

Peculiarities of motivation sources of public sector employees

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Abstract: This article studies the motivation sources of public sector employees, depending on their age, gender and work seniority. The empirical study involved 756 people living in Jerusalem and the vicinity (Israel), who were on the staff of public institutions and private firms and engaged in various spheres of professional activities – education, culture, civil service, telecommunications, etc. The Motivation Sources Inventory, developed by J. Barbuto and R. Scholl, was used as a tool to measure the orientation of personnel motivation and the level of expressiveness of motivation sources. A statistical analysis of the obtained data shows some statistically significant differences in the level of motivation source, depending on the form of employment. The empirical data indicate statistically significant differences in the level of motivation sources of public sector employees, depending on age, gender and work experience. Key features of public sector employee motivation are viewed and discussed.

Keywords: motivation, public sector employees, private sector employees, motivation sources

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Introduction

Public sector employees play significant roles in the economic, political, and social life of the State. Statesmen and officials, involved in state-maintained organs and governmental bodies of power, participate in nationwide goals and priority development, as well as in the formation and implementation of diverse aspects of State politics. From enhanced job performance to increased organizational commitment, job satisfaction, attraction to public service, and ethical behavior. These are all critical elements that contribute to a well-functioning society. Thus, a

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highly productive public sector is a prerequisite for the existence and proper functioning of a state.

Public service motivation encompasses various aspects, including the opportunity to influence public affairs, a dedicated commitment to serving the public interest, and a belief in social justice. Public sector employees are determined to meet the vital needs of many population groups. The efforts of scholars to consolidate and synthesize the existing research on public service employee motivation are particularly valuable. By identifying gaps in the literature and proposing directions for future investigation, these endeavors not only further our understanding of this concept, but they also provide a roadmap for continued exploration and refinement. Understanding public service employee motivation sources can be vital for fostering a motivated and engaged workforce. Public service motivation theory (PSM) yields the following viewpoint: statesmen and officials are unique and differ from their peers in the private sector, since, first and foremost, they are driven by their intrinsic motivation, and not by the extrinsic one, such as, for example, financial benefits. It has been shown that the inner motivation is a powerful force that urges statesmen and officials to act for the sake of the entire society. However, the distinction between public sector and private sector employees lacks uniform clarity, with various authors providing different definitions for the public sector while leaving the private sector undefined (Brewer & Selden, 1998).

One of the priority areas of public sector administration is to improve the efficiency of public employees' work, which is inextricably linked to changes in the existing motivational system and mechanism of incentives for the staff of state organizations. The nature of what constitutes performance within the public sector is complex, as it may refer to public sector efficiency and effectiveness or specific public sector objectives, such as public access, transparency, or freedom from corruption or depend on personal and social characteristics of the employees, such as age, gender, work seniority, etc. Regardless of the definition, public management scholars have shown a continued interest in job performance, seeking to understand the mechanisms that enhance it.

Previous literature reviews have shown distinct differences in work motivation between public sector employees and managers compared to their private sector counterparts (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999). However, limited attention has been given to understanding the underlying causes of these differences. All the abovementioned explains why the problem of studying the motivation profile of public sector employees is quite relevant and acute.

1. Literature review

In the current world, the public sector plays a vital role in boosting the economy by not only delivering quality services but also generating employment opportunities for a substantial portion of the population. Exploration of public sector employee motivation is of paramount importance due to its influence on each citizen's everyday routine as well as its unique and complicated environment. Recognizing the

contributions of the public sector to society and the importance of motivation in enhancing employee performance, the objective of this study is to explore the differences in motivation sources, depending on the field of employment, age, gender, work experience, etc.

Modern management principles emphasize the creation of work motivation through elements such as work context, job characteristics, organizational goals, conflict resolution, efficient work practices, rewards and incentives, job satisfaction, and cultivating a positive attitude towards the workplace. Moreover, effective executives must leverage the ability of their employees to achieve organizational objectives. The concept of individuals being predisposed to respond to motives grounded in public institutions can, indeed, have far-reaching implications across various domains (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022).

