

Work engagement: A study among civil servants of Romania state's public administration

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Abstract: *The present research aims to analyze civil servants' work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration, meaning the central and territorial public administration's organizations. The purpose of the study is to create a comprehensive image regarding the level of civil servants' work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration, taking into consideration the major importance of these institutions in the successful implementation of governmental reforms and crisis management, such as the Coronavirus pandemic and its economic and social impact. In order to better understand civil servants' attitudes and behaviors that reveal their level of work engagement, the items used in the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) were chosen, as well as three new items, based on the studies identified in the literature review process. A total of 646 respondents (civil servants) participated in the study. Findings suggest that civil servants in Romania's public administration have a high degree of work engagement, stating that they have a high level of energy and mental resistance during their work, are eager to put out effort in their work, and are persistent in the face of adversity. In comparison to female civil servants, men declared they adopted behaviors particular to a higher level of dedication, indicating that gender is a variable impacting work engagement. The occupied position, as well as the administrative level of the organization where the respondents worked, have no bearing on job engagement. The study adds new insights to the scarce literature on work engagement by examining the level of engagement among civil servants in the state's public administration and how it differs with respect to various socio-demographic and job-related variables. This is especially true in the Romanian context, where little research has been conducted in this direction.*

Keywords: work engagement, civil servants, Romanian public administration, gender

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Introduction

In the last years, an increasing number of publications that concentrate their attention on positive psychology and positive organizational behavior were observed. These studies have helped organizations and their managers to effectively administrate resources, improve their capacities and increase organizational performance, as a whole (Luthans, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). One of the most important positive factors is workplace well-being which makes employees feel satisfied, healthy, safe, and engaged at work, contributing to the organization's long-term effectiveness (ILO, 2009). Numerous studies have shown that engagement is vital for all complex and dynamic processes related to workers' health and wellbeing (Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2008; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Fiona et al., 2017; Ancarani, et al., 2018, Wu, Chin & Liu, 2022). More than that, previous studies showed that work engagement is positively correlated with job satisfaction (De Simone et al., 2014). Another research conducted by the authors in the Romanian public administration revealed that civil servants are highly satisfied with their jobs (Profiroiu et al., 2021), consequently it is also expected to display a high level of work engagement. In this respect, the present research aims to analyze civil servants' work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration, whereas the investigation of the literature has shown that there are no published studies on this subject in Romania or the neighboring countries so far. The study proposes to bring a new perspective regarding work engagement in civil service. Previous studies showed that motivation and job satisfaction in public service correlate with different factors as in private organizations (Bercu & Onofrei, 2017). Considering the main findings of previous research, it is possible to observe different aspects compared with the ones revealed by the work engagement studies conducted in private organizations. In addition, the present research aims to investigate the impact of different variables on work engagement levels, such as gender. Taking into consideration that the Romanian public administration is a feminine working area where women are predominant and previous research has shown that work engagement is gendered, being easier for men to be more engaged in their work as women (Banihani et al., 2013), it is important to approach this subject from the gender perspective. Starting from these considerations and results, two new variables have been included in the study: the administrative level of the public institutions and the positions held by respondents. The introduction of these variables and the study of their impact on work engagement contributes to the originality of the research and to the filling of the gap in the literature regarding work engagement in the public administration in general, and in the Romanian public administration in particular.

1. Literature review and conceptual framework - the concept of work engagement

Work engagement was defined by Kanungo (1982) as being the degree to which employees link to their occupations as part of their overall lives. Consequently, a high job involvement means that the employee identifies strongly with his or her job and thinks about it even when he or she is not at work. Task engagement has also been described by researchers (Kahn, 1990) as a multimodal motivational notion that reflects an individual simultaneous investment of physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, complete work performance. Workers who are physically active, cognitively and emotionally attached to their work have a high level of connection with their duties and engagement with their work (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). In the literature, workplace wellbeing is strongly related to employee engagement, the organization's environment, and culture, where employees desire to work because they feel safe, appreciated by their employer, and part of a supportive work community (Rousseau, 1995). Employers that pay attention to their employees' wellbeing can aid in securing staff engagement and motivation, and also in increasing productivity, organizational performance, and development (CIPD, 2007; Cesario & Chambel, 2017; BSI, 2019, Ancarani et al., 2021).

According to Schaufeli, et al., (2002) the concept of "engagement" refers to a good, rewarding work-related state of mind marked by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Engagement is a more lasting and ubiquitous affective-cognitive state that is not limited to a single object, event, person, or behavior. High levels of energy and mental resilience when working, the willingness to put forth effort in one's work and perseverance in the face of adversity, are all characteristics of vigor. Being deeply interested in one's work and feeling a sense of significance, passion, inspiration, pride, and challenge are all examples of dedication. Absorption is defined as being completely focused and happily involved in one's task, with time passing fast and difficulty disconnecting oneself from it.

