

Article

Managing Employee Motivation in Slovak Universities from the Perspectives of Time and Age

Milos Hitka ¹, Lenka Lizbetinova ², Jana Javorcikova ³, Silvia Lorincova ^{1,*} and Katarina Vanderkova ⁴

¹ Department of Economics, Management and Business, Faculty of Wood Sciences and Technology, Technical University in Zvolen, 960 01 Zvolen, Slovakia; hitka@tuzvo.sk

² Faculty of Corporate Strategy, The Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic; lizbetinova@mail.vstecb.cz

³ Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia; jana.javorcikova@umb.sk

⁴ Department of Track and Field, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Comenius University in Bratislava, 811 08 Bratislava, Slovakia; katarina.vanderkova@uniba.sk

* Correspondence: silvia.lorincova@tuzvo.sk

Abstract: Human resources refer to a special and unique field as they are the most valuable but also the most costly factor of production. The aim of the research is to analyze the level of motivation of university teachers in Slovakia in terms of time and age, and to define the motivational needs of university teachers. The method of sociological questioning is used. The collected data from 2016 university teachers from Slovak technical universities are analyzed using the Tukey HSD test. Based on the research results, it can be stated that university teachers are the most motivated by relational and financial motivational factors. There is a significant change in the level of average importance of motivational factors across time (years), but there is no change in their structure. In terms of the age factor, significant differences over time are identified. Finally, Slovak teachers display the need for a more respected social status and a better image of their profession. The research findings will help university managers in raising the level of teachers' motivation and in designing motivation programs.

Keywords: teacher motivation; motivation over time; motivation in terms of age; college teachers; Tukey HSD test



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1. Introduction

The 21st century is characterized by an immense pace of change, constantly increasing demands and expectations, which require a rapid pace of transformation and constant innovation in various fields. In this context, many businesses have come to understand that, along with “hard” economic indicators, “soft” ones need to be monitored and evaluated, as the quality of human resources is one of the most important pillars of business. Unfortunately, relatively little attention is paid to the issue of human resource management in public institutions and educational institutions in Slovakia, despite the fact that teachers ensure development in the whole of society. One of the main reasons why the field of human resource management in education remains in the background is, in particular, due to the frequent financial problems that the education sector in Slovakia has to deal with. Despite this fact, universities, just like other businesses, must strive to survive in today's dynamically changing environment. In doing so, it is crucial to implement human resource management into the processes, as human resources represent the most critical production factor that significantly affects the overall success of an enterprise. From the strategic perspective, human resource management should be based on employee motivation, not only in the corporate sphere, but also in public institutions and universities [1–3]. Human resource management should be applied all the more in the field of education, because by

improving the level of teachers' motivation, better quality education for future generations and thus a development in the whole of society can be achieved [4–6].

In any organization, people are of the first and foremost importance. Human resources have a special nature and uniqueness [7,8]. They are the key factor [9,10], the most valuable factor [11,12], but also the most costly production factor [13]. They cannot be compared to other resources such as production equipment, money, energy, or information. Other resources cannot be used as efficiently as human resources and, at the same time, other resources cannot be managed without human resources. What is more, human resource management should mainly focus on employee motivation because, according to previous research [14–19], employee motivation has a major impact on work performance and thus on the performance of the whole company. Research by Riketta [20] indicates that employees who are more motivated tend to perform better, for example, do more work in less time, and at the same time, according to the research by Elias et al. [21], employees with higher motivation are able to perform higher quality, more efficient, more inventive, more responsible work than individuals with low motivation. Employee performance and subsequent organizational success or failure are often dependent on how much effort employees expend in completing their job tasks [15,22,23]. Undoubtedly, it is the human resources that contribute their performance to maximizing profits, achieving business success, and ensuring business competitiveness [24–27].

The term motivation is applied to virtually all circumstances, facts, or situations that people experience, feel, and perceive as important, and which can be answered by asking why/for what reason/on the basis of what stimuli and decisions are actions carried out. Definitions of motivation [14,28] often differ in the way that they are expressed or phrased but are usually similar in content. What is common to many of them is that they define motivation as a psychological process, influencing inner feelings that guide a person's behavior, i.e., activate him or her to act with the intention of achieving a goal [29,30]. In the context of human motivation that directly affects the work environment, work motivation can be considered as a process that initiates and sustains goal-oriented performance, energizes thinking and enthusiasm, and colors emotional responses to work and life as positive or negative [30]. Motivation as one of the most essential antecedents of success has received quite a lot of attention [31–33]. There are a number of theories [34–36] according to A. H. Maslow, E. Schein, F. Herzberg, H. Heckhausen, F. W. Taylor, D. McGregor, etc., which investigate the process of motivation. They explain why people behave in a certain way at work and why they exert effort in a particular direction. They point out that no two individuals have the same attitude or behavior [37,38]. Individual employees may differ from each other in what is more valuable to them [39,40]. An individual's level of motivation is determined by two forms of motivation, namely intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the result of satisfying an individual's beliefs and values. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is based on tangible economic returns, goods, recognition, or services to the individual [41]. Intrinsically motivated employees often perform an activity because they find it right and rewarding. People experience pleasure, enjoyment, and self-motivation when performing a task and attribute their behavior to intrinsic factors that they control, such as emotions [42]. On the other hand, extrinsic rewards reflect a decrease in control over the situation [43]. The individual shifts his or her attention from the enjoyment of the activity to the reward for performing the activity [44,45]. Furthermore, Kantzell and Thompson [46] identified a total of seven intrinsic and extrinsic factors that can increase employee motivation. These seven factors include ensuring that workers' motives and values are appropriate for the jobs in which they are placed; making jobs attractive to and consistent with workers' motives and values; defining work goals that are clear, challenging, attractive, and attainable; providing workers with the personnel and the material resources that facilitate their effectiveness; creating supportive social environments; reinforcing performance; and harmonizing all of these elements into a consistent sociotechnical system. It can be argued that there are other factors that influence employee motivation. According to research by Sadhna et al. [47], rewards and

