

Introduction

The 1990s brought transformations in the agricultural economy of the countries of Central Europe, this was the result of the passage from the centrally managed economy to the market economy (Aslund, 1994). The transformations of agriculture had a very different character in individual countries. However, in the case of two East European countries, Hungary and Bulgaria, we are talking about the role of agriculture in similar size and importance in the national economy. These two countries historically considered agricultural countries. In the decades since the change of regime, in many scientific works researched agriculture, but there is a lack of research on the motivation of agricultural workers.

This study aims to provide an insight into the motivation and job satisfaction of agricultural workers in both countries.

Motivation is defined as the process which mobilizes, directs and supports an individual's effort towards a specific goal (Robbins & Judge, 2008). Karacsony (2017) explained motivation as the willingness of an individual to do something and conditioned by actions to satisfy needs. Motivation can be influenced by the level of cooperation of different groups too (Baranyai et al., 2012).

It is widely accepted that motivation is primarily two-dimensional, referring to intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is related to 'psychological' rewards such as the opportunity to use one's ability, a sense of challenge and achievement, positive recognition and being treated in a

considerate manner. Extrinsic motivation is related to touchable rewards such as salary, security, promotion, contract of service, the work environment and conditions of work. The motivation can be separated into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Gkorezis & Kastritsi, 2017).

According to Robescu & Iancu (2016) managers during the decision making are constantly searching for ways to create a motivational environment where employees work at their optimal levels to accomplish company objectives.

Motivation is extremely important for job performance; without the motivation the workers would not do their job properly. These motivational factors include financial benefits, recognition, personal growth, results, work itself, work conditions, promotion, etc. The Presence of motivational tools generates positive emotions and increases employee satisfaction (Karacsony, 2019). Effective motivation in a crisis, a change in the organizational structure, and grading of an organization are especially important.

Nowadays, agricultural businesses are facing a shortage of labour, so it is very important to study at the job satisfaction and motivation of employees in this segment of labour market. Since the change of regime, agricultural employment has been a less researched segment, there is little information available about the motivations, attitudes, and job satisfaction of agricultural workers. The most research on agricultural employment deal with the aging of the sector and the situation of the women (Zagata & Sutherland, 2015; Moshchenko et al., 2018; Urbancová, 2019). Based on the described above, our research is considered as a new approach to the topic.

Literature Background

Motivation research has a long history of considering employee motives and needs (Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1988; Alderfer, 1969). While need theories concentrate on the emotional aspects of motivation, process theories of motivation emphasize the role of cognitive processes (Cullen, 1997).

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs is known as the most prominent theory of motivation. Maslow found that all human beings have five levels of needs to be satisfied. These needs consist of physiological, safety, love and belongings, esteem, and self-actualization. When each of these needs is fulfilled, the next need will become the most dominant and be of great importance (Suyono & Mudjanarko, 2017).

Theory X and Theory Y were proposed by Douglas McGregor who explains two fundamental approaches about the nature of human being. In theory X, it is assumed that employees do not like working and therefore are not hard

working. Employees are considered as dynamic, tireless and creative creatures in theory Y which can take responsibilities and are able to manage themselves (McGregor, 1956).

Herzberg's two-factor theory says that people have two kinds of needs and those different elements of the work situation satisfy or make those needs dissatisfied. The first element concerns the basic survival needs of the person – hygiene factors. These factors are not directly related to the work itself, but relate to the circumstances associated with the performance of that work. Factors in corporate policy are the reward system, pay, and interpersonal relationships (Pegler, 2012). According to Pegler, these factors can cause dissatisfaction when not satisfied. When these factors are satisfied, they do not motivate or cause satisfaction, they only prevent dissatisfaction.

