THE EFFECT OF PROFESSIONAL EVENTS ON COMPETENCES FOR ENCOURAGING READING LITERACY

UTJECAJ STRUČNIH DOGAĐANJA NA KOMPETENCIJE ZA POTICANJE ČITALAČKE PISMENOSTI

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Abstract

Purpose: We want to determine the impact of participation in a professional event on the competences of library professionals in the field of reading literacy. We are interested to find whether professionals are more motivated to work after attending a professional event, feel more confident in working in the field of reading literacy, more connected to others and see more sense in their work, and whether participation in the event affects their work activities after the event itself.

Methodology: We used a case study with a quantitative survey method to collect data. First, we analysed selected scientific and professional literature to define the concepts of motivation, self-confidence, belonging and meaning, and responsibility of an

individual's professional development. We linked our case study to the predefined theoretical starting points. The design of the questionnaire structure was linked to the impact assessment.

Results: Understanding the concepts of motivation, self-confidence, belonging and meaning is crucial in strengthening the competences of professional staff. In the first part we compare the results over a three-year period, and in the second part we use the results to determine how participation in a professional event affects the individual. Comparative results of all three events show that obtaining the necessary information positively affects self-confidence at work. The research has shown that participation in a professional event has a positive effect on motivation, belonging, meaningful work and understanding of professional and personal role.

Research limitations are linked to the size of the study, as it is based on one case study, but includes a large enough sample that can indicate the starting point for a more extensive study to determine the impact of professional events on motivation, confidence, belonging and acceptance meaningful in the professional field.

Originality/value: Studies of the impact of participation in professional trainings on the competences of professionals are rare, so our research is an additional incentive to argue for regular professional training and monitor the development of individual key elements (i.e. motivation, confidence, meaning, belonging) of professional competencies. The research highlights the importance of an individual's commitment to promoting reading literacy and building reading culture.

Keywords: attitudes; competences; influence; library professionals; professional events; reading literacy

Sažetak

Cilj. Ovim se radom nastojao utvrditi utjecaj sudjelovanja na stručnom događaju na kompetencije knjižničarskih stručnjaka u području čitalačke pismenosti. Zanimalo nas je jesu li stručnjaci motiviraniji za rad nakon pohađanja stručnog skupa, osjećaju li se sigurnije u radu na području čitalačke pismenosti, povezaniji s drugima i vide li više smisla u svom radu te utječe li sudjelovanje na događaju na njihove radne aktivnosti nakon samog događaja.

Pristup/metodologija/dizajn. Za prikupljanje podataka koristili smo studiju slučaja s metodom kvantitativne ankete. Najprije smo analizirali odabranu znanstvenu i stručnu literaturu kako bismo definirali pojmove motivacije, samopouzdanja, pripadnosti i značenja te odgovornosti profesionalnog razvoja pojedinca. Svoju studiju slučaja povezali smo s unaprijed definiranim teorijskim polazištima. Dizajn strukture upitnika bio je povezan s procjenom učinka.

Rezultati. Razumijevanje pojmova motivacije, samopouzdanja, pripadnosti i zna-čenja ključno je u jačanju kompetencija stručnog osoblja. U prvom dijelu istraživanja uspoređujemo rezultate u trogodišnjem razdoblju, a u drugom dijelu koristimo rezul-tate kako bismo utvrdili kako sudjelovanje u stručnom događaju utječe na pojedinca. Usporedni rezultati svih triju događaja pokazuju da dobivanje potrebnih informacija pozitivno utječe na samopouzdanje na poslu. Istraživanje je pokazalo da sudjelovanje u stručnom događaju pozitivno utječe na motivaciju, pripadnost, sadržajan rad i razumije-vanje profesionalne i osobne uloge.

Ograničenja. Ograničenja su povezana s veličinom studije s obzirom na to da se temelji na jednoj studiji slučaja, ali uključuje dovoljno velik uzorak koji može ukazati na početnu točku za opsežniju studiju o određivanju utjecaja profesionalnih događaja na motivaciju, samopouzdanje, pripadnost i prihvaćanje smisleno u profesionalnom po-dručju.

Originalnost/vrijednost. Istraživanja utjecaja sudjelovanja u stručnim usavršava-njima na kompetencije stručnjaka rijetka su, pa je naše istraživanje dodatni poticaj za argumentiranje redovitog stručnog usavršavanja i praćenje razvoja pojedinih ključnih elemenata (tj. motivacije, samopouzdanja, smisla, pripadnosti) profesionalnih kompe-tencija. Istraživanje naglašava važnost predanosti pojedinca promicanju čitalačke pi-smenosti i izgradnji kulture čitanja.