benefits had the greatest impact on job performance. Research by Ariani [48] emphasizes environmental conditions. Vivek and Sweksha [49] consider appreciation, recognition, authority, responsibility, and status as the real motivating factors. Theories of employee motivation are often associated with goal setting, organizational justice, and the theory of social cognition. Work motivation is different for each individual and can be influenced by other motivational factors. A different individual motivational profile is a consequence of the uniqueness of each employee's personality [50].

While previous research [14,51–53] mainly investigates employee motivation in the corporate sphere, due attention should be paid to employees in the public sector as well [54,55]. The aim is to investigate which factors influence the motivation of university teachers in the country. The position of a teacher in Slovakia is still perceived by many as less credible and given less importance, despite the fact that a teacher, with his/her own hands, shapes the character, individuality, personality, and future of his/her students, and thus contributes to a development in the whole of society. Like employees in businesses, teachers can be motivated to perform by a variety of factors. They too may differ from each other in what is more valuable to them. Their commitment may vary as a result of individual, intra-company, or environmental changes [56]. Teachers with a strong sense of motivation tend to expand their teaching with formal and professional development. On the other hand, teachers with low levels of school socioeconomic status tend to have lower quality preparation, which is associated with challenges and may be associated with low motivation and self-efficacy in teaching. This is supported by research by Yaghoubinejad et al. [57], whereby, according to which, an unmotivated teacher will extinguish his learners' enthusiasm and energy for learning. The research of Mokretsova et al. [58] found that the democratic leadership style of the school principal is positively related to the autonomous motivation of teachers directly and indirectly through the psychological climate. The analysis of 1294 Danish high school teachers provided by Fjendbo [59] shows that female teachers, unlike male teachers, are less motivated the more pecuniary rewards they perceive. The research of Forson et al. [60] finds compensation package, job design, and environment and performance management systems as significant factors in determining teachers' motivation in the municipality. In this regard, it is advisable that every college and university should be able to identify and evaluate the motivation of its teachers, should be able to find out what drives teachers, and should find ways in which teachers can be motivated, and then make sure that the appropriate motivational factors are used for each teacher. The above is supported by the research of Engidaw [61]. Vnouckova et al. [4] further adds that education quality assurance is a necessity for a competitive environment in university education.

The aim of the research is to analyze the level of motivation of university teachers in Slovakia in terms of time and age and, based on the results, to define the motivational needs of university teachers. The focus is on age, because each generation shares the same significant life events in critical stages of their development [62]. These influence the way that people in a given generation develop and differentiate themselves from the next generation [63]. This provides space for intragenerational and intergenerational contacts, interaction, and learning [64]. Millennials are a generation that witnessed a technological explosion; they experienced life without the Internet, mobile phones, and other technologies, but they gradually learned to work and live with it. On the other hand, generation Z was born into the era of social media and online platforms. Technological media are natural for this generation. Generation Z perceives things more realistically, accepts challenges and facts with ease, and values privacy. They are independent and adaptable. Each generation has its own values, needs, and expectations, which must be understood in order to ensure their harmonious and successful integration into the organization, which was confirmed by the research of Urbancova and Vrabcova [65].

The uniqueness of the research lies in filling the gap, as no similar research has been conducted in this area in Slovakia.

2. Materials and Methods

The research on motivation was conducted between 2015 and 2022. Senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors working in 5 Slovak state technical universities were asked to participate in the research. A total of 2016 respondents were involved in the research. The composition of the research sample (n = 2016) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Composition of the research sample.

		Age				Total	
		Up to 30 Years Old	31–40 Years Old	41–50 Years Old	51 Years Old and Over		
Year	2015	Count % within Year	66 22.6%	96 32.9%	61 20.9%	69 23.6%	292 100.0%
	2016	Count % within Year	58 23.0%	86 34.1%	75 29.8%	33 13.1%	252 100.0%
	2017	Count % within Year	40 14.7%	79 28.9%	88 32.2%	66 24.2%	273 100.0%
	2018	Count % within Year	51 20.2%	43 17.0%	66 26.1%	93 36.8%	253 100.0%
	2019	Count % within Year	32 12.9%	56 22.5%	83 33.3%	78 31.3%	249 100.0%
	2020	Count % within Year	89 35.2%	58 22.9%	55 21.7%	51 20.2%	253 100.0%
	2021	Count % within Year	81 33.3%	43 17.7%	67 27.6%	52 21.4%	243 100.0%
	2022	Count % within Year	67 33.3%	63 31.3%	49 24.4%	22 10.9%	201 100.0%
Total	Count % within Year	484 24.0%	524 26.0%	544 27.0%	464 23.0%	2016 100.0%	