There are some essential differences in the motivation profile between public and private sectors. Public sector organizations have always been competing with the private sector for highly qualified staff. The public sector, however, has lost attraction as the employer of choice (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020). Public service motivation and different sector rewards have been identified as alternative drivers of sector attraction. It is still unclear, though, to what extent public service motivation is associated with sector attraction, especially when competing for a comprehensive set of sector rewards.

Motivation among public sector employees in Israel is influenced by a variety of unique factors, reflective of the country's socio-political context, cultural dynamics, and organizational frameworks. Isaac et al. (2001) emphasize that organizational success is based on the collaboration between management and employees, as both aspects are integral for coherence and effectiveness. In both the public and private sectors, various motivating factors drive employee performance within their respective organizations. These factors include but are not limited to financial incentives, job satisfaction, and recognition in the workplace (Davidov, 2023; Davidov, 2024). Lyons et al. (2006) conducted research that reveals a statistically significant variance in two intrinsic motivators – intellectual stimulation and challenging work – between the public and private sectors. Interestingly, no significant differences were found by these authors between the sectors in terms of personal interest in work.

Employee motivation is often tied to work-life balance policies. Many public sector entities emphasize this balance, offering flexible working hours, which can significantly enhance job satisfaction and motivation. Rashid & Rashid (2012) found that public sector employees are more motivated by work contents and experience more balance between work and family life, whereas, private sector employees are more motivated by financial rewards, career development opportunities, and a supportive environment. Ingrams (2020) focused their research on organizational behavior in connection with public service motivation. It was found that along with other predictors, organizational commitment and job satisfaction are a direct, positive influence on organizational behavior (Liu & Perry, 2016). Gould-Williams

et al. (2013) and Bottomley et al. (2016) present evidence of a positive association between PSM and organizational behavior. This research indicates that there are some important differences in motivations and attitudes of employees between the private and public sectors, and one of those differences is PSM.

Barbuto's model synthesizes several theoretical perspectives, identifying five sources of motivation: intrinsic process, instrumental, external and internal self-concept, and goal internalization. Intrinsic process motivation arises when the work itself is rewarding, and individuals take pleasure in their tasks. Instrumental motivation is driven by external rewards such as pay, promotions, and bonuses. External self-concept motivation is influenced by how others perceive the individual, while internal self-concept motivation is derived from personal ideals and self-fulfillment. With goal internalization, persons are motivated to work toward the goal of the collective (Barbuto, 2000). The five sources of motivation measured include intrinsic process, instrumental, self-concept-external, self-concept-internal, and goal internalization (Barbuto & Scholl, 1999). The description of motivation sources according to J. Barbuto is provided below.

Intrinsic process motivation. If an individual is driven to perform specific tasks or engage in particular behaviors simply for the enjoyment they provide, intrinsic process motivation is at play. In this type of motivation, the enjoyment derived from the activity itself serves as the incentive. Similar concepts to intrinsic process motivation can be found in the literature. Need-based frameworks akin to intrinsic process motivation include early existence needs and physiological needs highlighted by Maslow (1954). The term "intrinsic motivation" often refers to personal satisfaction gained from achieving goals or completing tasks. However, intrinsic process, as defined here, differs from the traditional notion of intrinsic motivation by focusing on the immediate enjoyment or pleasure derived from the activity itself, rather than satisfaction from its completion. The classical concept of intrinsic motivation is represented in this motivational taxonomy as self-concept internal (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998).

Self-concept external motivation tends to be externally based when the individual is primarily other-directed and seeking affirmation of traits, competencies, and values. The individual behaves in ways that satisfy reference group members, first to gain acceptance, and then to gain status. This source of motivation also resembles social identity theory, where the focus is on establishing and maintaining social reference and standing (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Developmental theorists have discussed a similar motivational stage as interpersonal (Kohlberg, 1976; Kegan, 1982) and early formal operational (Piaget, 1972).

