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# TESTING HERZBERG'S TWO-FACTOR MOTIVATION THEORY IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS – IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

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## ABSTRACT

*Motivation has been a continuous subject of research, and numerous theories have explored what drives employees. One of the most influential is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between hygiene and motivational factors. The main objective of this study is to examine differences in these factors between employees in the private and public sectors. Data were collected through a self-administered online survey. The sample consisted of 103 respondents (50.5% private sector; 49.5% public sector). The results revealed statistically significant sectoral differences in both hygiene and motivational factors, with higher mean values generally reported in the private sector. Salary level affected perceptions of both types of factors, with varying intensity between the two sectors. Furthermore, correlation analysis indicated a moderate relationship between job satisfaction and both hygiene and motivational factors in each sector, with slightly stronger correlations in the public sector. The theoretical contribution lies in findings that provide partial support for Herzberg's model and highlight sector-specific differences in motivational dynamics. Across both sectors, hygiene factors generally showed stronger correlations with job satisfaction than motivational factors. A refined analysis of these factors offers valuable insights for managers seeking to design effective motivational models in both the private and public sectors, thereby providing an important practical contribution.*

**Keywords:** Herzberg's two-factor theory, motivation, job satisfaction, private sector, public sector

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Employee motivation and job satisfaction have been central topics of scholarly interest for more than a century, largely due to the complexity of the constructs and the numerous individual and contextual factors that shape them. Employee motivation is essential for achieving higher levels of work performance. The literature distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is determined by formal incentives that provide material rewards, such as financial compensation. Intrinsic motivation encourages individuals to pursue their own interests and seek challenges that enable further development of their skills and capabilities (Načinović Braje *et al.*, 2019). According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, intrinsic motivation is defined as engagement in an activity driven by inherent interest and internal satisfaction, whereas extrinsic motivation refers to engagement motivated by external rewards incentives. In the case of extrinsic motivation, satisfaction is derived not from the activity itself, but from external outcomes that influence and direct behaviour (Rita *et al.*, 2018).

Herzberg's motivation theory has been widely tested and applied in numerous studies (Jung, Moon, 2024; Vulturius *et al.*, 2024; Hakami, 2024; Ann, Blum, 2020; Hur, 2018; Sanjeev, Surya, 2016; Lundberg *et al.*, 2009; Parsons, Broadbridge, 2006). However, mixed results were found, particularly when the public and private sectors were compared. Some research suggests that public-sector employees are more strongly motivated by intrinsic rewards, such as recognition and opportunities for self-development, than by extrinsic rewards, such as pay and benefits (Crewson, 1997; Khojasteh, 1993). Accordingly, economic rewards are valued more strongly by private-sector employees than by their public-sector counterparts (Cacioppe, Mock, 1984; Jurkiewicz *et al.*, 1998). In contrast, other studies indicate that public-sector employees are less motivated by certain intrinsic rewards, including responsibility and opportunities for self-development (Buelens, Van den Broeck, 2007). Nevertheless, some researchers report no significant differences in hygiene and motivational factors between public- and private-sector employees (Maidani, 1991; Gabris, Simo, 1995).

Given that the differences between the public and private sectors regarding hygiene and motivational factors remain inconsistent, this study aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of what motivates employees in these sectors. Based on previous research, several hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: Hygiene and motivational factors motivate employees across the public and private sectors differently.
- H2: Within the private sector, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with motivational factors than with hygiene factors.
- H3: Within the public sector, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with hygiene factors than with motivational factors.
- H4: Hygiene and motivational factors motivate employees in the public and private sectors differently, depending on salary level.

- H5: The correlation between job satisfaction and motivational and hygiene factors differs between the private and public sectors depending on salary level.
  - H5a: In the private sector, among employees with below-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with hygiene factors than with motivational factors.*
  - H5b: In the private sector, among employees with average and above-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with motivational factors than with hygiene factors.*
  - H5c: In the public sector, among employees with below-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with hygiene factors than with motivational factors.*
  - H5d: In the public sector, among employees with average and above-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with motivational factors than with hygiene factors.*

The paper is organized as follows. First, a theoretical overview of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, job satisfaction, and the specific characteristics of the public sector is presented. Next, the study's methodology is explained and the results are discussed. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main findings, theoretical and practical implications, addresses the study limitations, and identifies several areas for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section presents a theoretical overview of the key constructs examined in this study.

### **2.1 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

A wide range of motivation theories attempt to explain how employees' behaviour at work is directed and sustained. Among the most influential is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which conceptualizes work attitudes within a dual-structure model. Herzberg (1968) distinguishes between motivational factors: achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, growth, and the work itself which lead to job satisfaction; and hygiene factors: organizational policy, salary, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and benefits which prevent dissatisfaction. Herzberg and his collaborators argued that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction stem from qualitatively different sets of factors and therefore should not be treated as opposite ends of a single continuum. Accordingly, the absence of motivational factors does not necessarily result in dissatisfaction, nor do elevated levels of hygiene factors inherently lead to job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959; Thant, Chang, 2021).