Starting from Maslach and Leiter's (1997) assumptions regarding burnout and engagement, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) argue that energy, involvement, and efficacy are features of engagement. Engaged employees are more efficient in completing/ realizing/ finishing their work activities and respond positively to their job demands. In this respect, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) created a self-report questionnaire that measures vigor, dedication, and absorption, the three components of work engagement, an instrument that was named the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The factorial validity of the UWES is confirmed by the psychometric results of Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) tests, indicating that engagement is a construct made up of three closely related features measured by three internally consistent scales.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) in *Work Engagement. A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*, edited by Bakker and Leiter (2010) have mentioned that „engagement” in practice is associated with different concepts, such as commitment,

enthusiasm, employee energy, the implication of getting the job done, devotion, and excitement. While organizations in the business environment claim that is worth investigating work engagement, because it increases employees' productivity, customer satisfaction, and the organization's profitability, in scientific journals, these affirmations are not sustained (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). The literature reveals a high number of studies on work engagement and employee engagement-what they are, how can be measured, and other related concepts. In contrast, there is a reduced number of publications in peer-reviewed journals that identify and analyze the main factors that conduct to the increase in employee and work engagement. Some studies (Balain & Sparrow, 2009; Truss, 2014; Robinson, 2015) have shown that demographic factors like age, gender, education, tenure, position, and social statute, influence work engagement, and can be subjects to future research. Besides socio-demographic factors, other researchers (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004; Chaudhary & Rangnekar, 2017) demonstrated that also contextual factors, like job characteristics, have an impact on work engagement. Regarding which are the job characteristics that may influence employee engagement, researchers can look at different domains of activity, organization type, position in organizational hierarchy, tenure, and revenues.

Akhtar et al. (2015) explored in their research, the Big Five personality traits, emotional intelligence, and employee work personality effects on work engagement. As predictors of work engagement, they identified traits such as emotional intelligence, open-mindedness to new experiences, sensitivity to other people, ambition, extraversion, adjustment, and conscientiousness. Carmeli (2003) argued that emotional intelligence is also significant in workplace, for constructing altruistic conduct, contributing to increased employee engagement and work performance, and fostering a more cheerful mindset. When it comes to career and work engagement, it also reduces the impact of friction that can occur between personal and professional lives. Work engagement outcomes, such as commitment, health, job satisfaction, and effectiveness, are all dependent on emotional intelligence (Miao et al. 2016; Sabie et al. 2020a; Sabie et al. 2020b).

Despite previous work engagement analyses, some recent studies focused on the elements that influence the links between work engagement, its antecedents, and outcomes (e.g., Bakker et al., 2007, Salanova et al., 2005, Azim et al., 2014). Salanova et al. (2005) discovered that the association between job engagement and employee performance was mediated by the organizational internal environment. Bakker et al. (2007) looked at how job resources influenced the link between job demands and work engagement. Park and Gursoy (2012) extended this line of study and filled a gap in the literature by looking at differences in work involvement among generations of people, while Keyco et al. (2016) developed a new model for work engagement specific for nursing practice with an accent on professional resources and organizational climate.

The outcomes of work engagement and the factors that influenced them were also in the researchers' attention. Work engagement effects were studied by Keyco et al. (2016) who divided the 17 identified results into three categories: performance and care, professional and personal outcomes. Also, positive job-related attitudes, health and well-being, extra-role behavior, and job performance are all possible outcomes of engagement. Those who are engaged are more devoted to the social unit, are less likely to be absent, and have no plans to leave. Employees that are engaged, experience positive emotions and have excellent mental and psychosomatic health. Some researchers have demonstrated that engaged employees are competent and willing to go above and beyond in order to do their jobs, achieve organizational objectives, and enhance levels of performance (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2015; Ciobanu & Androniceanu, 2018; Ciobanu, Androniceanu & Lăzăroiu, 2019; Brișcariu, 2020; Pîrvu, 2020). Employees with a high level of emotional intelligence have more successful interactions with their coworkers and, as a result, accumulate more emotional resources. As a consequence, it encourages them to put forth greater effort and energy at work, transforming emotional intelligence into a personal resource that supports participation and work engagement (Duran, Extremera & Rey, 2004; Akhtar et al., 2015). Also, researchers like Profiroiu et al. (2021) and Nica (2016) have shown that managers who value their employees' efforts, take into consideration their opinions, and involve them in problem-solving, succeed to increase subordinates' work engagement levels.

2. Research methodology

The present research aims to identify and analyze civil servants' work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration. The study is conducted only in the central and territorial public administration's organizations (also called the state's public administration) and will further be extended to the local public administration (such as city halls and county councils).

The purpose of the study is to create a comprehensive image regarding the level of civil servants' work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration, taking into consideration the major importance of these institutions in the successful implementation of governmental reforms and crisis management, such as the Coronavirus pandemic and its economic and social impact.

The main objective of the study is to identify the level of work engagement for Romania's civil servants and analyze if there are any major differences between the civil servants from the central and territorial public administration, by gender, and by hierarchical level (held positions).

The present study started with the following *research questions*:

1. What is the work engagement level among civil servants in the state's public administration organizations?

2. Which are the main variables that influence civil servants' work engagement level?

The answers to these research questions will be used to develop a set of recommendations for improving civil servants' level of work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration.

The study is based on the following hypothesis:

H1. Gender is a variable that influences civil servants' work engagement level.

The hypothesis is based on previous research findings that showed that work engagement is a gendered concept (Banihani et al., 2013).

H2. There are no significant differences between the level of work engagement of civil servants from central and territorial public administration.

This assumption is made based on the similarities between the two administrative levels.

H3. Civil servant's held position influences the level of work engagement.

The hypothesis is based on findings from previous studies conducted in private organizations which revealed that work engagement is not the same at different hierarchical levels (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004, Chaudhary & Rangnekar, 2017).