Self-concept internal motivation is internally driven when an individual is inner-directed. In this context, the individual establishes internal standards related to traits, competencies, and values, forming the basis of their ideal self (Leonard et al., 1999). This internal motivation encourages the person to partake in behaviors that reinforce these standards, ultimately leading to higher levels of competency. This type of motivation is akin to McClelland's (1961) concept of a high need for achievement,

Deci's (1975) notion of internal motivation to face challenges, and Katz and Kahn's (1978) idea of internalized motivation stemming from role performance. Developmental theorists have likened this stage to Piaget's (1972) full formal operational stage, Kohlberg's (1976) social system stage, and Kegan's (1982) institutional stage. Similar motivational needs are described by McClelland (1961) and Murray (1964) as a need for achievement, Maslow (1954) as a need for esteem, and Herzberg (1968) as motivating factors. Additionally, Bandura (1986) discusses self-regulation and personal standards in terms that are similar to those used in describing an internal self-concept. This motivational force is also referred to as intrinsic motivation to overcome challenges (Deci, 1975) and intrinsic motivation to achieve personal success (Staw, 1976).

Goal internalization motivation appears when individuals embrace attitudes and actions that align with their personal value systems. This form of motivation relies heavily on robust ideals and beliefs, as highlighted by Barbuto and Scholl (1998). Workers who experience this motivation possess a deep commitment to their cause, cultivating a strong sense of duty that propels them toward achieving collective objectives. This source of motivation resonates with Katz and Kahn's (1978) concept of internalized values and Etzioni's (1961) notion of pure moral involvement, both underscoring the importance of virtuous character and the unwavering commitment to uphold these virtues.

Developmental theorists draw parallels to a motivational stage characterized as post-formal operational (Piaget, 1972), principled orientation (Kohlberg, 1976), and inter-individual (Kegan, 1982). Furthermore, need theorists equate this motivational drive with the concept of self-actualization put forth by Maslow in 1954. What sets goal internalization apart from these other motivational sources is the distinctive absence of self-interest (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998). Instead of seeking personal gain, individuals are inspired to act because they genuinely believe in the cause they are supporting.

With intrinsic process motivation, the work itself serves as the primary incentive, as employees derive enjoyment from the tasks they perform. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is driven by external rewards such as salary, promotions, and bonuses. Self-concept-external motivation revolves around the way individuals are perceived by others, where one's reputation and external validation act as key motivators. Conversely, self-concept-internal motivation is rooted in an individual's internal standards, encompassing traits, competencies, and values that define their ideal self, with the drive to achieve this ideal self-motivating their behavior.

Goal internalization represents a different motivational paradigm, in which individuals are driven by a genuine belief in the organization's goals and do not need significant external incentives. These individuals are motivated to contribute towards the collective objectives of the organization. This taxonomy provides a crucial framework for comprehending individual behaviors and decision-making processes (Barbuto et al., 2004; Barbuto, 2000).

In general, the idea of public service motivation can be perceived as a definite push to carry out social activities, a sort of a clandestine force that is expressed through the selfless aid, acting on behalf of the entire state. Thus, it is the process of the statesmen's and the officials' motivation that can be considered satisfactory, first for the social interests, and then for individual needs and requirements, in this very sequence and not in the opposite one. One of the key tasks in the state management and administration, as of today, is the urge to establish such a system, which would motivate clerks and could cater for the utmost efficiency in taking advantage of the manpower potential in state departments, as well as raising statesmen's reliability and professionalism.

2. Research results and discussions

2.1 Methodology

The public sector encompasses state administration, local communities, healthcare, education, arts, social care, sports, science, judiciary, military, and police, while all branches of the commercial sector and sole trader entrepreneurship fall under the private sector. This current research explores the peculiarities of public sector employees in Israel from the perspectives of age, gender, and work seniority. The stated goal of this study made it possible to formulate the following tasks:

- 1) description of the motivational profile of Israel's public sector employees;
- 2) develop a comparative analysis of motivational profiles of employees in public and private sectors.

