

Motivational factors and job satisfaction of employees in agriculture in the context of performance of agricultural companies in Slovakia

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Abstract: The aim of our research is to identify how the effectiveness of motivation and job satisfaction of employees contribute to the success of agricultural companies in Slovakia. The research sample consists of 757 employees in agricultural companies in Slovakia. Baron and Kenny's mediation model and regression ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) were also used. The hypothesis that the dependence of the business performance on the effectiveness of motivation of the employees is mediated by their job satisfaction has been confirmed. An important finding is that the direct relationship between the business performance of agricultural companies and the effectiveness of employee motivation is not significant. However, the variable that transmits this effect, respectively mediates the impact of the effectiveness of employee motivation on business performance, is the job satisfaction of employees. A significant relationship between the effectiveness of motivation was found mainly among financial motivators, which points to the problematic nature of this motivational setting. Significant influencing factors include age, education and job position. As the effectiveness of financial motivation and satisfaction was highest in these groups, it is possible to start applying new trends in employee remuneration to other groups that have not shown such a connection to such a significant extent.

Keywords: agricultural company; effectiveness of motivation; performance of company; work satisfaction

Agriculture has irreplaceable importance in the production of agricultural products, it shares responsibility for the status and development of the rural areas, and it contributes to the recovery of the rural areas by sustaining the rural population, thus preventing depopulation of marginal rural areas (Karcagi Kovats and Katona Kovacs 2012; Liu et al. 2020) and keep-

ing the population at a local level based on economic factors, socioeconomics factors and government policy (Ubels et al. 2019; Merino and Prats 2020). Only vital business entities can meet these goals. According to the Green Report on Agriculture and the Food Industry (2018), employment in agriculture on a global scale is important, and it accounts for as much as 30.7%

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of the total employment in the world. Even though it has dropped year after year. Some authors advise that a percentage increase in the Common Agricultural Policy budget would save 16 000 agricultural jobs each year then (Garronea et al. 2019).

The fourth industrial revolution has had a strong influence on agriculture and the organizations that serve them (Lezoche et al. 2020) relating to worker's compensation and labour conditions (Min et al. 2019).

Therefore, it remains a question of how to attract young people to work in the rural areas and how to keep the present employees to avoid a significant problem in 5 or 10 years.

Motivation is very closely linked to job satisfaction, so both areas have become part of many theories, concepts and a growing number of studies. This has led to today's efforts of their mutual theoretical-methodological and practical confrontation and their settings in the new challenges of the world of work (Christen et al. 2006; Javaloy et al. 2011; Sahito and Vaisanen 2017; Extremera et al. 2020). The literature also elaborates on the possibilities of measuring job satisfaction, to which effective motivation should belong (Aziri 2011). Many authors deal with the examination of the dependencies of motives on various criteria, such as type of ownership (Al-Zoubi 2012; George and Zakkariya 2015), job position (Andrade and Westover 2018) or employee personality (Howard et al. 2016).

To the best of our knowledge, the area of agriculture is missing serious research on the motivational factors of employees and their relation to employee performance and thus business performance, and on the relations to the work satisfaction, whereby this area represents a major research gap not only in Slovakia, but in the EU and the worldwide context as well. It is not possible to compare similar research from business or healthcare, given the many specifics agriculture as the primary production has, and which subsequently also contribute to the specifics of the agricultural labour market and are reflected in the motivational profile of employees and the factors affecting their job satisfaction. The nature of work in agriculture requires a universal focus of the employees. Still, it also gives rise to relatively high requirements for expertise and specialization in the context of the 4.0 industry. There is much seasonal and necessary overtime, and there is significant unevenness between the necessity to work throughout the workday. Work is physically more demanding, the productivity of work is lower because in some agricultural sectors the possibilities of replacing physical work with mechanical work are

limited and there is also an adverse effect of climatic conditions on the workers. There are also differences between the sources of the workforce and job opportunities in individual regions.