To find out the level of motivation, the method of sociological questioning was used, carried out via questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed electronically. The questionnaires were divided into two parts. The first part explored sociodemographic factors, with age categories divided into four groups: under 30 years (on average 24% of respondents), 31 to 40 years (26% of all respondents), 41 to 50 years (27%), and the category of over 51 years (23% of respondents). The second part of the questionnaire consisted of individual motivational factors, which were grouped into five groups for statistical analyses, namely motivational factors relating to mutual relationships, to career aspiration, to finance, to work conditions, and to social needs. A total of 30 motivational factors were investigated in the following composition: motivational factors relating to mutual relationships (atmosphere in the workplace, good work team, communication in the workplace, supervisor's approach), to career aspiration (opportunity to apply one's own ability, career advancement, competences, prestige, individual decision-making, self-actualization, personal growth, recognition), to finance (base salary, fringe benefits, fair appraisal system), to work conditions (physical effort at work, occupational safety, job security, workload and type of work, information about performance results, working hours, work environment, job performance, mental effort, stress), and to social needs (social benefits, mission of the university, name of the university, region's development, relation to the environment, free time). Due to the attempt to influence the respondents as little as possible, the motivational factors were listed alphabetically. Respondents could assign each motivational factor one of five levels of importance according to a rating scale from 1 (the least important/satisfied) to 5 (the most important/satisfied).

The collected data were further analyzed in Statistics software using statistical characteristics—weighted arithmetic mean, 95% confidence interval, and absolute and relative abundance. One way ANOVA test was used to compare multiple groups and look for statistically significant differences. The eta-squared value was used, which determines the substantive significance of the differences, whereby $\eta^2 = 0.01$ indicates a small effect; $\eta^2 = 0.06$ indicates a medium effect; and $\eta^2 = 0.14$ indicates a large effect.

The Tukey HSD test was used to test the experimental hypotheses to see whether there was a high chance that an observed numerical change in one value was related to an observed change in another value. The following hypotheses were formulated:

- WH1—it is assumed that the motivation of university teachers in Slovakia will be constant over time.
- WH2—it is assumed that the motivation of university teachers in Slovakia will be different in terms of age.

3. Results and Discussion

Using basic descriptive statistics, it is possible to present the evolution of the mean values of the importance of individual groups of motivational factors (Table 2, Figure 1). From the results of these values over time, it can be concluded that in the long term, relational (mean values at the level of 4.50 to 4.69) and financial factors (values from 4.31 to 4.59) are considered to be the most important. Conversely, social factors are perceived as being the least important. This trend was noticeable throughout the period under review. Statistically significant changes in the perception of the importance of groups of motivational factors over the years (Table 2) at the $p < 0.001$ level, while the material significance was below the medium-level values ($\eta^2 < 0.6$), were confirmed via ANOVA test as well.

Table 2. Evolution of the mean values of the groups of motivational factors over time.

Year	Financial Factors	Social Factors	Relational Factors	Work Factors	Career Factors
2015	4.5855	4.2426	4.6885	4.4427	4.2863
2016	4.3057	3.7657	4.5013	4.1012	3.9769
2017	4.4938	3.9167	4.5314	4.2049	4.1125
2018	4.4349	4.1800	4.5159	4.2619	4.2693
2019	4.4695	3.8608	4.5682	4.2394	4.0808
2020	4.4028	3.8916	4.6275	4.2175	4.0647
2021	4.4315	3.9546	4.6076	4.2982	4.1094
2022	4.3436	3.9669	4.6504	4.2444	4.1617
Total	4.4392	3.9775	4.5861	4.2545	4.1349
<i>p</i> -value (ANOVA)	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Eta-squared	0.024	0.039	0.017	0.036	0.030

Figure 2 shows the evolution of the mean values of the groups of motivational factors over time for the different age categories. The results show that the largest fluctuations and changes were observed for the youngest age group over time, which may be related to the distinct difference between Generation Z and older and more experienced teachers. At the same time, there is a significant trend of increasing importance of relational background in this generation, especially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the under 50 age group, there is more of a decline in this group of factors, similar to the group of financial factors. A significant break across all of the age categories can be identified in 2018 and also for some in 2021. The year 2018 is significant in the increase in the importance of the social group of factors (ecological burden, vision of the university, and impact on regional development).