Ključne riječi: čitalačka pismenost; knjižničarski stručnjaci; kompetencije; stručna događanja – stavovi o; stručna događanja – utjecaj

1. Introduction and literature survey

Today, it is crucial that individuals, who work in the development, promotion and implementation of reading literacy, are competent to perform these tasks, see the sense and meaning in it and connect with like-minded people.

Reading literacy today is divided into two poles. We have never read as much as we read in this moment, but at the same time, reading is extremely diffused, shallow, and deviates from the type of reading, which has helped us develop thoughts and feelings. Reading material, ways of reading, and reasons for reading change the ways of thinking and these changes are happening at an ever faster pace (Wolf and Stoodley, 2018). The changes in the reading process that research-ers have identified over the last decade are not the main subject of our paper, but we touch on them because of the impact on the quality of reading. The quality of reading is not only an indicator of the quality of our thinking, but also the best way to develop completely new systems in the brain evolution of our species. Reading is not innate and humans must learn to read themselves (Wolf and Stoodley, 2018) and such learning requires a stimulating environment. We believe that experts are key to a stimulating environment, and current situation requires from them regular

professional development and questioning. It was found that „self-initiative is an important part of continuing education. It is not only important how much and what kind of education, training and advanced training are part of an individual's professional development plan, but it is crucial that the individual is literate, which means that he can find the necessary information and follow the development of the professional field" (Fras Popović, 2021: 20).

On 19 December 2019, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the period 2019–2030. In Slovenia, we got „a strategic document that sets out priorities and educational goals in the field of literacy" (Nacionalna strategija, 2019). The vision of the strategy is to achieve a level of reading literacy that would enable everyone to optimally develop the ability to live and work actively (ibid: 5).

The terms reading literacy and reading culture are often used in public social life and in the space of professional activity. We understand the concept as defined by the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy: "Reading literacy is the ever-evolving ability of an individual to understand, critically evaluate and use written information. This ability includes developed reading skills, (critical) reading comprehension and reading culture (understanding reading as a value and motivation to read)." (ibid: 3). An important part of literacy is reading culture, defined as a relationship or a web of concepts and values that the individual and the society hold to books and reading." (ibid: 4)

On 1 January 2019, Mariborska knjižnica established the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy (hereinafter: the Center). It is intended for librarians of Slovenian public libraries and encourages cooperation between librarians of various libraries and the connection of librarians and other stakeholders in the field of reading literacy in Slovenia.

The Centre's program guidelines relate to the need for professional staff in public libraries for continuous training and improvement in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. In the period 2019-2021, the Center organized a professional event called ABC of Reading Literacy as the chosen method for transferring professional innovations among stakeholders in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. In its annual program, the Center has a permanent task to bring to the Slovenian library space those professional contents that will influence the improvement of the competencies of professional staff in libraries. In the previous research (Fras Popović, 2021) we confirmed the assumption that this method of work enables the achievement of strategic goals of the national strategy and the implementation of some elements of a model of a proactive public library to promote reading culture and reading literacy, formed by Vilar et al. (2017), and compliance with professional guidelines for profiling library roles and the development of professional competences in relation to Slovenian professional recommendations and standards for public libraries (Strokovna priporočila, 2019).

In this paper, we study the impact of participation in a professional event on the competences of library professionals in the field of reading literacy. We are interested in how the participants feel about the professional event, whether they are more motivated after participating in it, feel more confident, feel more connected to others, see more meaning in their work and actively respond by transferring content from the event to practice to attend the event. We are also interested in the individual's self-evaluation of participation in a selected professional event in terms of understanding his professional and personal role.

In this case study we associate self-confidence with positive self-esteem and self-esteem. The importance of self-esteem in librarians is just as important as in other professions (Kobal Grum, 2004). This time we focus on the impact of certain professional events on the strengthening of competences.

The present research tries to verify the thesis: professionals are more motivated after attending a professional event, see more meaning in their work, feel more connected to others, and strengthen personal and professional competencies by participating in the event, as these events offer them the opportunity to think about their professional and personal role.

We start from the assumption that library professionals are familiar with the guidelines for continuous development prepared by IFLA (Varlejs, 2016). According to the first principle of these guidelines, which states that „a librarian and information professional as an individual is primarily responsible for continuous learning that improves knowledge and skills", we assume that they accept responsibility for their professional development.

1. 2 Definition of basic concepts

Using professional and scientific literature, we will explain research-related concepts, namely professional competencies, motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem, belonging and meaning, and their connection with the concept of reading literacy.

In connecting research-related concepts, we intertwine two areas that fall into the field of psychology. The first belongs to the psychology of work and also to the personnel psychology, while the second recognizes reading ability as a key competence. In addition to the definition provided by the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy, in this paper it is important to understand literacy as defined by Pečjak (2012: 15)[1]: „a complex competence which includes numerous abilities and skills: reading, writing (including arithmetic), emphasizing the different development of literacy according to age, gender, education and other factors (e.g. social context). Literacy is therefore a culturally,

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[1] Translation from Slovenian to English: P. Vilar.

socially and historically determined concept. The basic element of all literacies is reading literacy."