Satisfied, loyal and efficient employees are an essential factor in the sustainable development of the company (Aziri 2011). There are many HR studies in the scientific literature that refer to positive associations of motivation and job satisfaction (Sahito and Vaisanen 2017; Bayona et al. 2020; Miao et al. 2020), both management tools – effective motivation and job satisfaction. They significantly affect both individual (Cortini et al. 2019; Extremera et al. 2020) and organizational performance (Meyerding 2019; Miao et al. 2020). Based on a search of studies and meta-analyses in this area, Aziri (2011) states that "many studies have demonstrated an unusually large impact on the job satisfaction on the motivation of workers, while the level of motivation has an impact on productivity, and hence also on the performance of business organizations". There are also studies, mainly in the field of work psychology, on the ambiguity of these relationships due to the influence of many variables such as personality and work status (Furnham et al. 2009).

It is crucial for companies to know the motivational profiles of their employees, which can then be used in the process of their effective motivation. It presupposes a targeted selection of tools so that they are compatible with the expectations of employees and affect their job satisfaction and level of motivation. Therefore, research aimed at examining the motivational profiles of employees is very valuable for the application practice of business management and can be a starting point for further ongoing research. Nevertheless, in the agricultural sector, we state a lack of in-depth knowledge of internal relations and contexts in this area not only in Slovakia but also in the European and global context, thus identifying a significant research gap that we are trying to fill.

Certain findings were provided by studies aimed at identifying motives leading to employee job satisfaction. Studies on motivation and job satisfaction in agriculture have been conducted in Bangladesh, Nigeria and other developing countries, where the agricultural conditions are completely different from the European countries. Nevertheless, they can be a methodological example of examining the issue of motivation and job satisfaction. The financial motivators, working conditions, safety at work as well as personal growth and education (Ambali et al. 2015; Hogue et al. 2016; Lu et al. 2017), and a corporate image in the highly attractive pro-

duction of palm oil and in the group of young employees (Stapa et al. 2019) were the dominating motivational factors. In the European area (Greece), autonomy and development of competences (Chrysanthi et al. 2017), flexible organizational structure and self-motivation were determined to be the main motivators.

This indicates that in the agricultural sector not only in Slovakia but within the EU as well, there is only very limited knowledge of motivational aspects and effectiveness of motivation in relation to business performance and job satisfaction. The aim is to identify how the effectiveness of motivation and job satisfaction of employees contribute to the success of agricultural companies.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample and data collection

We have collected the data necessary to verify the hypotheses using a questionnaire survey, which consisted of two steps. At first, we contacted managers of agricultural companies in person or by phone, who provided us with basic identification data about their organization (legal form, production focus, number of employees, cultivated land, region and the economic result achieved between 2015 and 2019). Respondents marked in the questionnaire the achieved profit after tax, in each year by ticking either loss or profit. After that, based on the consent of the manager, we requested employees to fill in the questionnaire, which contained two parts – one was devoted to the motives and evaluation of their perception and saturation. Ten items based on Herzberg's theory were used. Then the respondents evaluated, on a scale of 1–5, how they perceive their importance and current saturation in the current workplace. The second part was dedicated to measuring job satisfaction through answers of 12 statements from the Gallup questionnaire. Respondents answered on a scale of 1–5 to individual items of job satisfaction.

We have contacted a total of 75 companies of different legal forms in different regions of Slovakia (less favourable areas for agricultural production – Banská Bystrica region, Košice region, Prešov region, Žilina region and in productive agricultural areas – Trnava region, Nitra region, Trenčín region and Bratislava region). When selecting the addressed companies, we paid attention to the representation of all regions in the research sample, we focused primarily on larger companies, employing more than 50 employees, as we assumed the existence of sophisticated incentive pro-

grammes. Forty-nine companies were willing to cooperate in our survey. Our research sample consists of $n = 757$ respondents representing employees in agricultural companies in Slovakia. However, we must state that given the number of companies presented in the research sample, this does not fully copy the distribution of agricultural companies in Slovakia. Table 1 shows the structure of the sample of the respondents.

All data were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 software package. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency of the reliability of the scales. Baron and Kenny's mediation model was also used. The Freedman-Schatzkin test was used to test the mediator effect. A series of regression analyses were used to identify the proposed hypotheses. Partial R^2 (ΔR^2), F -test, the standardized regression coefficient (b) and their test statistics (t -value) were reported in all regression analyses. Identification data of the respondents was used for control variables (age, gender, job position and education). We have used the ANCOVA variance analysis to analyze multiple dependency. We have worked at the 5% level of significance. Bonferroni correction was used for pairwise comparisons.