2.1 The research method and instrument

The present study is a quantitative and applied research (Rădulescu, 1994; Chelcea, 2004) that relies on the theories from the most important studies regarding workplace engagement. The study was conducted using as research method, the **sociological survey**, being based on primary data collected directly by the authors. The research instrument used to respond to the stated objective of the study, was the self-administered opinion questionnaire (Chelcea, 2004) addressed to civil servants from the state's public administration organizations (such as ministries, other institutions from the central public administration, Prefect's Institutions and deconcentrated institutions at the county level).

The questionnaire was distributed through the official channels of communication to the institutions within the sample, in October- November 2021 period. Ten responses minimum were requested from each institution. The respondents participated voluntarily in this study, being assured of anonymity.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts:

1. The first part of the questionnaire included eight socio-demographic questions regarding respondents' positions, level of education, gender, age, seniority in the occupied positions, in the institutions in which they worked, as well as in the public

administration in general, and the administrative layer on which the analyzed public institutions were placed.

2. The second part of the questionnaire contained 20 different affirmations (grouped in two main questions), designed starting from the items identified in the literature review, developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), regarding work engagement, namely the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) scale is composed of 17 items, measured using a seven-point scale, and grouped into three main dimensions which define work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. In Schaufeli and Bakker's instrument, the seven-point scale is used for measuring the frequency of those aspects related to the employees' general attitudes towards work. In the case of the present study, we reinterpreted the instrument by measuring the level of respondents' engagement using a Likert scale on five levels (1 to 5). The reason for choosing to use another measurement scale abides from the fact that the present study is part of complex research which aims to investigate motivation, satisfaction, and work engagement in the public administration of Romania. It should also be mentioned, that the present research represents the first phase of a larger study and is conducted by using this new measurement scale for the aforementioned instrument, trying to establish which is the most suited instrument for measuring the level of work engagement. Depending on the achieved results, the study will further be continued using the initial form of the instrument or the reinterpreted one, in the public administration from the local and county level, involving also, concepts such as motivation and work satisfaction. In addition, beside the 17 items from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, three more items were designed, as to create a complex picture regarding work engagement in the institutions included in the sample.

The collected data were processed in SPSS 22.0 and the data analysis was done using three control variables: gender, the employee's hierarchic level (the position held), and the administrative level on which the public institution is placed (central and territorial level). In this manner, it can be observed if these variables influence the level of civil servants' work engagement.

2.2 The sampling method

The participants in the study were civil servants from the state's public administration institutions, which comprises the central public administration's institutions (Government's Working Apparatus, ministries, and other subordinated institutions) and the territorial public administration's institutions (consisting of the Prefect's Institutions and deconcentrated public services- which represent the institutions from the central public administration within the territory on the county layer).

Within the study, various sampling methods were used, as follows:

- In the ministries' case, the comprehensive sampling method was used, the questionnaire being administrated to all the Romanian ministries (18).

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- With regard to the subordinated institutions of each ministry, the simple random sampling method was used, the questionnaire being sent to one institution subordinated to each ministry (18 subordinated institutions).
- In the Prefect's Institutions case, the comprehensive sampling method was used and the questionnaire was sent to all the Romanian Prefectures (42).
- Regarding the deconcentrated services of the central public administration, the 'snowball method' was chosen. In this respect, the ministries and their subordinated institutions or under their coordination or under their authority, have sent the questionnaire through official addresses to be filled by the deconcentrated public services at the county level.

According to the National Agency of Civil Servants (2021), in Romania's central and territorial public administration work 62.461 civil servants. Using a formula to determine which sample is representative for this population, we have determined that the required number of responses is 382, for a 95% confidence level and a 5% standard error. The formula used for the calculation of the representative sample was:

$$n = \frac{N \times Z^2 \times 0,25}{[d^2 \times (N-1)] + (Z^2 \times 0,25)}$$

n = sample size;

N = total number of civil servants in central and territorial public administration = 62.461

d = level of accuracy (in the study is 5%)

Z = 1.96 corresponds to a confidence level of 95% (Androniceanu, 2011).

From all the institutions that agreed to participate in the study, 646 responses were received. Out of the total number of 646 participants, 27% (172) were from ministries, 25% (160) were from ministries' subordinated institutions, 31% (203) worked in Prefect's Institutions and 17% (111) were from deconcentrated services of the central public administration. Consequently, it can be affirmed that the research sample is representative and the results of the study can be extrapolated to the entire central and territorial public administration institutions.

3. The main results of the analysis regarding civil servants' work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration

The following section presents the main findings of the study regarding the level of civil servants' work engagement conducted in the central and territorial public administration. In the first subsection, the main characteristics of the sample are presented. In the second subsection, the most important results are presented and discussed. The main findings are summarized and examined, and some solutions for boosting civil servants' work engagement in the Romanian state's public administration are presented.