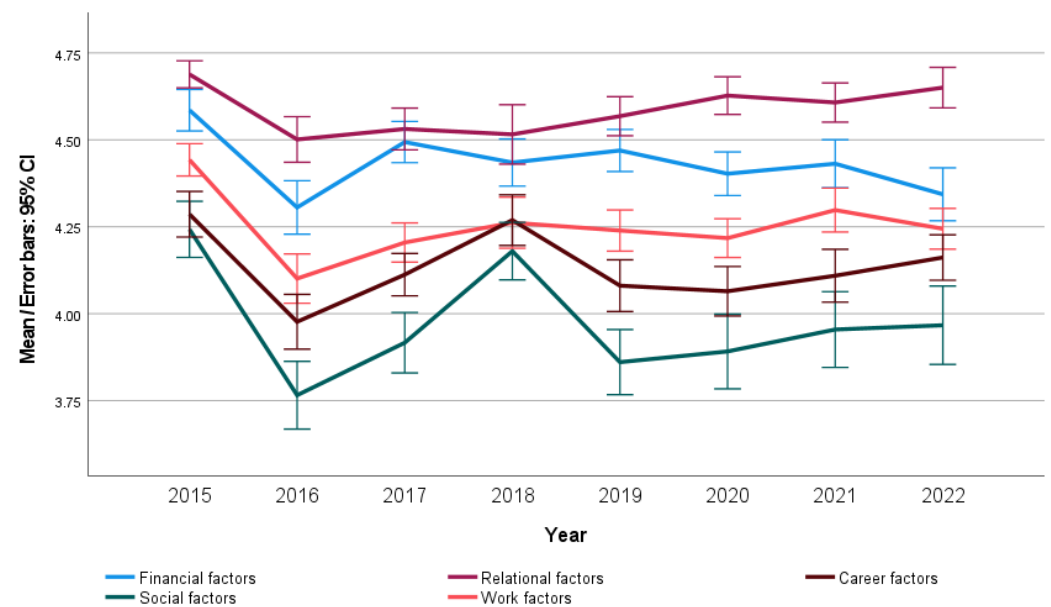


Figure 1. Evolution of the average values of the factor groups over time.



Figure 2. Evolution of mean values over time by age category.

The results of Tukey's HSD test for the evolution in the group of financial factors for each age category (Table 3) determined significant changes in perceived importance (at the 5% level of importance) only for the development for the group of teachers under 30 years of age, namely a significant decrease in the mean value of the importance of the factors in 2016 ($p > 0.00$ to $p = 0.046$) and 2021 ($p > 0.00$ to $p > 0.009$) compared to 2015 and 2017–2019. From 2021 onwards, the importance significantly increases compared to 2020 ($p = 0.034$). Table 3 shows that there were differences over time only in the age category up to 30 years.

Averaging factors across groups provides more basic information about overall perceived importance. On average, the most important factors for teachers (Table 4) were found to be workplace atmosphere (4.66), good work team (4.64), basic salary (4.56), and fair appraisal (4.55). For a closer look, the evolution of the importance of these important relational and financial factors was then analyzed (Tables 5–9, Figures 3 and 4). Tables 5 and 6 report a significant increase in the importance of atmosphere and a good work team during

the pandemic persistence period (2021 and 2022 compared to 2020) for the youngest age group. For the oldest group, there is a significant increase in the importance of workplace atmosphere in 2022 compared to 2021 and 2015. The determined value of eta-squared (Table 9) indicates moderate to medium substantive significance of differences (0.049–0.052) for workplace atmosphere factor and low substantive significance for good work team (0.039). For the 31 to 40 age group, this factor increases significantly in importance in 2020 (at pandemic outbreak) compared to 2016 and 2017.

Table 3. Comparison of changes in trends between various age categories in relation to financial factors.

Age	Year	Year							
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Up to 30 years old	2015		0.000 *	0.888	0.823	0.740	0.000 *	0.425	0.026 *
	2016	0.000 *		0.021 *	0.009 *	0.046 *	1.000	0.127	0.673
	2017	0.888	0.021 *		1.000	1.000	0.003 *	0.995	0.562
	2018	0.823	0.009 *	1.000		1.000	0.000 *	0.992	0.431
	2019	0.740	0.046 *	1.000	1.000		0.009 *	1.000	0.752
	2020	0.000 *	1.000	0.003 *	0.000 *	0.009 *		0.034 *	0.449
	2021	0.425	0.127	0.995	0.992	1.000	0.034 *		0.949
	2022	0.026	0.673	0.562	0.431	0.752	0.449	0.949	

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 4. Evolution of relational and financial factors over time.

Year	Atmosphere in the Workplace	Good Work Team	Communication in the Workplace	Supervisor's Approach	Fringe Benefits	Fair Appraisal System	Basic Salary	Social Benefits
2015	4.71	4.73	4.70	4.61	4.63	4.63	4.72	4.37
2016	4.64	4.60	4.42	4.35	4.36	4.42	4.33	4.11
2017	4.62	4.54	4.42	4.55	4.49	4.54	4.66	4.28
2018	4.63	4.55	4.49	4.39	4.39	4.43	4.64	4.27
2019	4.67	4.63	4.36	4.60	4.47	4.59	4.58	4.24
2020	4.66	4.72	4.56	4.57	4.28	4.69	4.54	4.10
2021	4.62	4.68	4.49	4.65	4.50	4.55	4.54	4.13
2022	4.72	4.67	4.60	4.61	4.30	4.52	4.39	4.17
Total	4.66	4.64	4.50	4.54	4.43	4.55	4.56	4.21

Table 5. HSD Tukey's test for atmosphere in the workplace.

Age	Year	Year							
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Up to 30 years old	2015		1.000	0.746	0.999	0.855	0.997	0.025 *	0.040 *
	2016	1.000		0.986	1.000	0.994	0.959	0.380	0.421
	2017	0.746	0.986		0.997	1.000	0.299	0.894	0.912
	2018	0.999	1.000	0.997		0.999	0.952	0.626	0.655
	2019	0.855	0.994	1.000	0.999		0.473	0.904	0.918
	2020	0.997	0.959	0.299	0.952	0.473		0.001 *	0.002 *
	2021	0.025 *	0.380	0.894	0.626	0.904	0.001		1.000
	2022	0.040 *	0.421	0.912	0.655	0.918	0.002 *	1.000	
41–50 years old	2015		0.780	0.506	0.975	1.000	0.999	0.193	0.883
	2016	0.780		1.000	0.145	0.896	0.968	0.987	1.000
	2017	0.506	1.000		0.037 *	0.651	0.838	0.999	1.000
	2018	0.975	0.145	0.037 *		0.755	0.758	0.005 *	0.365
	2019	1.000	0.896	0.651	0.755		1.000	0.271	0.953
	2020	0.999	0.968	0.838	0.758	1.000		0.491	0.985
	2021	0.193	0.987	0.999	0.005 *	0.271	0.491		0.995
	2022	0.883	1.000	1.000	0.365	0.953	0.985	0.995	

Table 5. Cont.