Literacy is recognized as a complex ability (cf ibid: 15–20) and therefore we defend the thesis that in the field of reading literacy work highly professionally competent, motivated individuals who see meaning in their work, are aware of the need to connect with other professionals to achieve goals of reading literacy and transfer knowledge from professional events to work practice and question their professional and personal role in this field. National strategies and professional documents define the goals of promoting reading literacy, while these goals are generally socially accepted (Wolf and Sttodley, 2018), because without understanding each other as a society we cannot develop. Understanding, however, is a consequence of reading.

The connections between the personal and professional development of an individual are investigated by Boštjančič and Tement (2016) who argue that these two processes are theoretically formed and separate, in practice running in parallel throughout an individual's career, being complemented and intertwined. They point out that personal development also includes basic competencies that must be developed for the individual to be goal-oriented and effective in the workplace and that professional development is formally independent of personality, but indirectly influences the formation of a better self-perception and the formation and emphasizing the desired personality traits. The authors thus confirm our research path of determining the impact of a professional event on the individual's professional development.

We are interested in the individual's view of participation in a professional event, which is part of the individual's professional formal development, and the individual's self-assessment of the impact of participation in a professional event on the competence to perform work. We do not distinguish between professional or personal competencies, that personal and professional development in the practice of individual development happen in parallel and intertwine. We define this by investigating the individual's view of his professional and personal role.

The definition of impact is summarized according to the international standard (ISO 16439:2014), where impact is defined as change or difference in behavior of an individual or society, resulting from contact with library services. A change can be tangible or intangible. From the standard we also take the definition of the term event, which is a previously agreed activity with cultural, educational, social, political, educational or any other purpose. Only events organized by the library itself or in collaboration with other institutions, indoors or outdoors, are included. Events that take place in the library, but are organized by external institutions without the participation of the library, are excluded (ISO 1639:2014: 4).

The concept of sense is defined by Viktor Frankl. „The desire for sense is human's fundamental and at the same time dominant motive. A person can be hap-

py despite deprivation and humiliation if they feel the meaning of life and can be an unhappy club of abundance and prestige if they feel the emptiness of life. Frankl connects the feeling of sense with the feelings of fulfilling the mission of life, especially with the feelings of freedom and responsibility in relation to life." (Musek, 2015: 57).

Kobal Grum (2021) defines the need for belonging as a fundamental psychological need in her model of the connection between emotion and the positive perceptions of the self.[2] She also highlights the conditions for meeting this need. The need to belong is met only when the other two basic needs are met, namely the need for competence and the need for autonomy. The need for autonomy is reflected in the tendency to direct one's own behavior by one's own desires, choices, goals and decisions (ibid: 9).

Belonging to a community,[3] in our case community of reading promotion professionals, refers to an individual's need to be part of a wider community, to belong to a group. Grum Kobal (ibid: 154) points out that feelings of satisfaction arise when the need for belonging is met. In our opinion, professional events in a certain field, in particular[4] service training events, represent the strongest meeting place and expression of belonging to a group, so in the present research we connect individual's view of awakening this belonging through attendance at the chosen professional event with their view of achieving their goals through reciprocal affiliation.

We assume that

- the participants in the present case study had a fulfilled need for autonomy, as they decided by themselves to participate in a professional event in the afternoon,
- there were fewer people who were delegated to participate by their heads,
- those who met the need for autonomy with an independent decision to participate, were guided by various motives for participation.

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[2] In this paper, we understand the concept of the self as defined by Kobal Grum (2021: 152) – the psychological whole of personality and identity characteristics that are divided into the active and the observational part of the self. „The active part of oneself or the active self includes motivation, cognition, emotions and behavior in the broadest sense, and the observational part of oneself acts as an observer of oneself, that is, one's motivations, thoughts, consciousness, control, decision-making, emotions, behaviors, etc." and as such forms the basis for the formation of self-image."

[3] "The sense of belonging to a community is a phenomenon that does not have a long tradition in psychology. It first appeared in 1986, when McMillan and Chavin (1986) defined it as a sense of belonging to a community in which members care for each other and believe that their common needs will be met through mutual affiliation." (Kobal Grum, 2021: 154)

[4] Among the professional events that connect and express affiliation and arouse positive emotions are also e.g. professional events at the professional award ceremonies, visits to book fairs, visits to libraries.

The basic individual's need for competence is expressed as the desire to work effectively in various areas of life, which is realized in accordance with his/her abilities and capabilities (ibid: 91). The author points out that this need is met when we manage to find appropriate challenges in the environment that lead us to realize and develop our abilities, and that the need is not met when we have too simple or too demanding challenges. She thus emphasizes the connection between this need and a sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence, which leads to high self-esteem.