Measurements

The mediator model was used to test the relations between the effectiveness of motivation (EM), job satisfaction (JS) and business performance (BP), which was based on the intermediary role of JS in relation between EM and BP . We consider mediation a good tool to examine the causal relationships between the variables and the engagement of a third variable in the basic relationship serves for a deeper examination of the relations and processes, which happen between the identified variables.

Effectiveness of motivation (EM). EM represents an independent and explanatory variable. This variable is operationalized as the difference between the overall level of importance of motivational factors (needs) and the degree of their saturation on the side of employees. The effectiveness of motivation expresses how successfully, and simultaneously the company meets the economic needs of its employees and determines whether employees receive what they require and at the same time whether funds are not spent on saturating such needs, which employees consider unimportant.

The Herzberg et al. (1959) two-factor motivational theory and its 10 motivators (dissatisfaction and satisfaction) are the bases for defining the motivational items. We have selected this theory due to the interconnection of the employee's motivation and job satisfaction

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Table 1. Characteristics of examined sample of respondents (number of respondents = 757; number of companies = 49)

Variable	Category	Frequency (number of respondents)	Percentage (%)
Legal form*	AC	329	43.5
	Ltd.	343	45.3
	Plc.	85	11.2
Number of employees	10–50	169	22.3
	51–249	588	77.7
	more than 250	0	0.0
Number of companies by number of employees	10–50	12	24.5
	51–249	37	75.5
	more than 250	0	0.0
Education	secondary	379	50.1
	tertiary	79	10.4
	primary	299	39.5
Age (years)	26 to 40	75	9.9
	41 to 60	610	80.6
	more than 61	72	9.5
Production focus	combined	521	68.8
	crop	170	22.5
	animal	66	8.7
Cultivated land (ha)	101–500	30	4.0
	501–1 000	52	6.9
	more than 1 000	675	89.2
Region	Banská Bystrica	62	8.2
	Bratislava	93	12.3
	Košice	107	14.1
	Nitra	93	12.3
	Prešov	64	8.5
	Trenčín	56	7.4
	Trnava	197	26.0
	Žilina	85	11.2

*AC – agricultural cooperative; Ltd. – limited company; Plc. – public limited company

Source: Own processing

it offers. At the same time, it is a simple and straightforward tool, which allows examining both stated aspects and their relationship. Given the specifics of the agricultural labour market, we have modified the factors listed in Herzberg's theory to reflect the aspects of this environment. We have included the following factors in the set: relationships to superiors, relationships to co-workers, status, the prestige of the profession, image of the organization, management of the organization (employee awareness), job security, wage/salary, employee benefits, working conditions (including the possibility of using modern technical and technological equipment), corporate culture, career growth, recognition of personal work results, work itself in terms of its

content, educational possibilities and responsibility. Employees assessed the subjective importance of motivational factors and the degree of their saturation using a 5-point rating scale. In calculating *EM*, we have quantified the absolute values of differences between subjectively assessed by the degree of preference of individual needs and the level of their current saturation for all items. Subsequently, their sum was converted into an index by dividing it by the maximum achievable absolute value of the difference and subtracting it from the value 1. The overall level of motivational effectiveness ranged from 0 (lowest effectiveness) to 1 (highest effectiveness). After reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha of the *EM* was 0.746 (10 items).

Business performance (BP). BP represents a dependent variable, which was examined through the aggregated variable, expressed as the share of years in profit within the examined period. The value ranged from 0 (whole period in loss) to 1 (whole period in profit). Measures of central tendency are reported as follows: Mean = 3.6, MdN (median) = 4.0, Min = 0.0, and Max = 5.