Age	Year	Year							
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
51 years old and over	2015		1.000	0.985	0.081	0.620	1.000	0.018	0.957
	2016	1.000		0.987	0.152	0.742	1.000	0.055	0.990
	2017	0.985	0.987		0.578	0.997	0.994	0.329	0.674
	2018	0.081	0.152	0.578		0.874	0.196	1.000	0.023 *
	2019	0.620	0.742	0.997	0.874		0.813	0.657	0.221
	2020	1.000	1.000	0.994	0.196	0.813		0.077	0.986
	2021	0.018	0.055	0.329	1.000	0.657	0.077		0.006 *
	2022	0.957	0.990	0.674	0.023 *	0.221	0.986	0.006 *	

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 6. HSD Tukey's test for good work team.

Age	Year	Year							
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Up to 30 years old	2015		1.000	0.913	0.969	0.993	0.525	0.337	0.926
	2016	1.000		0.988	0.996	1.000	0.935	0.322	0.824
	2017	0.913	0.988		1.000	0.999	1.000	0.223	0.509
	2018	0.969	0.996	1.000		1.000	1.000	0.490	0.736
	2019	0.993	1.000	0.999	1.000		0.998	0.269	0.687
	2020	0.525	0.935	1.000	1.000	0.998		0.000 *	0.048 *
	2021	0.337	0.322	0.223	0.490	0.269	0.000 *		0.997
	2022	0.926	0.824	0.509	0.736	0.687	0.048 *	0.997	
31–40 years old	2015		0.649	0.404	0.997	1.000	0.057	0.985	0.960
	2016	0.649		1.000	1.000	0.554	0.003 *	1.000	1.000
	2017	0.404	1.000		0.994	0.339	0.001 *	0.994	0.993
	2018	0.997	1.000	0.994		0.984	0.368	1.000	1.000
	2019	1.000	0.554	0.339	0.984		0.491	0.952	0.901
	2020	0.057	0.003 *	0.001 *	0.368	0.491		0.170	0.055
	2021	0.985	1.000	0.994	1.000	0.952	0.170		1.000
	2022	0.960	1.000	0.993	1.000	0.901	0.055	1.000	

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 7. HSD Tukey's test for basic salary.

Age	Year	Year							
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Up to 30 years old	2015		0.001 *	0.994	0.041	0.157	0.015 *	0.332	0.000 *
	2016	0.001 *		0.012 *	0.439	0.544	0.689	0.221	1.000
	2017	0.994	0.012 *		0.451	0.625	0.253	0.885	0.009 *
	2018	0.041 *	0.439	0.451		1.000	1.000	0.999	0.500
	2019	0.157	0.544	0.625	1.000		1.000	0.999	0.626
	2020	0.015 *	0.689	0.253	1.000	1.000		0.974	0.776
	2021	0.332	0.221	0.885	0.999	0.999	0.974		0.243
	2022	0.000 *	1.000	0.009 *	0.500	0.626	0.776	0.243	
31–40 years old	2015		0.000 *	0.102	1.000	0.077	0.019	0.258	0.007 *
	2016	0.000 *		0.236	0.000 *	0.123	0.643	0.208	0.497
	2017	0.102	0.236		0.147	1.000	0.999	1.000	0.999
	2018	1.000	0.000 *	0.147		0.125	0.032 *	0.309	0.016 *
	2019	0.077	0.123	1.000	0.125		0.995	1.000	0.996
	2020	0.019 *	0.643	0.999	0.032 *	0.995		0.996	1.000
	2021	0.258	0.208	1.000	0.309	1.000	0.996		0.997
	2022	0.007 *	0.497	0.999	0.016 *	0.996	1.000	0.997	

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 8. HSD Tukey's test for fair appraisal system.

Age	Year	Year							
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
41–50 years old	2015		0.008 *	0.402	0.077	0.998	1.000	0.235	0.535
	2016	0.008		0.522	0.921	0.023 *	0.019 *	0.859	0.625
	2017	0.402	0.522		0.991	0.715	0.619	1.000	1.000
	2018	0.077	0.921	0.991		0.198	0.164	1.000	0.996
	2019	0.998	0.023	0.715	0.198		1.000	0.472	0.811
	2020	1.000	0.019	0.619	0.164	1.000		0.393	0.724
	2021	0.235	0.859	1.000	1.000	0.472	0.393		1.000
	2022	0.535	0.625	1.000	0.996	0.811	0.724	1.000	

* $p < 0.05$.**Table 9.** Resulting p -value of ANOVA test by years of development in each age category for the top four factors (2 + 2).