The fulfillment of the ***need for competence*** in the present research was determined by a set of questions about the individual's view of his feelings before and after participating in the event. With two questions, we directly check the realization of the individual's need for competence in participating in a professional event. We start from the thesis that the individual found appropriate challenges at the professional event to meet this need.

Competences are the individual's abilities that he or she has or needs to work and live in a society (Bračko, 2018). In our paper, we reflect on the individual's abilities that he/she has or needs to work, knowing that the abilities that an individual has or needs to work cannot be separated from the abilities he/she has or needs to live in society. The concept of ***professional competence*** (Fras Popović, 2016) is linked to public libraries.

Competences are "knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics, abilities, behaviors and behaviors in the work process that enable an individual to properly perform their work tasks. They are related to the demands of work and business needs in a particular work environment." (Strokovna priporočila, 2019: 18).

Competences in the public library environment can also be understood (Fras Popović, 2016: 41) as abilities of an individual to activate, use and connect the acquired knowledge in complex, diverse and unpredictable situations.

As we pointed out in our previous research (Fras Popović, 2021), generic competences are the ones that most characterize an individual's personal life, as they are mostly related to the character of the individual and his private life, and are also transferable between professions, since the individual brings or takes them with him, so to speak. Specific competencies in our case are called professional competences, they are related to an individual field of work. Even well-developed personal competences cannot replace specific, professional competences, so they are determined for individual areas of work (e.g. with a prescribed education).

Expert recommendations for public libraries emphasize that "the quality of a library service is based on the quality of the work and responsibility of the librarian in relation to his/her field of work within the library." (Strokovna priporočila, 2019: 38).

They also define the requirements for a certain level of education and lifelong professional development and training.

Motivation is a psychological process that "encourages and directs our behavior" (Kobal Grum, 2021: 9) When we talk about motivation, we are interested in why and why people behave the way they behave. In our research, we are interested in motivation in the sense that participation in a professional event encourages and directs certain behavior, and motivation is a consequence and not the cause of an activity.

The general social belief leads to the opinion that ***self-confidence*** and ***self-esteem*** are the result of a circle of connection of individuals' actions. The better an individual is at something, the higher his self-confidence and self-esteem. The more confident an individual is in what he does, the higher his self-esteem and, consequently, the better he is in what he does.

Self-esteem is an emotion that a person expresses towards himself. Self-esteem is built through the process of interaction and self-comparison with others, with the individual learning to value himself through self-perceptions of evaluation by others (ibid: 175).

By determining the impact of participation in a professional event in the field of reading literacy and reading culture, we enter the field of work psychology, which is of interest. How they (Boštjančič and Tement, 2016) feel at work and what are the results of work and what is the role of personality traits in the choice of work, perception of work and results of work. We assume that in our case study, most individuals attended a professional event as part of work assignments, so we are interested in how they perceive participation in the event, what consequences they feel, where they see the results of participation in the professional event and how they see their personality traits. at a professional event.

2. Research

2.1. Problem and methodology

With the present research, we upgrade the research presented in 2021 (Fras Popović, 2021). In this research, we are interested in the feelings of the participants before the event, namely the level of self-confidence before attending the event. Self-confidence was defined as the sum of independence and professional self-confidence. We were interested whether it was possible to connect the feelings of participants before the event (whether they feel self-confident, less self-confident or very self-confident), with participants' views on their own professional confidence, their own assessment of competence after attending the event, transfer to practice, motivation, affiliation and self-evaluation of the significance of such professional events. Furthermore, we were interested in the impact of participa-

tion at the selected professional event on personal and professional competencies, professional self-confidence, motivation, belonging and perception of sense. We wanted to determine the pattern over a three-year period. We could not use the data for the same participants, but in all three events it is a comparable population.

2. 2. Research questions

We formed five research questions:

1. What is the impact of the professional event *ABC of reading literacy* on motivation, perception of meaning, connection with others, strengthening of personal professional competencies in professionals?
2. What is the pattern of professionals' perceptions regarding self-confidence, competence to promote reading, the sense of their work, connection with others and strengthening their professional competencies after two or three professional events?
3. What is the impact of the professional event *ABC of reading literacy* on the willingness of professionals to transfer the knowledge presented at it into their practice?
4. What is the relationship between the frequency of visits (i.e. daily participation or weekly participation) and the individual's view on how much they gained at the professional event?
5. What is the connection between the feelings of the participants of the professional event *ABC of reading literacy* before attending the event and their opinions on the transfer to their work, the meaningfulness of such professional events, motivation, affiliation and greater competence to promote reading after the professional event?