The sample of the study includes the staff of public institutions and private firms engaged in various spheres of professional activity: education, culture, civil service, telecommunications, etc.

The study involves 756 people living in Jerusalem and its vicinity and between the ages of 18-65 years. The sample distribution according to social characteristics is as follows:

- (1) the staff of public institutions – 585 people employed in various occupational fields: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Absorption, the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), the National Insurance Institute, the Israel Trade Union, the Jerusalem Municipality and other institutions.
 - gender: 261 males (44%) and 324 females (56%);
 - age: average age 44 years, median age – 42 years.
 - work experience of the employees: minimum – 1 year, maximum – 44 years, average – 14.1 years, median – 14 years.
 - education level: secondary general education – 204 people (34.6%), practical engineering – 169 people (28.7%), first academic degree – 148 people (25.1%), second academic degree – 47 people (8%).
 - status of employees: managerial staff – 169 people (29%), non-managerial staff - 417 people (71%).
- (2) staff of private firms – 171 people (91 men and 80 women).

The Motivation Sources Inventory (MSI) (Barbuto & Scholl, 1998) was used as a tool to measure the orientation of personnel motivation. In total, five such sources were identified:

1. Intrinsic processes: the desire for pleasure and enjoyment from the processes of activity.
2. Instrumental motivation: desire for tangible external rewards such as pay, bonuses, etc.
3. External self-concept: desire for acceptance and maintenance of one's traits, competence, and values by other individuals or a reference group.
4. Internal self-concept: desire to meet someone's own standards of traits, competence, and values.
5. Goal internalization: the desire to achieve goals consistent with internalized values.

The questionnaire consists of 30 questions (six in each category). For each item, the filler is asked to respond on a seven-point scale.

2.2 Public sector and private firms' personnel

To identify the prevailing type of motivation of public sector personnel, the data obtained by means of the MSI were analyzed. Analysis of the average values of the motivation source indicators obtained in the groups of public sector and private firms' personnel reveals the internal self-concept source of motivation as the predominant type, i.e., the employee's desire to meet his/her own standards of traits, competence, values, etc. (Table 1).

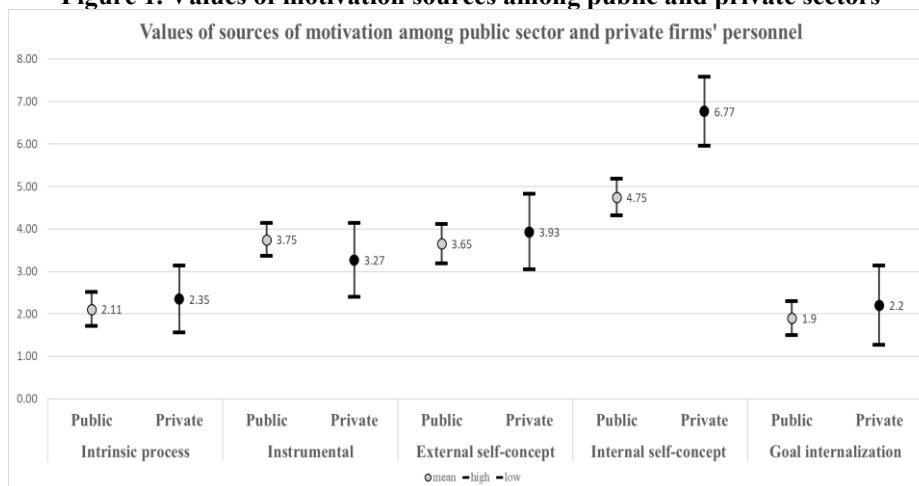
Table 1. Comparison of sources of motivation (public and private sectors)