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Table 1. The main characteristics of the sample

Item	Categories	Percent
Gender	Feminine	73.84%
	Masculine	26.16%
Age	20 – 30 years	2.63 %
	30 – 40 years	17.03%
	40 – 50 years	42.88%
	50 – 60 years	32.20%
	over 60 years	5.26%
Education	Bachelor degree	36.46 %
	Master degree	59.47 %
	Ph.D.	4.07 %
Tenure in the analyzed public institutions (years)	0 – 1 years	5.26%
	1 – 5 years	22.60%
	5 – 7 years	11.92%
	over 7 years	60.22%
Seniority in the held positions (years)	0 – 1 years	5.73%
	1 – 5 years	28.02%
	5 – 7 years	13.16%
	over 7 years	53.10%
Seniority in the public administration (years)	0 – 5 years	19.97%
	6 – 10 years	14.55%
	11 – 15 years	15.17%
	over 15 years	50.31%
The hierarchic levels within the state's public administration	Management level	13,16%
	Execution level	86,84%
Administrative layer	Central public administration	71 %
	Territorial public administration	29 %

Table 1 presents the main characteristics of the sample. As it can be observed, regarding the positions held by the respondents, 13,16% (85) occupied management positions, and the majority- 86,84% (561)- occupied execution positions.

The respondents' distribution by seniority in the institutions where they work was: 5,26% (34)- less than 1 year, 22,60% (146)- 1 up to 5 years, 11,92% (77)-5 up to 7 years, and the majority – 60,22% (389)- more than 7 years.

Also, the majority of the respondents- 53,10% (343) were occupying their positions for more than 7 years, 28,02% (85) had a seniority between 1 and 5 years, 13,16% (181) between 5 and 7 years, and only 5,73% (37) occupied their positions for less than 1 year.

Concerning respondents' seniority in the public administration, as Table 1 reveals, the majority of the civil servants (50,31%- 329) worked in the public administration for more than 15 years, 15,17% (98) had a seniority of 11 up to

15 years, 14,55% (94) of 6 up to 10 years, and 19,97% (129) occupied positions in the public administration's institutions for less than 5 years.

Regarding respondents' distribution by gender, the majority of the civil servants participating in the study - 73,84% (477) were women and only 26% (169) were men. The proportion is close to the gender distribution of the Romanian civil servants' body where 67% are women and 33% are men (National Agency of Civil Servants, 2020).

As regards respondents' distribution by age, it can be affirmed that the sample follows civil servants' age pyramid, where civil servants aged 40-55 are predominant. The body of civil servants in Romania is aged, being necessary to attract young people into the system. In the present study, the majority of respondents were between 40-50 years old (42,88%- 277) and 50-60 years old (32,3%- 208). Only 2,63% (17) of the participants were between 20 and 30 years old and a higher percentage (17,03%- 110) were between 30 and 40 years old. It should also be mentioned that the proportion of respondents over 60 years old was quite low (5,26%- 34).

Regarding civil servants' level of education, the majority of respondents (59,47%- 380) had master's degrees, 36,46% (233) had bachelor's degrees and a lower proportion (4,07%- 26) completed doctoral studies.

Regarding the administrative level of the public organizations, out of the total number of civil servants who participated in the study, 71% (459) worked in organizations from the central public administration (ministries and subordinated institutions) and 29% (187) worked in institutions from the territorial public administration (Prefect's Institutions and deconcentrated public institutions).

3.1 Research results and discussions

This section presents the results of the study regarding the level of civil servants' work engagement. For data analysis, the SPSS 22.0 statistical analysis package was used, in order to perform a series of parametric tests and descriptive analyses to fulfil the research's objective and to respond to the study's main questions.

In order to analyze civil servants' work engagement in the state's public administration organizations, based on the studies identified in the literature review process, the items used in Utrecht Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) were chosen, and in addition, three new items were designed in order to better understand civil servants' attitudes and characteristics that reveal their level of work engagement.

For measuring the three new items, the Likert scale from 1 to 5 was used (where the scale meant: 1- total disagreement, 2- partial disagreement, 3- no agreement, no disagreement, 4- partial agreement, 5- total agreement).

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Table 2. Civil servants' attitudes and behaviors towards work

Work engagement items	Total disagreement (%)	Partial disagreement (%)	Neither agreement nor disagreement (%)	Partial agreement (%)	Total agreement (%)
When I am at work, I focus 100 % on my responsibilities and activities	1.08	2.79	6.35	32.82	56.97
I offer the best I can to accomplish each task and individual objectives	0.31	0.62	2.79	16.10	80.19
I can't wait to go to work every day	4.64	8.98	25.23	39.32	21.83

The average of the responses for the three items in Table 2, was 4.27, revealing civil servants' partial to total agreement with all the presented items. For the first two items, the majority of the respondents (56,97% and 80,19%) agreed totally with the presented statements and in the case of the last item, the majority (39,32%) agreed partially. The average of the responses for item 1 was 4,42, for item 2 was 4,75 and for the third item was 3,65. The results presented in table 2 show that, at a first glance, the civil servants in the sample present an increased level of engagement in their work and workplace, offering their best to carry out each task, trying to fulfill their individual objectives, while also focusing on their responsibilities and activities to a high extent.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) used in this research, created by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), measures the work engagement level grouping the 17 items in three main dimensions: vigor (V), dedication (D), and absorption (A). In table 3, it can be observed how the items were divided in these three dimensions. Also, the total averages of responses on the three dimensions were computed, as to establish at which dimension, civil servants achieved the highest score.