These research questions represent a complex and intertwined view of the concepts relevant to the professional work in the field of teaching and encouraging reading literacy and reading culture. Through research questions, we also want to check the realization of the purpose of the professional event, which aims to create a positive social environment to promote reading literacy and strengthen the professional competencies of general librarians.

2.3. Methodology

Data for the case study were collected through a longitudinal survey using purposive samples described below. The professional event *ABC of Reading Literacy* was conducted three times, in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The event was conducted according to the epidemiological situation in two different formats. It was first held on May 28, 2019, as an all-day live professional event in the physical space.

The next two performances were live in an online environment. In 2020, it took the form of seven one-hour morning lectures between 5 and 9 October 2020. In 2021, there were fifteen one-hour lectures between 5 and 8 October, three lectures per day in the afternoon.

In all three years, the survey was conducted after a professional event, and the link to the questionnaire was sent to the participants by e-mail. Thus, they gave feedback on the impact that attending the event had on them. The online questionnaires prepared with the 1ka tool were designed to allow for a comparison of opinions on some claims for all three years, while certain claims were specific to the content of each event. The first questionnaire consisted of six closed (yes/no) questions and one open-ended question. The second questionnaire included nine closed (yes/no) questions and one open-ended question. The third questionnaire consisted of eleven closed (yes/no) questions and one Likert-scale question. Closed questions had sub-questions. We also asked them in random order, trying to avoid suggestiveness. As we worked with nominal variables, the descriptive results are shown in percentages, while connections between variables are done with non-parametric Chi-square test using adapted residuals.

2.4. Samples

The sample consisted of the participants of each of the professional events. This is a purposive sample, as they are representatives of the population of professionals in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. This is a group of librarians and other professionals who deal with teaching and encouraging reading literacy; from their institutions we assess that they mostly came from educational environment. As reported (Fras Popović, 2021) in 2019 we sent the survey to 43 e-mail addresses and received 25 fully completed questionnaires. In 2020, we sent the online survey to 70 e-mail addresses and received 43 completed questionnaires. In 2021, we provided a link to the online survey at 427 addresses. 330 respondents started solving the survey, 180 respondents completely solved it, and another 18 respondents partially solved it, so we have an insight into 196 answers of the participants of the professional event. The response was high in all years: 58% in the first year, 57% in the second year and 60% in the third year.

2.5. Results

Comparative results for all three years show an interesting pattern, which can be seen from Tables 1, 2 and 3.[5] We see that participants in all years have very

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5   Some questions were asked in all three years (one in a partially modified form, but with the same content), some in two.

positive opinions about different aspects of the training. Table 1 shows us opinions on meeting the need for competence.

Table 1: Opinions on the impact of the event on understanding of various aspects of professional role

The impact of the event on		
2019 (n = 25)	**no**	**yes**
professional role and contribution to the role of the library in promoting reading literacy	0 %	100 %
personal role and contribution to the role of the library in promoting reading literacy	4 %	96 %
2020 (n = 39)		
professional role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy	0 %	100 %
personal role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy	0 %	100 %
2021 (n = 182)		
professional role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy	3 %	97 %
personal role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy	2 %	98 %

Participation in the event helps participants to better understand their professional and personal role, their contribution to the promotion of reading literacy (Table 1) and the need for the participation of different actors (Table 2). They also received information that makes them feel more connected to others (82 percent in 2020 and 85 percent in 2021).

Table 2: Attitude to cooperation an connecting in the field

They obtained information at a professional event	2020[6] (n=25)		2021 (n=39)	
	no	**yes**	**no**	**yes**
which makes them feel more connected to others in their efforts	18%	82 %	15%	85 %
which make them more supportive of the need for different actors to work together to promote reading literacy	3 %	97 %	2 %	98 %

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[6]   Results are also published in the paper Fras Popović, 2021, but are corrected here. Instead of 7 % in the first claim, the correct per cent is 18, in the second claim it should be 8 % instead of 3 %.

Table 3 reveals that participants (88 percent in 2019, 90 percent in 2020, 93 percent in 2021) have received information that makes them feel more competent to promote reading and feel more confident in the work they do (88 percent in 2019), 92 percent in 2020 and 93 percent in 2021).

Table 3: Opinion of the influence of professional event on professional competencies and self-confidence

They obtained information at a professional event	2019 (n=24)		2020 (n=39)		2021 (n=182)	
	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
which makes them feel more competent to promote reading	12 %	88 %	10 %	90 %	7%	93%
which makes them feel more confident in the work they do	12 %	88 %	8 %	92 %	7%	93%

The results in Tables 2 and 3 can be linked to the results in Table 4, which allows assessment of the importance of the role of the professional event in the professional development and training of staff. After participating, 90 percent of respondents consider the need for such education and professional training, as they offer them an insight into what is happening at various levels. A larger (96 percent) share is of those who, after participating through their own questioning, looked for opportunities to transfer the share of heard content into their practice.