The second group of needs is growth needs, which relate to factors inherent in the work itself, such as recognition of the task performed, achievement, responsibility, progress, and the work itself. These factors, according to Herzberg, are motivating factors that suggest that people try to get everything they can (Herzberg, 1971). According to Herzberg, content of work, (e.g. opportunities for responsibility and advancement) is the only way to increase satisfaction and thereby enhance work motivation (Juariyah & Saktian, 2018).

Achievement-Motivation Theory was developed by Atkinson, McClelland and Veroff and focuses on aspects of personality characteristics and proposes three forms of motivation or needs in work situations (McGee, 2006). The three forms of motivation of the Achievement-Motivation Theory are achievement, power, and affiliation. The Achievement-Motivation Theory's central idea deals with the managerial success and motivation of a person. In his works McClelland highlighted that human actions are influenced and controlled by subconscious motives (Al-Akeel & Jahangir, 2020).

Vroom's theory of expectancy (1994) is based on the concept that individuals only strive to make an effort, if this has results that are favorable to them and yields the expected rewards.

Skinner (1991) believed that if we are familiar with what behavior of a given individual resulted in his/her rewarding or punishment we will be able to fully understand the behavior of the given individual. He believed that the general theory that explains behavior is that of affirmation. The basic concept behind his theory is that the consequences of past actions have an impact on the probability of the occurrence of future actions.

The path-goal theory states that modern organizations cannot be successful without objectives and personal and organizational objectives need to be reconciled (Aarts, 2019).

The equity theory, postulates that individuals make generalized calculations about their relative contributions and rewards extrapolated from their employment (Christensen, 2014).

The Main Characteristics of Hungarian and Bulgarian Agriculture

The agriculture of exampled countries has been subject over 50 years to similar social and economic processes. In both of the examined countries, the significance of crop production is confirmed by a relatively high share of arable land in the structure of agricultural land (Kovacs, 2003). This is largely due to the advantageous agro-ecological conditions, allowing for the cultivation of many species of crops. Animal production has a relatively lower significance than in the countries of other parts of Europe. This is demonstrated by the low numbers of animals bred (Table 1). Another characteristic of the chosen countries agriculture is the relatively high share of employment in this sector after the change regime (Maddock & Hristova, 1993; Marinov, 2019). This confirms the importance of agriculture in the national economies of both countries.

Materials and Methods

The principal objective of our study was to identify the level of employees' motivation and job satisfaction in Hungarian and Bulgarian agricultural companies. It is crucial for managers to provide a motivating environment and identifying factors that motivate employees.

The data collection was realized between 2018 and 2020 by the method of questioning, in personally and electronically. The questions were developed in order to provide information regarding: the type of motivation in evaluated agricultural organization used, worker satisfaction with the offered benefits and their requests.

Participants of the research were Hungarian and Bulgarian agricultural workers. Each country was represented by a local partner, mostly former students of Széchenyi István

University, each partner was responsible for the data collection in that country. The procedure for sampling and data collection was the same in both countries. In the course of the study, we evaluated a total of 837 agricultural employees, 449 Hungarian and 388 Bulgarian ones, every respondent was from different agricultural enterprises. We used structured questionnaires that have been tested for reliability. The variables used have the Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient above 0.6, it means all the variables in this study is reliable. The questionnaire was designed to include a Likert-type with a 5-point scale. Beginning of our research the following hypothesis was set:

H1. There is a significant relationship between motivational factors and job satisfaction.