Table 3. Civil servants' level of work engagement in the state's public administration (vigor- dedication- absorption)

Work engagement items	Averages
V1. At my job, I feel full of energy	3,81
V2. At work, I feel strong and vigorous	3,61
V3. When I wake up in the morning, I want to go to work	3,47
V4. At some point, I can continue working for very long periods of time	3,83
V5. At my job, I am very resilient and deal with uncertain and demanding situations; I am mentally focused	4,07
V6. At my job I always persevere, even when things go wrong	4,00
Vigor - total average of responses	3,79
D1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	3,97
D2. I am excited about my job	3,79
D3. My job inspires me	3,56
D4. I am proud of the work I do	4,13

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Work engagement items	Averages
D5. For me, my job (the activity I do) is challenging	3,84
Dedication - total average of responses	3,85
A1. Time flies when I work	4,30
A2. When I work, I forget everything else there's around me	3,80
A3. I feel happy when I work hard	3,78
A4. I am fully focused on my work	3,80
A5. I am immersed in my work	3,70
A6. It is difficult to detach from my job	3,34
Absorption - total average of responses	3,78

From Table 3, civil servants' attitudes towards work, namely their level of work engagement, can be identified. For measuring the 17 items from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale presented above, a five-point Likert scale was used, where the scale meant as follows: 1-never, 2- rarely, 3- sometimes, 4- often, 5- always. The table presents the averages computed for each item. The total average of the answers received to this particular question is 3.81, revealing that the presented aspects are specific to civil servants almost often and that they make great efforts to carry out their assigned tasks and fulfill all their objectives. It can also be observed that for all the presented items, the average of responses was above three, showing that all the mentioned characteristics were exhibited by the respondents, at least sometimes, revealing a medium to a high level of work engagement. In addition, the results show that for the civil servants within the sample, the activities in which they are involved are aspects of great importance and that they make significant efforts to carry out all the assigned duties. It can also be observed that civil servants' achieved the highest score on the dedication dimension (3,85). On vigor and absorption, the respondents scored in a similar manner (3,79 and 3,78).

By analyzing the responses and based on the averages computed for each item, a hierarchy of attitudes and characteristics that, in civil servants' opinions, contribute the most or the least to an optimal level of work engagement, has been made. It was observed that civil servants' most exhibited characteristics are specific to all three dimensions of work engagement (vigor, absorption, and dedication). They achieved the highest scores in *the feeling of time passing by at work (absorption-4.3)*, *the pride felt about their work (dedication-4,13)*, *the capacity of resilience at work (vigor-4.07)*, and *the capacity of persevering in all circumstances (vigor, 4)*.

The first ranked attitude (the feeling of time passing by at work) reveals how absorbed and engaged civil servants are in their activities, how happy they are at work, but also the fact that they encounter difficulties in getting away from the work they do, why they have the impression that time passes quickly and forget everything else around. More than that, these findings reveal that civil servants' work engagement seems not to be influenced by financial, extrinsic motivation, but rather by intrinsic motivation.

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On the contrary, civil servants' presented the least, characteristics that are also specific to all the three dimensions of work engagement. They achieved the lowest scores in: *the difficulty to detach from work (absorption- 3.34), the desire to go to work every day (vigor-3.47), and the job inspirational capacity (dedication- 3.56).*

On a whole, the results show a high level of work engagement of the civil servants, who, according to their responses, have the energy and mental resistance during working hours, as well as their willingness to make all the necessary efforts in their work and are persistent in face of difficulties. The respondents scored similar at all the three dimensions, showing that they present the same levels of vigor, dedication and absorption.

Table 4. Civil servants' level of work engagement by the held position, gender, and the administrative level of the public organizations

Work engagement items	Execution	Management	F	M	CPA	TPA
Q1. At my job, I feel full of energy	3,79	3,96	3,75	3,97	3,82	3,80
Q2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	3,96	3,99	3,90	4,15	3,93	4,04
Q3. Time flies when I work	4,31	4,27	4,26	4,41	4,29	4,33
Q4. At work, I feel strong and vigorous	3,58	3,74	3,52	3,83	3,65	3,52
Q5. I am excited about my job	3,78	3,85	3,71	4,01	3,77	3,83
Q6. When I work, I forget everything else there's around me	3,80	3,77	3,77	3,89	3,82	3,77
Q7. My job inspires me	3,53	3,70	3,49	3,74	3,53	3,61
Q8. When I wake up in the morning, I want to go to work	3,45	3,62	3,38	3,71	3,41	3,59
Q9. I feel happy when I work hard	3,78	3,79	3,74	3,89	3,78	3,78
Q10. I am proud of the work I do	4,12	4,19	4,07	4,30	4,11	4,17
Q11. I am fully focused on my work	3,79	3,88	3,73	3,98	3,79	3,81
Q12. At some point, I can continue working for very long periods of time	3,82	3,86	3,77	3,98	3,82	3,83
Q13. For me, my job (the activity I do) is challenging	3,84	3,87	3,78	4,02	3,82	3,89
Q14. I am immersed in my work	3,68	3,80	3,63	3,88	3,69	3,70
Q15. At my job, I am very resilient and deal with uncertain and demanding situations; I am mentally focused	4,07	4,02	4,00	4,26	4,07	4,07
Q16. It is difficult to detach from my job	3,33	3,37	3,26	3,54	3,35	3,32
Q17. At my job I always persevere, even when things go wrong	4,01	3,93	3,92	4,23	3,99	4,02

In order to create a more realistic and comprehensive picture regarding the aspects that trigger civil servants' work engagement, the received responses were analyzed by taking into consideration three variables: the hierarchical levels (held positions-management and execution), respondents' gender, and the administrative levels on which the institutions are placed (central public administration — CPA and territorial public administration — TPA). Table 4 presents the means of the answers received for each question, grouped by the variables presented above. As it can be observed, all the averages are above 3, revealing that the civil servants included in the sample

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present a medium up to a high level of work engagement, despite gender, held position, and administrative level.