Age	Atmosphere in the Workplace		Good Work Team		Basic Salary		Fair Appraisal System	
	p -Value	Eta-Squared	p -Value	Eta-Squared	p -Value	Eta-Squared	p -Value	Eta-Squared
Up to 30 years old	0.001	0.052 *	0.009	0.039 *	0.000	0.068 *	0.158	0.022
31–40 years old	0.579	0.011	0.011	0.035	0.000	0.081 *	0.116	0.022
41–50 years old	0.014	0.032	0.106	0.022	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.048 *
51 years old and over	0.002	0.049 *	0.172	0.022	0.002	0.047 *	0.027	0.034

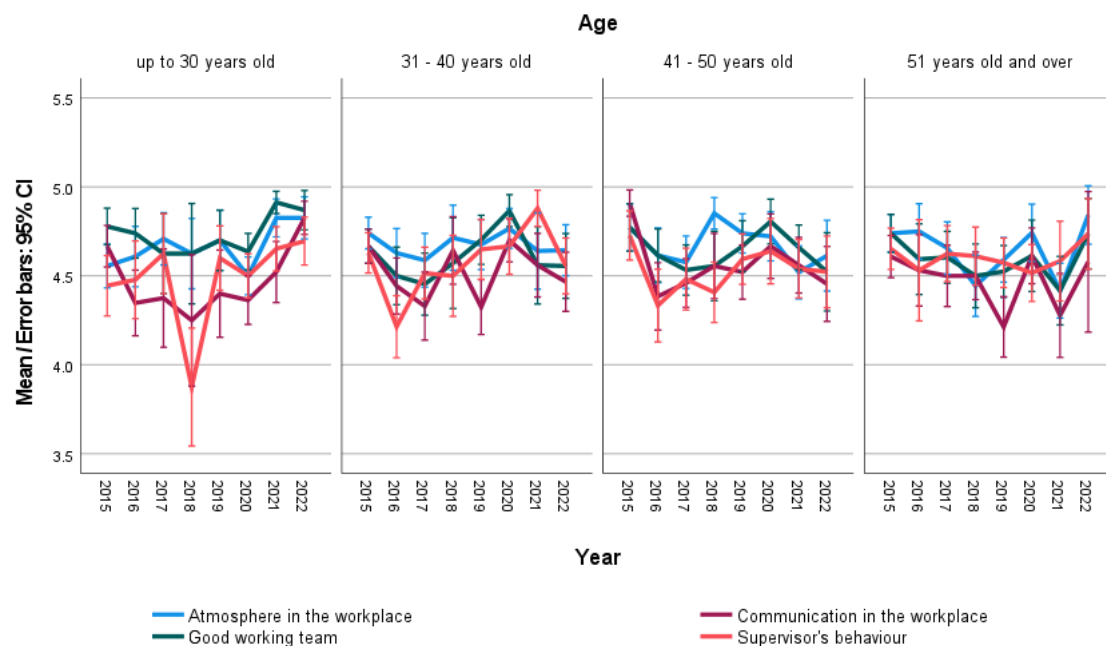
* $p < 0.01$.**Figure 3.** Development in relationship factors by age categories.

Table 7 presents the fact that, significantly ($\alpha = 5\%$), the highest importance attributed to basic salary for the age group of teachers under 40 years was in 2015; since then it has significantly decreased (in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022, p was max. 0.041, and for the older category in 2016, 2020, and 2022, p was max. 0.019). For the youngest group of teachers, this emphasis on base salary increases significantly in 2016 (compared to 2017) and for teachers aged 31 to 41 it does so in 2018 (compared to 2016). For teachers aged 41+, the importance of base salary does not change significantly over time. The determined eta-squared value

(Table 9) shows medium substantive significance for the differences (0.068–0.081) for the factor of basic salary in the first two age categories.

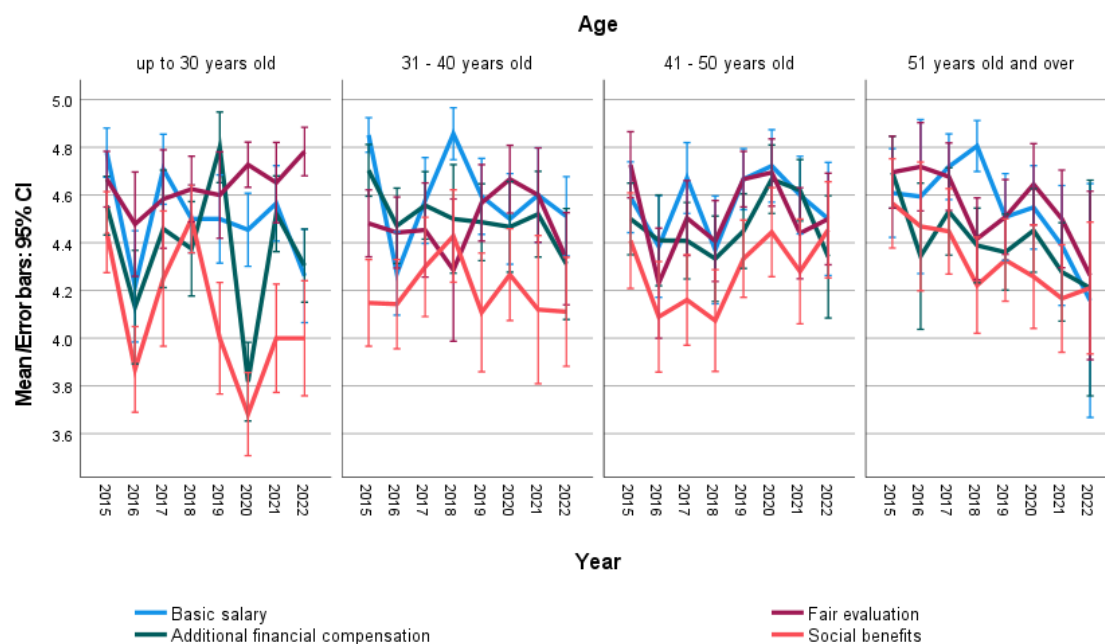


Figure 4. Evolution of financial factors by age category.