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics including multiple regression analysis. Multiple linear regressions are the method of statistics in regression that used to analyze the relationship between single response variable (dependent variable) with two or more controlled variables (independent variables).
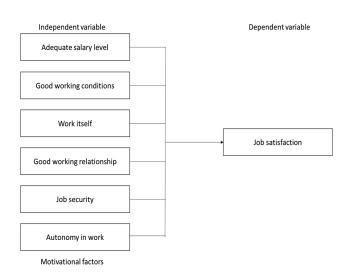
The data of Table 2 shows the main demographic characteristics of the respondents, in the case of Bulgaria 94.59% of respondents were male and 5.41% were female, while in the case of Hungary 92.87% were male and 7.13% were female. We can state that in agriculture work is mostly masculine. The few female workers are working in the administration part of the agricultural business. In terms of age, middle (36-50 years old) and old age (50+ years old) were the majority of the respondents, 55.93% of Bulgarian respondents declared themselves to be between 36 and 50 years, while 52.56% of Hungarian respondents were in the same age group. The age group with the smallest representation in the sample (Bulgaria, 10.05%, Hungary, 10.475%) was the group between 18 and 24 years of age. If we take a look at the educational background of the respondents, most of them, just have finished their primary school education (Bulgaria, 44.85%, Hungary, 45.43%). Those who finished university make up below 25% of the respondents and are mainly from the leader groups. It was found that 43.03% of the Bulgarian employees had more than 10 years of work ex-

Table 1. The main characteristics of Hungarian and Bulgarian agriculture

	Farm – number	Utilised agricultural area – hectare	Farms with livestock – number	Farms with livestock – live stock unit	Standard output – euro
Bulgaria	202 720	4 468 500	134 970	1 094 240	3 842 891 030
Hungary	430 000	4 670 560	261 540	2 444 890	6 532 474 660
	Total worker	Farm labour force	Sole holder directly employed by the farm	Members of sole holders' family	Non-family farm labour force
Bulgaria	255 520	243 920	106 790	78 030	59 100
Hungary	394 410	357 230	171 970	88 700	96 560

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Respondents' Characteristics (N = 837)		Bulgaria		Hungary	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	21	5.41	32	7.13
	Male	367	94.59	417	92.87
Age	18-24	39	10.05	47	10.47
	25-35	85	21.91	92	20.49
	36-50	217	55.93	236	52.56
	51-65	47	12.11	74	16.48
Educational attainment	Primary school	174	44.85	204	45.43
	High school	124	31.96	131	29.18
	Bachelor's degree	61	15.72	86	19.15
	Master's degree	29	7.47	28	6.24
Employment status	Full-time	278	71.65	337	75.06
	Part-time	86	22.16	94	20.94
	Part time (less than 50% of full-time hours	24	6.19	18	4.01
Work experience	Less than 1 year	27	6.96	52	11.58
	1-5 years	76	19.59	117	26.06
	6-10 years	118	30.41	123	27.39
	More than 10 years	167	43.04	157	34.97

Fig. 1. A research model for the relationship between motivational factors and job satisfaction
Source: Own editing, 2020

perience, while between Hungarian respondents this number was 34.97%.

To evaluate the research hypothesis is essential to conduct a study on motivation and job satisfaction of the agricultural employees. The review of related literature on motivation and job satisfaction has helped us to identify the direction of the current research study (Figure 1).

Results and Discussion

When motivating employees, there are two main ways: financial motivation and non-financial motivation. When speaking about financial motivators, it means that the employee receives some kind of monetary reward. Financial methods are short-term motivators to employees and are forgotten about later in the employee's careers. Non-financial method does take more time on the manager, but it has longer lasting effects (Hokroh, 2014).

In order to measure the factors with the highest impact on worker's motivation, it was used a semantic differential rating scale with a 5 points Likert-type scale format, ranging from 'very important' to 'not at all important' was used for all factors. The data in Table 3 shows the ranking of the motivational techniques adopted by the evaluated agricultural enterprises. The mean score for employee motivation is average 4, this value indicating that the employees in examined agricultural enterprises are motivated. The majority of employees choose a good working relationship as their best source of motivation (Bulgaria, 4.44, Hungary, 4.39) as a mean value. In Bulgaria, the second preferred motivational factor was work itself (4.34), while in Hungary it was a good working condition (4.29). Our results have also proof previous researches (Isoraité, 2013; Dwibedi, 2018; Dhanabhakyam & Umadevi, 2012), which has concluded that one of the most important employee motivational tools is working relationship. In the case of Bulgaria, these fol-

lowed by good working conditions (4.31) and autonomy in work (4.06), while in the case of Hungary the 3rd and 4th most preferred motivational tools were adequate salary level (4.16) and work itself (4.12). According to respondents, in both countries, the lowest mean as motivational tools got job security (Bulgaria, 3.84, Hungary, 3.61). In our opinion, job security is the least important motivational factors among our respondents, due to the examined employees, are not afraid of losing their job due to there is a lack of workers in this sector.