Motivation source	Public sector		Private sector		p- value	Cohen's coefficient
	μ	σ	μ	σ		
Intrinsic process	2.11	4.96	2.35	5.23	0.674	no differences
Instrumental	3.75	4.76	3.27	5.76	0.397	no differences
External self-concept	3.65	5.65	3.93	5.89	0.668	no differences
Internal self-concept	4.75	5.28	6.77	5.37	0.001*	0.379
Goal internalization	1.90	4.92	2.20	6.17	0.614	no differences

* Statistically significant differences

Source: own processing

The analysis of the mean values of the sources of motivation obtained in the groups of public sector and private firms personnel shows that the employees of private firms have significantly higher internal self-concept motivation, which is expressed in the employees' desire to meet their own standards of traits, competence, values, etc. (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Values of motivation sources among public and private sectors


Source: own processing

Comparison of sources of motivation in the sectoral aspect shows the following:

- the prevailing motivation of both public sector employees and employees of private firms is the internal motivation, i.e., the employee's desire to meet his/her own standards, traits, competence, values, etc.;
- the personnel of private firms are characterized by a higher level of internal motivation than employees of public organizations.

2.3 Males and females in the public sector

A statistical analysis of motivation sources differences between males and females was conducted (each of the respondents identified with one of the two genders - male or female). Analysis of average values of motivation sources reveals external motivation as the prevailing source of motivation among men, i.e., an individual's orientation, mainly towards others, seeking the confirmation of his/her traits, competence and values (orientation towards approval by others), and among female personnel – internal motivation, depending on self-concept, i.e., an employee's desire to meet their own standards of traits, competence, values, etc. (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of motivation sources in different gender groups

Motivation source	Males		Females		p- value	Cohen's coefficient
	μ	σ	μ	σ		
Intrinsic process	2.21	4.97	2.11	4.87	0.858	no differences
Instrumental	3.88	4.76	3.81	4.59	0.893	no differences
External self-concept	5.23	5.60	2.11	5.05	0.001*	0.585
Internal self-concept	5.16	5.11	4.36	5.42	0.180	no differences
Goal internalization	1.82	4.87	2.12	4.90	0.587	no differences

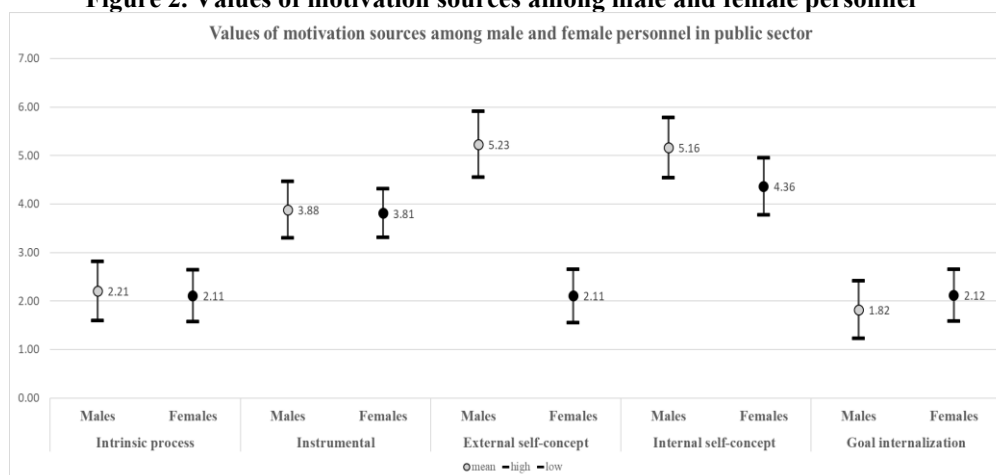
* Statistically significant differences

Source: own processing

The analysis shows that male staff have significantly higher external self-concept motivation, which is expressed as a focus on approval by others, desire for acceptance and maintenance of one's traits, competence, and values by other individuals (Figure 2).