Table 4: Opinion on the importance of professional training and the transfer of content into practice

After attending, they wondered about:	Responses		
	no	yes	Total
the appropriateness of such education and professional training, as they have gained little or nothing	87%	13%	180 (100%)
the need for such education and professional training, as it offers them an insight into what is happening at different levels	10%	90%	178 (100%)
how they can put some of the content they heard at the event into their practice	4%	96%	179 (100%)

Participants have an extremely positive attitude towards such professional development and education, as they gain a large 87 percent and provide them with insight into events at various levels (90 percent).

Table 5: Opinion on motivation and meaningfulness

	Responses		
	no	**yes**	**Total**
At the professional event, they gained information that makes them feel more motivated.	5%	95%	178 (100%)
After attending a professional event, they saw more meaning in what they were doing in the area of reading literacy and building a reading culture.	3%	97%	181 (100%)
After attending the professional event, they became more aware of the importance of their work in the field of promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture.	4%	96%	181 (100%)

Participation in this professional event affects motivation positively, as 95 percent of respondents believe that they have obtained information that makes them feel more motivated. Table 5 reveals the impact of the event on the perception of the sense and significance of the work. 97 percent of respondents believe that after participating, they saw more sense in what they do in the field of reading literacy and building reading culture. After the event, 96 percent were more aware of the importance of their work in promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture. We assume that the connection supports the feeling of sense and significance, so here we point out the information from Table 2, which brings the participants' position on the connection with others and the necessity of connection of different actors.

Table 6: Opinion on their own feelings before attending the event

Participants felt (self-confident = independent and professionally confident) before participating in the professional event					
	very self-confident	self-confident	less self-confident	Total	Avg.	Std. dev.
in promoting reading literacy	15%	66%	19%	185 (100%)	2	0.58
in building a reading culture	17%	61%	22%	187 (100%)	2.1	0.62

In 2021, we were interested in the individual's feelings before participating and we wanted to gain insight into the individual's self-assessment in the field of self-confidence in performing certain professional tasks. Self-confidence in this case was defined as the sum of independence and professional self-confidence. We were interested in the feelings regarding the promotion of reading literacy and

reading culture – we asked about each of them separately, leaning on the definition of terms as provided by the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy. Table 6 reveals that the majority of participants in the professional event were those who felt self-confident in promoting reading literacy before participating in the event (66 percent) and self-confident in building reading culture (61 percent). The data reveals that most participants felt self-confident or very self-confident before attending a professional event.

We wondered if those who feel very self-confident in promoting reading literacy are also very self-confident in building a reading culture. With additional analyses (non-parametric bivariate analysis based on adjusted residuals) we found that there is a strong positive connection between the two categories (sign <0.01). The participants, who before the event felt very self-confident (79 percent) in promoting reading literacy, also felt very self-confident in building a reading culture. A strong positive connection (sign <0.01) was also found in self-confident (83 percent) and less self-confident (77 percent) feeling.

When reviewing the data, we asked ourselves whether the participants, who felt self-confident and very self-confident before participating in such a professional event, gained something to

- feel more competent to promote reading after the event,
- can put something into practice,
- this affects their motivation,
- feel more connected,
- see the meaning in such professional events.

When linking the data, we paid attention only to statistically significant positive connections, i.e. strongly significant (sign <0.01) and significant (sign <0.05). However, we also stressed weak positive connections, as we consider them noteworthy. We present the results of analysis according to the degree of significance (strong, significant, weak).

Strong positive correlation (sign <0.01) was found in:

- the impact of the professional event on the understanding of *personal role* and the *level of self-confidence in working after the event,*
- the link between the claim that attending a professional event helped individuals in any way to understand their *professional role* and the fact that they gained information *at* the event that made them *feel more connected to others,*
- *understanding the professional role and motivation after the event,*
- linking *awareness of the importance of an individual's work* in promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture and the individual's *feelings after the event in what they do.*

313

- understanding *their professional role and increasing their self-confidence* in the work they do,
- understanding the *professional and personal role* in promoting reading literacy,
- understanding the *sense* of work and *motivation* after the event.

A significant positive correlation (sign <0.05) was found in:
- a *very self-confident feeling* in promoting reading literacy and *doubting the usefulness of such educational events,*
- understanding *personal role* and *transferring gained knowledge into practice*,
- *full participation at the event* and *feeling better after the event about what they are doing.*

Weak positive correlation, which indicates the need for further research attention, was found in:
- *Less self-confident feeling* of participants before the event and a *sense of greater competence to promote reading,*
- *Less self-confident feeling* of participants before the event and *motivation after the event,*
- *Less self-confident feeling* of participants before the event and a *sense of connection with others after the event,*
- a *very self-confident feeling* before participating and *transferring gained knowledge into practice,*
- a *very self-confident feeling in building a reading culture* before participating and *doubting the usefulness of such educational events,*
- *frequency of visits (daily)* and *doubts about the usefulness* of such educational events.