Job satisfaction (JS). JS represents an intermediate variable, which transfers the effect from the independent variable to the dependent variable. It can be measured through a single item expressing overall satisfaction with working conditions or through several sub-items of the JS. Wanous et al. (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of 17 studies of both types of measuring JS. It has been demonstrated that the average correlation is 0.63 and the use of the one-item questionnaire (despite its benefits in limited administration) requires the verification of validity and reliability using scale measuring (Wanous et al. 1997). We have decided to use both types of measuring in our research and verify their concurrent validity on a sample of examined employees of agricultural companies. We have conducted the multi-item assessment of JS using the 12 statements Gallup questionnaire, used for an audit of satisfaction in the workplace (Harter et al. 2002). Statements were rated on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – no, 2 – rather no, 3 – cannot say, 4 – rather yes, 5 – yes). After reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha of the JS was 0.805 (12 items). Examples of statements – "Do I know what is expected from me at work?", "Do I have the materials and tools to do my job well?", "At work, do I have the opportunity to do every day what I know best?", "Have I received a valuation for good work in the last 7 days?", "Does my supervisor or anyone else care about me as a person?", "Does anyone at work encourage me to develop personally?".

The overall job satisfaction correlates ($r = 0.56$) to the one-item scale of experienced satisfaction at significance level $p < 0.001$. An even weaker relation between these two variables has been verified compared to the results of Wanous et al. (1997). We, therefore, think that the one-item measuring constantly requires concurrent verification of validity using another scale measurement. In our research, we, therefore, relied on the results of a multi-item PS survey.

The main hypothesis was formulated as follows:

H: The performance of agricultural companies is influenced by the effectiveness of motivating employees through their feeling of job satisfaction (the mediation effect of the job satisfaction as a factor, is of high importance).

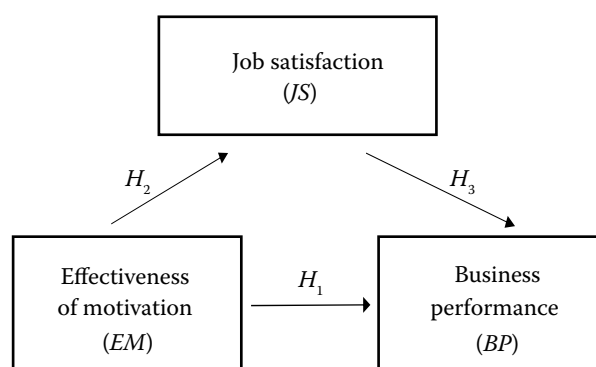


Figure 1. The mediation model and three tested hypotheses

Source: Own processing

Verifying the validity of the main hypothesis, we have researched three partial hypotheses.

H₁: The effectiveness of motivation is positively associated with the performance of agricultural companies.

H₂: The effectiveness of motivation is positively associated with job satisfaction.

H₃: Job satisfaction is positively associated with the performance of agricultural companies.

Figure 1 depicts the formulated relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We have used the mediator model to solve the set hypothesis that the dependency of the business performance on the effectiveness of motivation is facilitated by the satisfaction of employees. We proceeded in three steps (A, B, C), representing three partial regressions:

C) There is a relation between business performance (Y) and the effectiveness of motivation (X).

A) There is a relation between the measured satisfaction of employees (M) and the effectiveness of motivation (X).

B) There is a relation between business performance (Y) and employee satisfaction (M), in which X does not participate.

Where C is expressed as an overall effect and the multiplication of $A \times B$ is the mediated (indirect) effect of X on Y by means of M.

The difference $C' = C - A \times B$ is the net (direct) effect of X on Y without the participation of M.

The hypothesis is true when the indirect effect is significant. This means when $A \times B = C - C'$ is significant (use of the Freedman-Schatzkin test). The level of the statistical significance is 5%, which represents the P-value in the following tables. All steps are listed in Table 2.

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Table 2. Parameter estimates

Parameter	<i>b</i>	Std. error	<i>t</i>	Significance	95% confidence interval	
					lower limit	upper limit
Model 1/Step C						
Intercept	0.873	0.088	9.890	0.000	0.700	1.046
Effectiveness of motivation	−0.196	0.110	−1.781	0.075	−0.413	0.020
Model 2/Step A						
Intercept	0.441	0.043	10.270	0.000	0.357	0.525
Effectiveness of motivation	0.191	0.054	3.557	0.000	0.085	0.296
Model 3/Step B						
Intercept	0.440	0.083	5.308	0.000	0.277	0.602
Effectiveness of motivation	−0.384	0.098	−3.928	0.000	−0.576	−0.192
Job satisfaction	0.983	0.066	14.947	0.000	0.854	1.113

Model 1/Step C – relation of the business performance (*Y*) and the effectiveness of motivation (*X*), dependent variable: business performance; Model 2/Step A – relation of the measured satisfaction of employees (*M*) and effectiveness of motivation (*X*), dependent variable: job satisfaction; Model 3/Step B – relation of the result of the business performance (*Y*) and employee satisfaction (*M*), dependent variable: business performance; *b* – non-standardized coefficient for each parameter
Source: Own processing

As the results clearly show, the overall effect of *C* (relation of the business performance and the effectiveness of motivation) is not significant.