The least common source of motivation among male public sector staff is goal internalization, i.e., behavior aimed at aligning the employee's goals with the goal of the institution, while among female staff – intrinsic process and extrinsic motivation (external self-concept).

Figure 2. Values of motivation sources among male and female personnel



Source: own processing

2.4 Managerial and non-managerial staff in the public sector

A comparative analysis of the motivation differences between the managerial and non-managerial teams was also conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of motivation sources depending on the work position

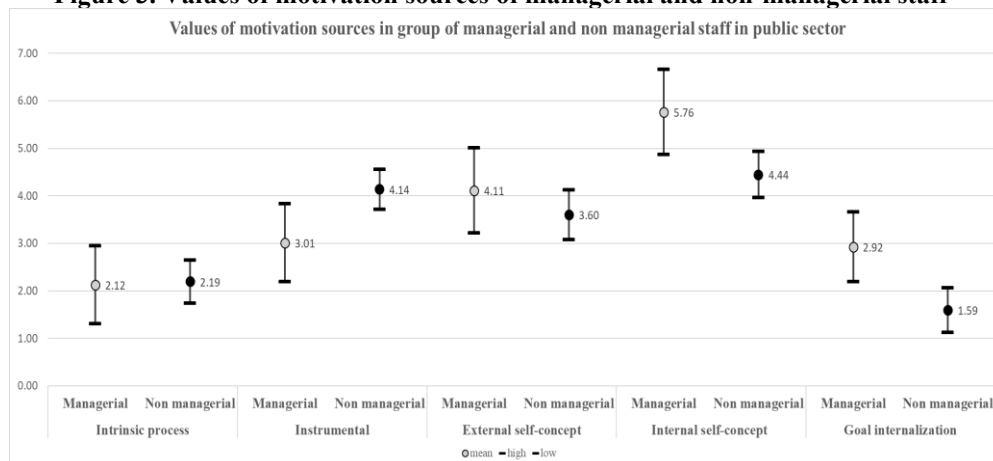
Motivation source	Managerial staff		Non-managerial staff		p- value	Cohen's coefficient
	μ	σ	μ	σ		
Intrinsic process	2.12	5.39	2.19	4.72	0.911	no differences
Instrumental	3.01	5.38	4.14	4.35	0.053	no differences
External self-concept	4.11	5.88	3.60	5.44	0.428	no differences
Internal self-concept	5.76	5.90	4.44	5.05	0.037*	0.24
Goal internalization	2.92	4.83	1.59	4.84	0.029*	0.28

* Statistically significant differences

Source: own processing

The least common source of motivation among managerial staff in the public sector is process orientation, while among non-managerial staff it is goal internalization, i.e., behavior aimed at aligning the employee's goals with the purpose of the institution (Figure 3). Analysis of the mean values of the sources of motivation obtained in the groups of managerial and non-managerial public sector staff shows that managerial staff has significantly higher (with a mean effect size) internal self-concept motivation and goal internalization.

Figure 3. Values of motivation sources of managerial and non-managerial staff



Source: own processing

2.5 Age groups in the public sector

To identify the predominant type of motivation among different age groups of public sector employees, the data obtained were considered using the Motivation Sources Inventory. The analysis of average values reveals intrinsic motivation, i.e. the employee's desire to meet his/her own standards of traits, competence, etc., as the predominant source of motivation in the younger group of personnel (up to 42 years old), and extrinsic motivation, i.e., the focus on approval by others, as the predominant source of motivation in the older group (above 42 years) (Table 4).