2.6. Discussion

The field of reading literacy is a demanding field of professional activity in these times, as the individual has every opportunity to turn from enthusiasm into routine, also under the influence of mechanisms for evaluating civil servants and evaluating work. Our five research questions tackled the complex and intertwined picture of the concepts that are relevant to the professional work in the field of teaching and encouraging reading literacy and reading culture. We also interpret the findings in this way, not explicitly addressing each of the research questions individually.

It is crucial that in the field of development, promotion and implementation of reading literacy there are individuals who are motivated, competent to perform

these tasks, see the meaning in it and connect with like-minded people. The latter is important for two reasons. Networking helps to transfer ideas, experiences and knowledge. The established social network helps through periods of fluctuations in motivation. Participation in various forms of professional development and training is a fundamental starting point for the professional development of the individual, so the purpose of this article is to draw attention to the potential they have in the field of e.g. motivation of such professional events, which was confirmed in our study. In the research, we confirmed that the participants, who were equipped with information at the professional event and gained additional insight into their professional role, are more motivated after the event.

The research found that the case-studied professional event has a significant impact on motivation, perception of meaning, connection with others, transfer of knowledge into practice and strengthening personal professional competencies of professionals, especially in connection with greater insight into the professional role of individuals. Perceptions of professionals regarding self-confidence, competence to promote reading, the sense of their work, connection with others and strengthening their professional competencies after two or three professional events are of high value.

The professional event in 2021 took place over several days, with participants being able to choose daily or weekly (i.e. full) participation. Based on several years of observations of events, we shaped the thesis that among the respondents who felt they received very little or almost nothing, most were those who did not participate in the event in full. By analyzing the data, we found that there is no strong connection between the number of days of participation in the event and the respondents' view that they gained very little or almost nothing by attending the professional event, although we expected a strong connection here.

We found that the professional event fulfills the set goals, namely the creation of a positive social environment to promote reading literacy and strengthen the professional competencies of librarians in general. The latter is achieved by encouraging internal and external motivation of participants, connecting like-minded people in the context of the importance of advocating reading and promoting reading literacy, and confirming the relevance of work in the field. Based on the fact that we have a larger research sample in this case study and generally known findings, we assume that participation in such professional events is key to strengthening the professional competencies of those working in the field of reading literacy and reading culture.

Unlike in the past, in this survey we were interested in the individual's feelings or beliefs before participating in a professional event. Self-confidence was defined as independence and professional self-confidence, so we assumed a high level of self-esteem. We can say that the event in 2021 was attended by more of those who felt less self-confident than very self-confident before the event. Within the con-

text of the fifth research question we assumed that those who felt very self-confident before participating in the event did not obtain any additional information at the event, which would be an additional building block for their very strong self-confidence, i.e. independence and professional self-confidence. We cannot confirm this prediction.

Within the fifth research question we further anticipated that those who felt less self-confident before the event would gain the most from the event. Unfortunately, this cannot be confirmed with the level of competence to promote reading, motivation and connection with others. On the other hand, we anticipated that among the participants who thought about the content to be put into practice after the event, there were more of those who felt very self-confident before participating. This, too, cannot be confirmed with a strong connection. However, we confirmed that the participants, who felt that the event in any way helped them to understand their personal role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy, after attending the event think about how they can put some of the content they heard at the professional event into practice.

We found that it is the professional role that, in relation to other claims related to the feelings after the event, is the biggest factor influencing the professional event. Those participants who were helped by the professional event to better understand their professional role, felt more motivated after the event, more connected to others, more aware of the importance of their work, had better feeling towards what they do and greater self-confidence in doing their job. The connection between professional and personal roles can also be confirmed in the field of promoting reading literacy. We found that the participation of individuals in the professional event helped them to better understand their professional role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy, the participation also helped to understand their personal role in this field.

In defining the concepts, we realized that the meaning of individuals is the fundamental and strongest motive. If participation in a professional event awakens in an individual those emotions that make his work meaningful and help him see sense in his work, we believe that this is the greatest possible motivation. And we were able to confirm this in our study. At the same time, we emphasize the importance of the content orientation of the professional event in order to awaken motivation in the individual as a consequence and confirm the meaningfulness of his work tasks. It follows that just attending any professional event is not enough. We believe that at this point, the individual education plan and IFLA principles of professional development and the efficiency of work performance are most closely linked. The results of the present research confirm that a larger proportion of participants after participating in a professional event thought about the usefulness of participating in such training and that the content of the professional event helped to confirm/see/again perceive/recognize the meaning of their work and a higher-level motivation to work.