The result of multiple regression analysis in the case of Bulgaria is shown in Table 4.

In Table 4 the R-square value is 0.214 which means 21.4% of variation in job satisfaction is accounted by variation in the motivational factors.

The data in Table 5 show the correlation between motivational factors and job satisfaction in the case of Bulgarian agricultural workers. The results show that there is a significant relationship between work itself and job satisfaction (B

= 0.285, p < 0.05) and between a good working relationship and job satisfaction (B = 0.197, p < 0.05). Based on these, it can be clearly stated that elder agricultural employees have been doing this profession also for the pleasure of work. Our research has also shown that it is difficult to involve young people in this sector, unfortunately for them, agricultural work is not motivating, and they are only willing to do it temporarily. Our results are confirmed by the similar results published previously by Galan (2017) and Urbancová & Hlavsa (2014). Measures of social support and social control are necessary to create favorable working conditions for youth (Nikiporets-Takigawa, 2018; Vinichenko, 2017).

Table 6 shows the results of the Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis. The results of the model show that work itself is the most significant predictor of job satisfaction contributing to 15.4% of job satisfaction, these are followed by the good working relationship which contributes a further 4.1% to job satisfaction, and by the autonomy of work which contributes a further 1.2 %, together with work itself, good

Table 3. The ranking of motivating factors in examined agricultural enterprises

	Bulgaria	Mean	Hungary	Mean
Rank	Motivational techniques		Motivational techniques	
1	Good working relationship	4.44	Good working relationship	4.39
2	Work itself	4.34	Good working conditions	4.29
3	Good working conditions	4.31	Adequate salary level	4.16
4	Autonomy in work	4.06	Work itself	4.12
5	Adequate salary level	3.84	Autonomy in work	3.78
6	Job security	3.74	Job security	3.61
Total mean		4.12		4.05

Table 4. Multiple regression of analysis with motivational factors as predictors of job satisfaction (Bulgaria)

Model Summary[b]										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.463[a]	.214	.202	1.658	.214	17.334	6	381	.000	1.764

a. Predictors: (Constant), Adequate salary level, Good working conditions, Work itself, Good working relationship, Job security, Autonomy in work

Table 5. Relationship between predictor variable and job satisfaction (Bulgaria)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.685	.593		2.839	.005
Work itself	.285	.043	.322	6.573	.000
Good working conditions	.060	.048	.061	1.261	.208
Autonomy in work	.075	.042	.089	1.783	.075
Job security	.018	.093	.009	.189	.850
Good working relationship	.197	.047	.196	4.165	.000
Adequate salary level	-.098	.077	-.061	-1.270	.205

a. Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction

working relationship and autonomy of work contributes a total of 20.7% to job satisfaction.

In the case of Hungary, we also performed a multiple regression analysis to survey which motivational factors play a role in job satisfaction (Table 7).

In Table 7 the R-square value is 0.286 which means 28.6% of the variation in job satisfaction is accounted for by variation in the motivational factors, namely: adequate salary level, good working conditions, and good working relationship, work itself, the autonomy of work and job security.