Step *A* verified that the relation of the measured satisfaction of employees (*M*) and the effectiveness of their motivation (*X*) is significant.

However, the significance of the relationships between measured employee satisfaction (*M*) and the effectiveness of their motivation (*X*) was also confirmed, as well as business performance (*Y*) and employee satisfaction (*M*), on which *X* does not participate.

We have used the Freedman-Schatzkin test to reveal the mediator effect. This test compares the relative strengths of the path from the independent variable to the outcome variable in the unmediated model versus the mediated model ($C - C' = 0.188$) based on a Student's *t*-test ($t = 10.25$) with statistical significance ($P = 0.000$).

The result of the Freedman-Schatzkin test indicates that the indirect effect of *X* on *Y* through *M* is significant, and mediation was important.

We took the following steps to interpret the acquired results:

- We have discovered that there is a relation between the measured employee satisfaction (*M*) and the effectiveness of their motivation (*X*). There is also a relation between the business performance (*Y*) and employee satisfaction, on which *X* does not participate, and that these relations are significant, which is a prerequisite from the existence of mediation.

- The multiplication of $A \times B$ is significant, so the indirect effect of effectiveness of motivation on the business performance by means of the measured employee job satisfaction has been confirmed. The hypothesis is supported.

- However, the overall effect – the relation of the business performance and effectiveness of motivation (expressed in step *C*) was not significant.

The hypothesis on the dependency of the business performance on the effectiveness of motivation, which is mediated by the employee job satisfaction has been confirmed. The results suggest that the direct relationship between the business performance of agricultural companies and the effectiveness of motivation of the employee, created by the companies, is not significant. However, employee work satisfaction is an important variable, which transfers this effect, meaning it mediates the effect of the effectiveness of motivation of the employee on the business performance of companies.

Our findings deepen the knowledge about the relationship between the variables examined, as they indicate that a unilateral focus on the saturation of employee needs by the employer may not lead to better organizational results. It is necessary to include job satisfaction in this relationship, which, according to the research results, is the factor that directly affects the success of companies. As job satisfaction was measured on the basis of a set of items, including factors such as working conditions and environment, employee

Table 3. Significance of variables – tests of between-subjects effects (dependent variable: job satisfaction)

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean ²	<i>F</i>	Significance
Corrected model	3.571	8	0.446	21.630	0.000
Intercept	1.914	1	1.914	92.745	0.000
Gender	0.006	1	0.006	0.280	0.597
Position	0.567	2	0.283	13.736	0.000
Education	0.405	2	0.203	9.821	0.000
Effectiveness (salaries and benefits)	2.633	1	2.633	127.585	0.000
Effectiveness (others)	0.485	1	0.485	23.509	0.000
Age	0.383	1	0.383	18.575	0.000
Error	15.435	748	0.021	–	–
Total	284.384	757	–	–	–
Corrected total	19.006	756	–	–	–

Source: Own processing

appreciation, interest in their opinion, the opportunity to learn, the results confirm that these are important for increasing performance.

Given the important position of the employee job satisfaction, we have examined in greater detail its relationship to control variables using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). We have divided the motivational factors into two sets – financial motivators (salary and benefits) and non-financial motivators (other eight items). Age, gender, job position and education of the respondents were the controlled variables in the analysis.

Reliability of the first set of the variables (salary and benefits) was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha $\lambda = 0.745$ (2 items). The other eight items form a set of various non-monetary motivational tools; Cronbach's Alpha reaches a value of 0.656. We have used the ANOVA variance analysis to analyze the multiple dependency. The level of significance was 5%. Categorical variables are coded in ascending order. Age was used as an interval variable in the analysis. Table 3 presents the significance of individual variables on the perception of the dependent variable, which is the satisfaction of agricultural employees.