As it can be observed, there are no significant differences in the average distribution of the responses regarding the aspects specific to an increased level of work engagement, by civil servants' hierarchical levels (held positions).

Regarding the differences in the average distribution of the responses by respondents' gender, the opinions of the two groups were different related to a series of aspects: the meaning and purpose of the job, the feeling of excitement about the job, the desire of going to work every day, the perceived challenging character of the job, the feeling of power and vigor, the resilience capacity and the capacity of persevering in any circumstances. Only in the aforementioned cases, the differences in perception seem to be significant. The results reveal a lower level of commitment among female civil servants.

As regards the perception between civil servants working in organizations in the CPA and those working in organizations in the TPA, it can be stated that for all the presented items, no significant differences seem to exist.

In order to certainly determine whether the differences in perception between groups are significant or not, the variance analysis (ANOVA) was conducted. The results are presented in the tables below. The notations from the beginning of the tables have the following meanings: the Sum of Squares shows the variation in Y related to the variation within each category of X, meaning the variations of the 17 presented items considering the variation of responses by the three variables included in the study. DF represents the degrees of freedom, namely the number of independent variables whose variation is not restricted, being computed as the number of responses minus the numbers of estimated parameters. The mean square represents the Sum of Squares divided by the degrees of freedom, showing the estimation of the variance. F statistic represents the variation between sample means/variation within samples. High values of the F-statistic show a high variation between sample means relative to the variation within the samples. The F statistic help at interpreting the ANOVA. Sig. represents the significance level of the ANOVA. When Sig. \leq 0.05, the differences between the responses of the two groups are significant, showing a high variance of the responses.

Table 5. ANOVA compare means by administrative levels of the public organizations (CPA and TPA)

ANOVA						
Work engagement items		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squar	F	SIG.
Q1. At my job, I feel full of energy	Between Groups	023	1	023	028	867
	Within Groups	530,937	644	824		
	Total	530,960	645			
Q2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	Between Groups	1,579	1	1,579	1,818	178
	Within Groups	558,737	643	869		
	Total	560,316	644			

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Q3. Time flies when I work	Between Groups	326	1	326	440	507
	Within Groups	476,207	644	739		
	Total	476,533	645			
Q4. At work, I feel strong and vigorous	Between Groups	2,486	1	2,486	2,320	128
	Within Groups	689,857	644	1,071		
	Total	692,342	645			
Q5. I am excited about my job	Between Groups	469	1	469	465	495
	Within Groups	649,477	644	1,009		
	Total	649,946	645			
Q6. When I work, I forget everything else there's around me	Between Groups	422	1	422	403	526
	Within Groups	674,216	644	1,047		
	Total	674,638	645			
Q7. My job inspires me	Between Groups	1,027	1	1,027	863	353
	Within Groups	766,238	644	1,190		
	Total	767,265	645			
Q8. When I wake up in the morning, I want to go to work	Between Groups	4,830	1	4,830	3,887	049
	Within Groups	800,111	644	1,242		
	Total	804,941	645			
Q9. I feel happy when I work hard	Between Groups	011	1	011	010	919
	Within Groups	687,334	644	1,067		
	Total	687,345	645			
Q10. I am proud of the work I do	Between Groups	518	1	518	575	449
	Within Groups	580,559	644	901		
	Total	581,077	645			
Q11. I am fully focused on my work	Between Groups	044	1	044	050	824
	Within Groups	577,196	644	896		
	Total	577,240	645			
Q12. At some point, I can continue working for very long periods of time	Between Groups	015	1	015	016	899
	Within Groups	593,913	644	922		
	Total	593,927	645			
Q13. For me, my job (the activity I do) is challenging	Between Groups	903	1	903	907	341
	Within Groups	640,992	644	995		
	Total	641,895	645			
Q14. I am immersed in my work	Between Groups	015	1	015	015	904
	Within Groups	664,909	644	1,032		
	Total	664,924	645			
Q15. At my job, I am very resilient and deal with uncertain and demanding situations; I am mentally focused	Between Groups	005	1	005	007	935
	Within Groups	447,861	644	695		
	Total	447,865	645			
Q16. It is difficult to detach from my job	Between Groups	088	1	088	072	789
	Within Groups	792,345	644	1,230		
	Total	792,433	645			
Q17. At my job I always persevere, even when things go wrong	Between Groups	130	1	130	163	687
	Within Groups	514,868	644	799		
	Total	514,998	645			

Observing the differences in the responses between the civil servants working in the central public administration and those working in the territorial public administration, it can be stated that only in one case, namely the desire to go to work every day, the differences are significant. The average of responses is higher for civil servants from TPA (3,59) than for civil servants from CPA (3.41). Consequently, civil servants from the TPA seem to be more motivated to go to work, presenting a higher level of work engagement and energy at the workplace than civil servants in the CPA. Consequently, it can be affirmed that civil servants in the TPA seem to attribute a higher significance to their work, are more enthusiastic about their own work, and feel more inspired by the set tasks and objectives. As far as the rest of the

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aspects are concerned, no significant differences can be observed because the value of Sig. is more than 0.05.