In this research, we focused on the impact of the event and the emotional state of individuals after participating in the event. We investigated the impact that the selected professional event has on certain categories that guide individuals' actions and behavior. Based on the obtained data, we also asked ourselves whether, in practice, participants distinguish between the concepts of promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture. However, we cannot provide any reliable answer to this question with the available data in this study. The possibility of differentiation in the use of the term also suggests a finding in the connection of a very self-confident feeling before participation and questioning the meaning of such education. In linking the data, we found a difference between those who felt very self-confident in promoting reading literacy and those who felt very self-confident in building a reading culture.

2.7. Limitations of the research

The limitations of the research were identified at the following points:
- we did not check the degree of autonomy in participating in the event, but we assume it based on the general social belief, since individuals themselves decided to participate in this type of event,
- we did not further check whether the challenges were too low or too high for them in order for this need to be met in accordance with their capabilities and abilities,
- we did not check why they decided to participate in the professional event,
- we did not check demographic data, which would also include the profession, so we do not know whether only professional staff from libraries were present at the event.

At the same time, these limitations are the starting point for further research in determining the impact of professional events on the competencies of professionals in the field of promoting reading literacy and building reading culture.

3. Conclusions

With the present research, which has a number of limitations and at the same time provides a number of starting points for further research, we have tried to highlight the emotional involvement of individuals in building and strengthening professional competences in promoting reading literacy and reading culture. Participation in a professional event strengthens knowledge, awareness and connection, the present research provides positive feedback on how an individual thinks and acts before and after participating in a professional event. In the present em-

pirical research, we have systematically highlighted the assessment of the impact and thus enabled the evaluation of a particular library service, i.e. the offer of professional development. For further research with a larger scope (i.e. a larger number of participants) and a representative sample (consequently we also conclude with a larger number of respondents), we want other organizers of professional events in the field to determine the impact of such events in the future.

As this is a case study covering a smaller sample, the presented survey and its results are an introduction to a possibly more extensive research on the topic of our research question. When determining the impact of an individual educational event on the strengthening of competencies and motivation for work, it would also be interesting to determine the work commitment in the field of promoting reading literacy. In any case, we start from the well-known position that it is difficult to awaken something in others if you do not believe in it or are not committed to this area. Work commitment (Tement and Boštjančič, 2016: 120) is a positive, fulfilling work-related state in which employees experience vitality, commitment and involvement. In any case, this is an area that is also very much related to the current and acute problem in society, namely burnout. We assume that in the field of professional work to promote reading literacy, individuals are also on the path to burnout. But it is important for the profession and society as a whole to be aware of this problem, because for the functioning of the individual and society as a whole, literacy is the basic competence of everyday life. And if there is no one who would do it enthusiastically, devotedly and with enthusiasm, no beautiful fairy tales will be written to us. Especially because we know that children's reading is easier with an adult (teacher, librarian, parent), who is a reading model.

External events, which in our opinion include professional events such as the present case study, are "environmental incentives that encourage and guide behavior." (Kobal Grum and Musek, 2009, p. 30). According to the authors, incentives have „the role of attractive motivation, as they direct the individual to those external events that give him a favorable experience." (ibid). They will offer them a favorable experience. From the point of view of our research, it is important to assume that a favorable experience influences the transfer of content into practice. When individuals leave professional events in the role of external stimuli with a positive perception of themselves, we anticipate that their contribution to promoting reading literacy will be more effective and efficient.

In the introduction to this paper, we wrote a statement about the importance of the work of individuals who are competent in the field of development, promotion and implementation of reading literacy, see sense in their efforts and connect with like-minded people. Promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture today are increasingly moving away from talking about what to read and getting closer to talking about how to read. At this point, however, it is very important that professionals are aware of their importance, both in the personal and professional role they perform. Our research has shown that professional and personal roles are

not mutually excluded, but very strongly intertwined, that professionals are aware of this importance, and at the same time, professional events help them to question their role. The intertwining of personal and professional roles nurtures a stimulating environment that professionals can perceive by participating in professional events. The documents defining the field of work also play an important role, and we presented them in the introductory chapter. If the umbrella document, as we allow ourselves to call national strategies for a particular field, provides precise definitions of individual concepts (in our case the concepts of reading literacy and reading culture), the present study paints a picture of unclear attitude of the professionals, who were participants in these events, to the definitions of these concepts. The importance of such studies, which are created by analyzing selected research, based on individual self-evaluation and monitoring trends over time, is also seen in raising awareness of the definition of reading literacy and reading culture. Reading culture and reading literacy are so important areas for the development, functioning and well-being of the individual and society as a whole that it is not enough if the definitions are included in national documents. It is important to use different methods and frequently highlight the importance of reading literacy and reading culture in different settings. We never talk, write, discuss and think enough about the meaning and role of reading, reading culture and literacy. Not in a professional and not in a wider space.

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