Table 4. Average values of work motivation depending on the age group

Motivation source	Below 42 years old $\mu(\sigma)$	Above 42 years old $\mu(\sigma)$	p-value	Cohen's coefficient
Intrinsic process	2.36 (5.59)	2.11 (4.38)	0.659	no differences
Instrumental	3.77 (5.25)	3.96 (4.14)	0.718	no differences
External self-concept	3.12 (5.60)	4.23 (5.53)	0.088	no differences
Internal self-concept	5.97 (5.64)	3.85 (4.86)	0.001*	0.402

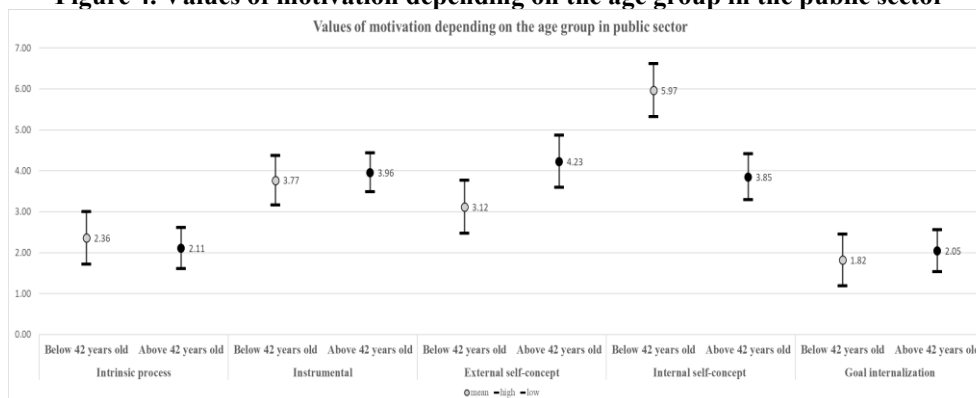
Motivation source	Below 42 years old $\mu(\sigma)$	Above 42 years old $\mu(\sigma)$	p-value	Cohen's coefficient
Goal internalization	1.82 (5.51)	2.05 (4.45)	0.688	no differences

* Statistically significant differences

Source: own processing

The least common source of staff motivation in both age groups is goal internalization, i.e., behaviors aimed at aligning the employee's goals with the institution's goal (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Values of motivation depending on the age group in the public sector



Source: own processing

The least common source of staff motivation in both age groups is goal internalization, i.e., behaviors aimed at aligning the employee's goals with the institution's goal (Figure 3). Analysis also shows that personnel in the older age group have significantly higher intrinsic motivation.

To identify the predominant type of motivation among different seniority groups of public sector personnel, the data obtained with the help of the Motivation Sources Inventory were considered. The analysis of average values of motivation sources indicators does not reveal statistically significant differences in the strength of motivation sources between the group of “newcomers” (pre-median seniority – up to 14 years) and the group of “veterans” (post-median seniority – over 14 years).

3. Conclusions

The research conducted allows the following conclusions. Civil servants make high demands on their personal qualities and motivation, as they have to perform many duties related to moral issues, and not to material benefits. They are also required to be highly diligent for a successful career. The results of the study reveal gender, status, age, education and work characteristics of the motivation of employees of

Israeli public institutions. Comparison of sources of motivation in the sectoral aspect shows the following:

- the prevailing motivation of both public sector employees and employees of private firms is internal motivation, i.e., the employee's desire to meet his/her own standards, traits, competence, values, etc.
- the personnel of private firms are characterized by a higher level of internal motivation than employees of public organizations

Among male employees, the prevalence of the external source of motivation of the self-concept is shown, which is expressed in the focus on the approval of others. Among management personnel, the internal motivation of the self-concept and the internalization of goals are higher, which is expressed in the need for influence and power, the need to be a creative worker, and the need to feel in demand. In the younger age group, internal motivation is significantly higher than in the older age group. Among personnel with a second academic degree, the predominant source of motivation is the internal motivation of self-perception.

The obtained results are largely consistent with the findings of other authors. However, the sources of motivation depend largely on social factors. A study of the characteristics of public sector employees in different countries would also be of great interest. Differences in personnel motivation depending on the form of ownership of the organization (public and private sectors of the economy) are also identified. Internal motivation prevails in both sectors, but it is stronger among the personnel of private firms. In general, the hypotheses of the study were confirmed.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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