Table 6. ANOVA compare means by hierarchical levels (held positions)

ANOVA						
Work engagement items		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	SI G.
Q1. At my job, I feel full of energy	Between Groups	2,320	1	2,320	2,829	093
	Within Groups	527,224	643	820		
	Total	529,544	644			
Q2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	Between Groups	048	1	048	055	815
	Within Groups	559,201	642	871		
	Total	559,248	643			
Q3. Time flies when I work	Between Groups	079	1	079	106	745
	Within Groups	475,968	643	740		
	Total	476,047	644			
Q4. At work, I feel strong and vigorous	Between Groups	1,760	1	1,760	1,643	200
	Within Groups	688,634	643	1,071		
	Total	690,394	644			
Q5. I am excited about my job	Between Groups	338	1	338	336	563
	Within Groups	648,136	643	1,008		
	Total	648,474	644			
Q6. When I work, I forget everything else there's around me	Between Groups	066	1	066	063	801
	Within Groups	673,134	643	1,047		
	Total	673,200	644			
Q7. My job inspires me	Between Groups	2,053	1	2,053	1,730	189
	Within Groups	763,132	643	1,187		
	Total	765,184	644			
Q8. When I wake up in the morning, I want to go to work	Between Groups	2,197	1	2,197	1,765	184
	Within Groups	800,401	643	1,245		
	Total	802,598	644			
Q9. I feel happy when I work hard	Between Groups	008	1	008	007	932
	Within Groups	685,843	643	1,067		
	Total	685,851	644			
Q10. I am proud of the work I do	Between Groups	369	1	369	409	523
	Within Groups	579,951	643	902		
	Total	580,319	644			
Q11. I am fully focused on my work	Between Groups	657	1	657	735	392
	Within Groups	575,141	643	894		
	Total	575,798	644			
Q12. At some point, I can continue working for very long periods of time	Between Groups	092	1	092	099	753
	Within Groups	592,460	643	921		
	Total	592,552	644			
Q13. For me, my job (the activity I do) is challenging	Between Groups	080	1	080	080	777
	Within Groups	640,472	643	996		
	Total	640,552	644			
Q14. I am immersed in my work	Between Groups	1,057	1	1,057	1,026	311
	Within Groups	662,162	643	1,030		
	Total	663,219	644			
Q15. At my job, I am very resilient and deal with uncertain and demanding situations; I am mentally focused	Between Groups	190	1	190	274	601
	Within Groups	446,808	643	695		
	Total	446,998	644			
Q16. It is difficult to detach from my job	Between Groups	113	1	113	092	762
	Within Groups	789,552	643	1,228		
	Total	789,665	644			
	Between Groups	451	1	451	565	453

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ANOVA						
Work engagement items		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	SI G.
Q17. At my job I always persevere, even when things go wrong	Within Groups	513,543	643	799		
	Total	513,994	644			

The results presented in Table 6 reveal that there are no differences in the work engagement level between civil servants occupying execution positions and management positions due to the fact that the Sig. value is above 0.05 in all the presented cases as it can be observed in Table 6. Consequently, it can be considered that the hierarchical level (held position) does not represent a variable with an impact on work engagement.

Table 7. ANOVA compare means by civil servants' gender

ANOVA						
Work engagement items		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	SIG.
Q1. At my job, I feel full of energy	Between Groups	5,884	1	5,884	7,225	007
	Within Groups	523,660	643	814		
	Total	529,544	644			
Q2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	Between Groups	7,609	1	7,609	8,856	003
	Within Groups	551,639	642	859		
	Total	559,248	643			
Q3. Time flies when I work	Between Groups	2,669	1	2,669	3,625	057
	Within Groups	473,378	643	736		
	Total	476,047	644			
Q4. At work, I feel strong and vigorous	Between Groups	11,427	1	11,427	10,822	001
	Within Groups	678,967	643	1,056		
	Total	690,394	644			
Q5. I am excited about my job	Between Groups	10,986	1	10,986	11,081	001
	Within Groups	637,489	643	991		
	Total	648,474	644			
Q6. When I work, I forget everything else there's around me	Between Groups	1,959	1	1,959	1,876	171
	Within Groups	671,241	643	1,044		
	Total	673,200	644			
Q7. My job inspires me	Between Groups	7,484	1	7,484	6,351	012
	Within Groups	757,701	643	1,178		
	Total	765,184	644			
Q8. When I wake up in the morning, want to go to work	Between Groups	13,755	1	13,755	11,212	001
	Within Groups	788,843	643	1,227		
	Total	802,598	644			
Q9. I feel happy when I work hard	Between Groups	3,063	1	3,063	2,884	090
	Within Groups	682,788	643	1,062		
	Total	685,851	644			
Q10. I am proud of the work I do	Between Groups	6,483	1	6,483	7,265	007
	Within Groups	573,836	643	892		
	Total	580,319	644			
Q11. I am fully focused on my work	Between Groups	7,665	1	7,665	8,676	003
	Within Groups	568,133	643	884		
	Total	575,798	644			
Q12. At some point, I can continue working for very long periods of time	Between Groups	5,100	1	5,100	5,582	018
	Within Groups	587,452	643	914		
	Total	592,552	644			