As our results indicate, gender is not a significant factor for the experience of job satisfaction. Other variables (age, job position, education, effectiveness of motivational factors of the "salaries and benefits" group and the effectiveness of motivational factors of the "other" group) were identified as significant.

Within the individual variables, we performed the pairwise comparisons using Bonferroni corrections, both to determine the estimated level of variables and also to identify the significance of the differences.

The results in Table 4 clearly indicate that the difference in satisfaction based on gender was not significant. The analyzed companies, therefore, do not have to differentiate their incentive schemes according to men and women. However, it cannot be applied to individual categories of employees in terms of their job positions and education. Higher satisfaction has been detected in manual and management employees when compared to administrative workers. These employees create the most problematic category. In terms of education, employees with completed secondary education manifested the highest level of satisfaction when compared to employees with completed primary and tertiary education. The differentiated feeling of satisfaction of employees depending on their age was also confirmed. Additionally, age is positively related to satisfaction, which means that older employees of agricultural companies show a higher level of job satisfaction (Table 3).

We have further examined how the effectiveness of motivation of individual groups of motivational factors – financial and non-financial affects the satisfaction of agricultural employees (Table 5).

Statistical analysis has confirmed that the effectiveness of motivation in the "salary and benefits" group of motivational factors is positively related to satisfaction. The *b* value ($b = 0.245$) indicates a statistically significant positive effect of monetary instruments on employee satisfaction. On the other hand, the effectiveness of motivation in the "other" group of factors is negatively related to satisfaction ($b = -0.350$). The negative *b* – the value of the indicator indicates that this category of motivational tools

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Table 4. Significance of differences for the gender, position and education variables (pairwise comparisons) (dependent variable: job satisfaction)

	(I)	(J)	Mean difference (I – J)	Std. error	Significance	95% confidence interval	
						lower limit	upper limit
Gender	male	female	0.008	0.015	0.597	–0.021	0.037
	female	male	–0.008	0.015	0.597	–0.037	0.021
Position	manual employee	management employee	–0.035	0.029	0.679	–0.103	0.034
	manual employee	TEE	0.099	0.026	0.001	0.036	0.161
	TEE	management employee	–0.133	0.027	0.000	–0.199	–0.068
Education	primary	secondary	–0.043	0.012	0.001	–0.072	–0.015
	primary	tertiary	0.024	0.030	1.000	–0.049	0.096
	tertiary	secondary	–0.067	0.027	0.045	–0.133	–0.001

TEE – technical-economic employee

Source: Own processing

has a statistically significantly lower effect on satisfaction. The obtained results point to the dominant influence of monetary and other tangible motivational tools on the job satisfaction of employees in the surveyed agricultural companies, while other tools forming part of the total remuneration remain less effective.

It is obvious that wages and benefits are the most important factors influencing job satisfaction in agriculture and the tendency to shift traditional monetary motivation towards non-financial factors is not yet a suitable tool for agricultural managers. Although

some research studies agree with the focus mainly on financial rewards (De Gieter and Hofmans 2015), the vast majority of studies have confirmed the need to focus on total rewards (Schreurs et al. 2014).

According to Peccei and van Veldhoven (2017) by adopting the principle of total remuneration, the company signals to its employees that it is interested in recognizing their efforts, in satisfying their emotional needs. By moving away from the "one-size-fits-all" approach, it seeks to support and develop positive attitudes of employees towards the company, increase

Table 5. Estimates for linked variables (parameter estimates) (dependent variable: job satisfaction)

Parameter	<i>b</i>	Std. error	<i>t</i>	Significance	95% confidence interval	
					lower limit	upper limit
Intercept	0.471	0.065	7.294	0.000	0.344	0.598
Gender	male	0.008	0.015	0.529	–0.021	0.037
	female	0.000	–	–	–	–
Position	manual employee	0.099	0.026	3.784	0.048	0.150
	management employee	0.133	0.027	4.899	0.080	0.187
	TEE	0.000	–	–	–	–
Education	primary	0.024	0.030	0.783	–0.035	0.082
	secondary	0.067	0.027	2.439	0.013	0.121
	tertiary	0.000	–	–	–	–
Effectiveness (S&B)	0.245	0.022	11.295	0.000	0.202	0.287
Effectiveness (others)	–0.350	0.072	–4.849	0.000	–0.492	–0.208
Age	0.003	0.001	4.310	0.000	0.001	0.004