The Tukey HSD test reveals in Table 8 changes in perceptions of fair evaluation across 2015–2022 for the group of teachers aged 41 to 50. This group is characterized by a period when children are beginning to become independent and there may be a tendency for a need for career advancement before the onset of older age. There is a significantly lowest level of importance of this factor in 2016 compared to 2015, 2019, and 2022. For the other age groups, no statistically significant difference was identified in the evolution of the importance of this factor over time at the 5% significance level.

Based on the results presented above, it is possible to verify the established research hypotheses. WH1 assumed that the motivation of university teachers in Slovakia would be constant over time. The research hypothesis WH1 is rejected by the results of the ANOVA test, as during the years 2015–2022, there were statistically significant changes in the perception of the importance of all groups of motivational factors over the years among teachers (Table 2) at the level of $p < 0.001$, while the material significance of these differences is below the mid-level values ($\eta^2 < 0.6$). Therefore, it is necessary to perceive the change in teachers' preferences over time. The Tukey HSD test results of the development in financial factors for individual age categories show significant differences in perceived importance (at the 5% importance level), especially for teachers under 30. There is a considerable decrease in the perceived importance of financial factors in 2016 ($p > 0.00$ to $p = 0.046$) and 2020 ($p > 0.00$ to $p > 0.009$) compared to the years 2015 and 2017–2019. From 2021, the importance increases significantly compared to 2020 ($p = 0.034$). The identified decrease indicates a more sensitive reaction to external stimuli among the youngest group of teachers when teachers' salaries were increased in 2016, and the year 2021 represented increased tensions in terms of the development of the crisis and, thus, job insecurity for newly qualified teachers. This sensitivity is also manifested in the issue of creating a relational background at the workplace (Table 9, significant differences in financial and relational factors at the level of 5%), which is natural for their higher vulnerability due to lower practice and the need to gain experience. Regarding the sustainability of education, this group has a high potential for contribution to innovation and a development in children's digital literacy.

The second research question assumed that the motivation of university teachers in Slovakia would differ in age. The results presented in Tables 5–9 refute the validity of the WH2 hypothesis at the 5% significance level. The results of a comparison of the preferences of motivational factors by age category over time are presented in Figure 5 and Table 9. It is obvious that the most noticeable reaction of the youngest and oldest age groups to the ongoing crisis in 2021–2022 is in the form of a decrease in the importance of the basic salary and, conversely, the need for a higher relational background. On the contrary, the middle age groups reacted more to the valorization of the salary in 2016. It is also clear that adjusting the basic salary amount on the perception of importance has a more short-term effect.

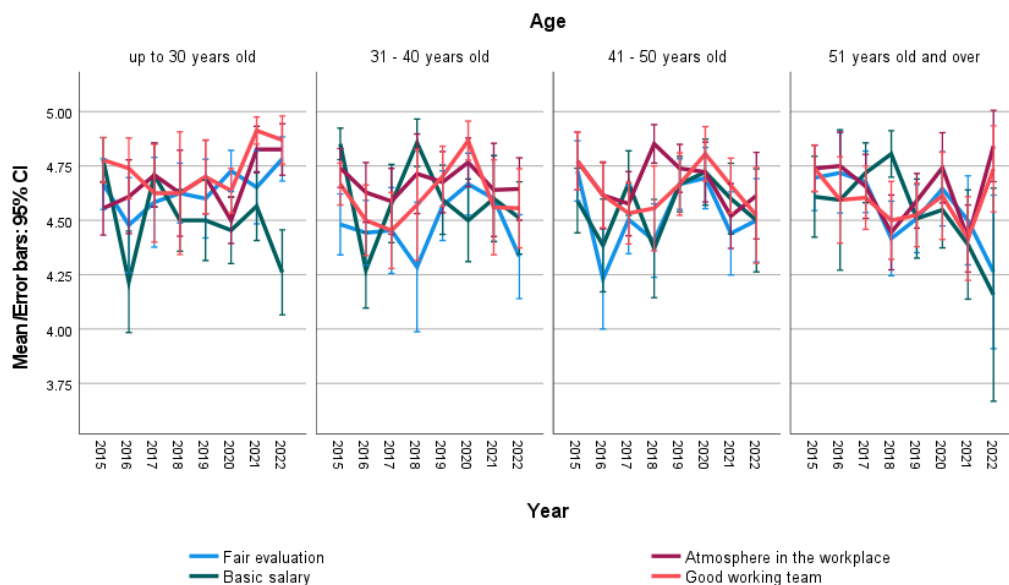


Figure 5. Evolution of the most important factors by age category.

Employee motivation plays an important role in development in enterprises, for the reason that it increases the productivity and efficiency of employees [32,66,67]. Appropriately constructed solutions in the field of the employee motivation process can bring multiple benefits for the organization, which is also suitable for public institutions, including academic ones [59,68–70]. Motivation in higher education is addressed in the research of Tohidian and Abbaspour [71], Lei et al. [72], and Hassan et al. [73]. The presented research is unique because it examines the level of motivation of university teachers in the country in terms of time and age, and based on the results, it defines the motivational needs of university teachers.