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ANOVA						
Work engagement items		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	SIG.
Q13. For me, my job (the activity I do) is challenging	Between Groups	7,161	1	7,161	7,270	007
	Within Groups	633,391	643	985		
	Total	640,552	644			
Q14. I am immersed in my work	Between Groups	8,023	1	8,023	7,874	005
	Within Groups	655,196	643	1,019		
	Total	663,219	644			
Q15. At my job, I am very resilient and deal with uncertain and demanding situations; I am mentally focused	Between Groups	8,006	1	8,006	11,727	001
	Within Groups	438,992	643	683		
	Total	446,998	644			
Q16. It is difficult to detach from my job	Between Groups	9,162	1	9,162	7,548	006
	Within Groups	780,503	643	1,214		
	Total	789,665	644			
Q17. At my job I always persevere, even when things go wrong	Between Groups	11,943	1	11,943	15,296	000
	Within Groups	502,050	643	781		
	Total	513,994	644			

With regard to the differences between male and female civil servants' work engagement levels, in 14 out of 17 presented items, the differences are significant because the value of Sig. is under 0.05. In all these cases, the results are in men's favor because the averages of their responses are higher than women's. They declared that they are exhibiting characteristics specific to a higher level of engagement compared to female civil servants. The most significant difference was observed regarding the following type of behavior- *the capacity of persevering, even in difficult situations*- meaning that male civil servants have higher levels of energy and resistance, have the willingness to invest additional efforts, greater ability to resist, and at the same time not fatigue easily, managing to cope much better with the encountered difficulties, compared to female civil servants.

For the other three items, the results between the two groups were similar, the value of Sig. being more than 0.05. Considering the presented findings, it can be stated that gender is a variable that influences civil servants' work engagement.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

It has been observed that civil servants in the state's public administration organizations present an increased level of work engagement, declaring that they have energy and mental resistance during work, willingness to invest effort in their work, and are persistent in face of difficulties.

Regarding H1 - „Gender is a variable that influences civil servants' work engagement level” and in accordance with previous research underlying that work engagement is a gendered concept (Banihani et al., 2013), also contrary to studies published so far in the literature (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Mostert & Rothmann, 2006; Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006), the results of the present research have shown that gender is a variable influencing work engagement, which means that the

first hypothesis validates. Observing the perceived discrepancies between male and female civil servants' work engagement levels, in 14 out of the 17 presented items, the differences were significant. The results validated the first hypothesis (H1) of the study. The results are in favor of men in all of these circumstances because they stated that they are exhibiting characteristics that indicate a higher level of engagement than female civil servants. When compared to women, the most significant difference was observed regarding the capacity to persevere at work, even in difficult situations which means that male civil servants have higher levels of energy and resistance, greater willingness to invest additional efforts, greater ability to resist, and at the same time do not easily fatigue, managing to cope much better with the encountered difficulties. Our study results are different also from other research that found gender differences in work engagement, as their outcomes demonstrate that women show a higher level of work engagement than men (Rothbard, 2001; Mauno et al., 2005; Avery, McKay & Wilson, 2007; Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010).

Also, the research revealed that the occupied position is not a variable with a particular influence on work engagement. The results of the ANOVA test did not validate the third hypothesis (H3) which states that „Civil servant's held position influences the level of work engagement.”

More than that, it was observed that the administrative level of the institutions where the respondents worked does not have a great influence on the work engagement level, as only in one case, the differences between the responses of the two groups were significant. In conclusion, the results demonstrated that there are no major differences between the civil servants from the central and territorial public administration, partially validating the second hypothesis (H2) of the study which states that „There are no significant differences between the level of work engagement of civil servants from central and territorial public administration.”

Our recommendations are addressed to civil servants in management positions, who should understand that the measures to increase the engagement of civil servants should not be general and take into account the socio-demographic and contextual factors of the public institutions. Since the male civil servants registered higher levels of engagement, compared to women, we recommend like civil servants in management positions improve their communication and relationships with female civil servants, to change the organization environment climate in order to facilitate the participation of women in the problem-solving and decision – making processes.

Because TPA civil servants are more motivated to come to work and seem to have a greater level of work engagement than CPA civil servants, we recommend that managers from CPA to encourage their subordinates to discuss their tasks with them and their co-workers in order to better clarify them and find the best way and resources to achieve the established objectives. It is necessary for CPA civil servants to better visualize and become aware of their work results, the impact their activities produce in practice, and especially in the daily life of the citizens they serve. In this

way, they will appreciate more the value of their work and will make additional efforts to solve the problems that arise, regardless of their nature.

On a whole, the results of the study revealed a high level of work engagement among civil servants. The findings can be extrapolated to the whole population of civil servants from Romania, as the sample in the study was representative. The research brings valuable insights to the studies on the public administration field, especially from the gender perspective, since the male civil servants scored better showing a higher level of work engagement in a field dominated by women.

5. Research limitations and points for further research

The study conducted by this research team doesn't intend to be an exhaustive research, but it was our endeavor to add a new page to the existing large number of research thesaurus on work engagement. As a limit, the present research did not take into consideration variables like: age, education, tenure in a public institution, seniority, etc. Another limitation consists of the fact that the research has been conducted only in the state's public administration organizations.

Additional research can be conducted in order to examine the impact of other variables on employees' work engagement that were not measured in this study and in the organizations from the local public administration.

Authors Contributions

The authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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