TEE – technical-economic employee; S&B – salary and benefits; *b* – non-standardized coefficient for each parameter

Source: Own processing

their commitment to the performance of tasks and their involvement in various activities. The research results of Bakker et al. (2014) show that if employees also receive remuneration in the form of autonomy, recognition, training and development opportunities, they will make further efforts to achieve the goals and fulfil the assigned tasks. The concept of total remuneration can serve as a source of competitive advantage for companies, allowing them to align employee performance with business goals (Peluso 2017), because the involvement and combination of different forms of remuneration is a source of overlapping and mutually reinforcing effects on employee performance (Innocenti et al. 2011). Applying this principle and creating conditions to support employee job satisfaction will therefore be a challenge for agricultural management.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, among the agricultural companies included in the research sample, we confirmed the hypothesis of the dependency of the business performance of agricultural companies on the effectiveness of employee motivation through job satisfaction.

The results refer to the importance and need for orientation of the management of examined agricultural companies to support the job satisfaction of their own employees, which in conjunction with an effective incentive system will enable a company to achieve better business performance and thus provide resources for their further development. Job satisfaction, which mediates the impact of effective motivation (especially financial) on the success of companies, acts as an important factor. For examined agricultural companies in Slovakia, it is the factor that supports the achievement of results, because the lack of job satisfaction, respectively long-term dissatisfaction of an employee with work is a barrier to his motivation (Herzberg et al. 1959). Therefore, it is essential for companies to measure job satisfaction and take care of its support.

This finding, obtained on the sample of companies, has huge application importance for the management of agricultural companies. However, given the significant relationship between the effectiveness of motivation, especially through monetary instruments with job satisfaction, it is clear that such an orientation is not sustainable in the long term. It probably results from the wage undercutting of the agricultural sector. Data obtained from The Green Report on Agriculture and

the Food Industry (2018) points to the fact that average monthly wage in agriculture (763 EUR) represents only 75.3% of the average wage in the national economy. Concurrently, agriculture is showing labour costs decrease, related to labour losses over several years in a row, as well as a faster decrease of total revenues (1.3%) than costs (0.7%). The unfavourable development of the situation in the sector and the inability of wage competition to other sectors lead to the orientation of employees primarily to monetary factors of motivation, at a time when the principle of so-called total remuneration is used, integrating various components in order to meet the individual needs of employees.

In accordance with current scientific knowledge, our findings have confirmed that job satisfaction in the examined companies of the agricultural sector may not necessarily be the same for all categories of employees. Significant influencing factors are in a particular: age, education and job position. Employee satisfaction in agriculture increases with age. Employees with completed secondary education show higher levels of satisfaction than other categories. In terms of job position, administrative employees seem to be the most problematic category. The existence of individual differences in motivational profiles creates preconditions for the application of the current trend of individualization in human resource management. Its application is the so-called management focused on the life phases (stages) of the employee, which applies in motivating individual employees such tools that will correspond in real-time to a specific combination of his life and career stages. The intention is individual support of individual employees, which leads to their job satisfaction and stabilization in the company.

Slovakia is constantly struggling with the crisis of the workforce in agriculture, especially the skilled workforce. Although it is assumed that the crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic will lead to an increase of available workforce in the labour market due to the reduced economic growth and the related unemployment, it is likely that these unemployed people will continue not to be interested in working in agriculture. Therefore, the management of agricultural companies should focus its efforts on the effective motivation of workers and efforts on keeping them especially by looking for reserves in its own motivational systems and ensuring the support of job satisfaction of its own employees.

Limitation of the study. Realization of the study just in one country, we consider as a limitation of the study. The representativeness of the sample is controversial.

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Regarding the number of companies, the sample did not fully correspond to the representation of individual categories of agricultural companies in the Slovak Republic. However, the obtained results provide a starting point for further research in this area. Some other research limitations of our study should also be noted in the area of employee job satisfaction conditions, which was identified as an important aspect of organizational performance. We also found out that the area of non-financial remuneration did not come out significantly, but it is one of the current trends of employee remuneration. Therefore, further investigations would be necessary. The measurement of business performance through profit or loss in the observed period, which may be influenced by other factors, may also be considered as a limitation.

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