Comparing previous studies [55,74,75] with the presented research, a difference emerging in the preference of importance of motivational factors is evident. The research of Czaplicka-Kozłowska and Stachowska [69] confirmed that motivation and commitment of employees are influenced by a variety of factors in areas such as attitude to work and organization, learning and development, relations with superiors, communication and cooperation, work organization, and also rewarding and motivating. According to research by Murangi and Bailey [76], co-worker support significantly and positively impacts employee engagement. In the presented research, factors such as intrinsic value, autonomy at work, and benefit to the university are not considered to be important by teachers. Foreign teachers [77,78] as well as Slovak teachers, consider the attitude of the supervisor as an important factor of motivation. The attitude of the supervisor determines the teacher's performance, and the teacher is encouraged and understood by his/her supervisor, but also criticized. The attitude of the principal also influences a good work team, the general atmosphere in the workplace, and the working environment, which in turn affect the

feeling of satisfaction. The aforementioned is supported by the research of Ashraf [78], Jankelova et al. [79], and Shafagatova et al. [80].

The fact that financial motivation is the most important motivational factor in the long run is confirmed by previous research [81–86]. The same results are presented by the research of Al-Madi [87], who concluded that financial and relational motivational factors are considered to be the most important motivational factors. Based on the research of Ozturk Akar [88], the most important and main motivational factors for teachers can be considered to be basic salary, social influences, social contribution, working with children or adolescents, effective job opportunities, flexible working hours, and time off during holidays and weekends. The research results of Rasheed et al. [89] showed that although compensation packages and financial incentives are important factors for employees in the competitive market environment of the higher education sector, some other factors such as job design and working environment, performance management system, and training and development are also significant.

The research findings presented here should be complemented by the observation that, in addition to monetary and relational factors, Slovak teachers also show a need for a more respected social status and a better image of their profession. This need is directly related to the intrinsic motivation for self-actualization, which is unlikely to be solved only by monetary incentives. It is also related to the fact that the teaching profession is primarily a mission. It is a mentally demanding and responsible job. At the same time, it is work that is not financially awarded in Slovakia. The average salary of a teacher with many years of experience is at the level of 50% of the average salary of other university-educated employees. In Slovakia, the average salary of a teacher with a university degree is around EUR 750. At the same time, as bureaucracy has increased, children have begun to be separated according to the family's wealth. Arrogant behavior of individuals begins to appear in schools, and children lose motivation to learn. The state also fails to provide material and technical equipment, high-quality curricula, and a dignified environment for their work. It clearly follows that society does not value pedagogical education enough.

In the past, the teaching profession was highly respected, and teachers were perceived as mentors. Their role was not only to impart information, but also to educate and guide their students. Looking at today's image of the teaching profession, it is evident that there is much less room for this form of self-perception. The original mission of their profession is thus seemingly disappearing, which can be considered to be one of the limits of research. The practical consequences of the application of the research are conditioned by an improvement in the social status of teachers in Slovakia, which is conditioned by a fundamental change in the approach of the government of the Slovak Republic to the issue of education. Another limitation of the research can be considered the acceptance and application of the research outcomes by university managers. This is conditioned by a change in the thinking of managers who will ensure the recruitment and retention of talented and capable teachers in the positions of university teachers. However, this requires a fundamental change in personnel policy and strategy.

4. Conclusions

The aim of the research was to analyze the level of motivation of university teachers in Slovakia in terms of time and age and, based on the results, to define the motivational needs of university teachers. The research on motivation was conducted using a research sample of senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors working in Slovak technical universities. It was assumed that the motivation of university teachers in Slovakia would be constant over time. A significant change in the level of average importance of motivational factors across time (years) was confirmed, but there was no change in their structure. Furthermore, it was assumed that the motivation of university teachers in Slovakia would be different in terms of age. In terms of the age factor, significant differences over time were confirmed. The resulting outcomes further confirm that Slovak university teachers considered relational and financial factors as being the most important motivational factors.

There were changes in their preferences over time, but they were not statistically significant. This means that they have maintained their motivational requirements in the long term. Significant differences exist in age categories. A significant effect of age on motivation for the factor of basic salary was confirmed. Additionally, the factor of fair evaluation was significantly affected by age. Based on our results as well as previous research [1,81], it can be concluded that the values of different generations are different. Younger generations are team players, are technologically savvy, want to feel valued and recognized in the workplace, want to learn, and want to grow [82]. Older generations of employees are loyal to their employers and have strong social skills, but lack technical skills [40]. These different values of different age groups may account for the differences that were observed in the presented research.

The presented research on motivation in higher education, along with a focus on the motivational preferences of university teachers, provides us with results that, when applied by university managers, can help to advance effective teaching along with high teacher satisfaction. Our work has defined the most important motivational factors of Slovak university teachers between 2015 and 2022. These were financial and relational motivational factors, which often strongly motivated them to work in a team. Financial motivation is conditioned by the long-term financial undervaluation of the teaching profession in Slovakia. However, the research outcomes have shown that Slovak teachers are also motivated by other motivational factors.

From the point of view of the theoretical implications of the research, it can be stated that the development in the motivation of university teachers over time is stable. The mentioned aspect is a challenge for university managers, and on the basis of which the insufficient motivation of university teachers in Slovakia can be seen.

The further direction of the research will focus on teachers' motivation in terms of job category and length of experience.

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