Table 8 shows the correlation between motivational factors and job satisfaction in the case of Hungarian agricultural workers. The results show that there is a significant relationship between a good working relationship and job satisfaction (B = 0.409, p < 0.05), between good working conditions

and job satisfaction (B = 0.176, p < 0.05) and between work itself and job satisfaction (B = 0.113, p < 0.05). Based on these, among Hungarian agricultural workers, we identified the three most important motivational factors (good working relationship, good working conditions and work itself). In our opinion, the working environment has a positive impact on the job satisfaction of agricultural employees. The bad working environment has a negative impact on employees' motivation, so it is necessary that agricultural enterprises realize the importance of a good working environment. Our results are confirmed by the similar results published previously by Qarri & Fejza, 2018; Baah &Amoako, 2011.

Table 9 shows the results of the Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis. The results of the model show that good working relationship is the most significant predictor of job

Table 6. Model summary of stepwise method (Bulgaria)

Model Summary[d]										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.392[a]	.154	.152	1.709	.154	70.173	1	386	.000	
2	.441[b]	.195	.191	1.670	.041	19.629	1	385	.000	
3	.455[c]	.207	.201	1.659	.012	5.864	1	384	.016	1.773

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work itself,
b. Predictors: (Constant), Work itself, Good working relationship
c. Predictors: (Constant), Work itself, Good working relationship, Autonomy in work

Table 7. Multiple regression of analysis with motivational factors as predictors of job satisfaction (Hungary)

Model Summary[b]										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.535[a]	.286	.276	1.622	.286	29.481	6	442	.000	2.036

a. Predictors: (Constant), Adequate salary level, Good working conditions, Good working relationship, Work itself, Autonomy in work, Job security
b. Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction

Table 8. Relationship between predictor variable and job satisfaction (Hungary)

Coefficients[a]					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.097	.317		3.463	.001
	Good working relationship	.409	.050	.391	8.193	.000
	Good working conditions	.176	.040	.205	4.431	.000
	Job security	-.034	.049	-.039	-.700	.484
	Work itself	.113	.045	.132	2.517	.012
	Autonomy in work	.060	.041	.068	1.440	.151
	Adequate salary level	-.025	.046	-.025	-.547	.584

a. Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction

Table 9. Model summary of stepwise method (Hungary)

Model Summary[d]										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.451[a]	.204	.202	1.703	.204	114.364	1	447	.000	
2	.522[b]	.272	.269	1.630	.068	41.846	1	446	.000	
3	.531[c]	.282	.277	1.621	.010	6.169	1	445	.013	2.029

a. Predictors: (Constant), Good working relationship
b. Predictors: (Constant), Good working relationship, Good working conditions
c. Predictors: (Constant), Good working relationship, Good working conditions, Work itself
d. Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction

satisfaction contributing to 20.2% of job satisfaction, these are followed by the good working conditions which contributes a further 6.7% to job satisfaction, and by the work itself which contributes a further 0.8 %, together with work itself, good working relationship and autonomy of work contributes a total of 27.7% to job satisfaction.

According to the results presented above, we accept our hypothesis, that the motivational factors influence the job satisfaction of agricultural enterprise workers.

Conclusion

In our study, we undertook to investigate a less researched segment of agriculture. We are convinced that agricultural workers will soon receive more and more attention. The number of people working in agriculture is decreasing and the sector is becoming less attractive for young people, so retaining those who work in it will be a key issue. The study findings show that the agricultural workers in Bulgaria and Hungary are relatively older age, and they have mostly more than 10 years of working experience.

In the case of the examined countries, we can see similarities in the motivation of agricultural workers. We concluded that salaries and working conditions have a strong motivational effect on agricultural workers in both countries. Furthermore, three motivation factors that are working relationship, working conditions and work itself were found to be significant predictors of job satisfaction.

In order to be successful in agriculture, in the long run, we need to pay attention to the people who work in it. Managers' basic task has to be keeping their employees motivated. Its importance is growing significantly in the face of a decline in older workers and retirees after the pandemic.

It is certainly worthwhile for managers to pay more attention to the needs of their employees, or it will be very difficult to replace older workers who retire from agricultural work. This will be especially true after the pandemic. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that increasing motivation in the workplace can help the retention of workers in the agricultural sector in the long term.

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