Nevertheless, the theory has faced critique. Thant and Chang (2021) note that motivational and hygiene factors are not always independent and often behave as positively correlated constructs. Campbell and Pritchard (1976) and Vroom (1964) argue that distinctions between the two sets of factors are not always clear in practice, as salary and interpersonal

relationships can also function as motivators rather than solely as dissatisfier preventers. Critics further highlight that Herzberg's model simplifies the motivational process and underestimates contextual dynamics (Latham, Pinder, 2005; Steers *et al.*, 2004). Despite these critiques, Herzberg's framework remains highly relevant and is widely applied in contemporary organizational research. Recent studies continue to use or extend the model, for example, Gazi (2024) evaluates its applicability in analyzing work behaviour outcomes; Gimpl (2024) revisits its relevance in modern information-driven environments; Reyes (2024) adopts it to investigate turnover intention in the business process outsourcing sector (BPO); Amrullah and Nasution (2025) employ it to study job satisfaction and retention among civil servants in Indonesia; Ng and Cheah (2025) apply it within engineering professions post-pandemic context.

## 2. 2 Job satisfaction

Motivation and job satisfaction are distinct constructs by nature. Motivation refers to the energy and drivers behind work behavior, whereas job satisfaction reflects the emotional evaluation of one's work experience (Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction has attracted scholarly attention across psychology, sociology, management, and economics (Taylor, Westover, 2011). Locke (1976, p. 1300) defines job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." Determinants of satisfaction include individual characteristics, such as demographics, personal values, and expectations, as well as situational factors shaped by the organization and specific external influences.

Personal predictors identified in the literature include age, gender, education (Bedeian *et al.*, 1992; DeSantis, Durst, 1996), family factors (Saltzein *et al.*, 2001), and personality-based core self-evaluations (Judge *et al.*, 1998). Positive personal resources, such as optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy are also important (Bakker, Demerouti, 2007). A strong alignment between personal values and organizational context predicts higher satisfaction (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005).

Organizational determinants are the most frequently explored, including leadership style, culture, communication, job autonomy and variety, and HR management practices, such as appraisal, rewards, and career development. The role of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986, 2002), organizational climate and culture (Schneider *et al.*, 2013), and promotion opportunities (Ellickson, Logsdon, 2002; Taylor, Westover, 2011; Ting, 1997) is consistently supported empirically.

External environments including political, economic, social, and technological contexts also shape job satisfaction (Perry, Porter, 1982). In public service, factors such as job security, societal legitimacy, and political stability may play a substantial role, although such macro-level influences remain underexplored (Thant, Chang, 2021).

Within Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene framework, personal predictors determine the extent to which motivational or hygiene factors influence job satisfaction, for example, with intrinsically motivated employees more likely to respond positively to the same work conditions. Organizational context further shapes this dynamic by regulating the availability

of motivational factors and the quality of hygiene conditions, thereby affecting how effectively motivation converts into job satisfaction. The broader external environment, including sectoral affiliation, moderates these relationships.

## 2.3 Specificities of the public sector

The complexity of motivation and satisfaction becomes even more pronounced when comparing the public and private sectors. The private sector is profit-oriented and operates within competitive markets, whereas the public sector is state-funded and mission-driven, prioritizing public service over revenue (Bakotić, Bušić, 2014). Public organizations frequently exhibit slower promotion pathways, limited financial incentives, and less performance-based differentiation, while providing stable working hours and secure employment (Sindik, 2013). Such structural differences affect employees' motivational profiles, expectations, and satisfaction mechanisms (Taylor, Westover, 2011). Recent literature increasingly applies Herzberg's theory to the public sector. Jung and Moon (2024) demonstrate that motivational and hygiene elements moderate the relationship between public motivation and organizational commitment. Lee *et al.* (2022) confirm that Herzberg's factors significantly predict satisfaction across the private and public sectors. Wang *et al.* (2025) conducted a comprehensive review of global literature on hygiene and motivational factors within the service sector, including research carried out in public sector environments. The review incorporated 50 relevant empirical studies. A synthesis of the findings revealed moderate positive relationships, with average correlations of  $r = 0.42$  for motivational factors and  $r = 0.36$  for hygiene factors. These results indicate a consistent pattern across the literature, demonstrating that motivational factors exert a stronger influence on job satisfaction, while hygiene factors mainly prevent dissatisfaction and maintain baseline stability. In public service sectors such as healthcare and education, optimal outcomes are observed when adequate hygiene conditions are combined with robust motivational factors.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the following section presents the methodology, including the research design, sample, and data analysis procedures.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The survey employed an online snowball sampling technique to recruit participants. The questionnaire link was distributed via email to professional contacts with a request to participate and to further share the survey among their colleagues. The research was conducted in May 2023 in Croatia.

The questionnaire was developed based on a review of the literature (Table 1). Consistent with Herzberg's theory, the researchers used two categories of factors: hygiene factors, often referred to as extrinsic rewards, and motivational factors, defined as intrinsic or growth rewards. However, there is no consensus on the exact factors that define hygiene and motivational constructs. Researchers frequently modify the factors underlying these constructs to ensure they align more appropriately with the specific context of the study (Lundberg *et al.*, 2009).

Table 1. Review of hygiene and motivational factors

Literature	Context	Hygiene Factors	Motivational Factors
Jung, Moon, 2024	Public employees from central administrative agencies in Korea	Compensation, work environment, company policies	Sense of accomplishment, recognition, responsibility
Vulturius, Budd, Ison, Quddus, 2024	Members of three commercial airline pilot unions in Europe and Australasia	Company policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, salary, factors in personal life, status, job security	Achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, possibility of growth
Hakami, 2024	Auditors in Saudi Arabia	Company policies, relationship with peer, work security, relationship with supervisor	Achievement, advancement, recognition, growth
Ann, Blum, 2020	Senior employees in the US hospitality industry	Technical supervision, relationship with peers, supervisors and subordinates, salary, personal life, status, job security, company policy and administration, working conditions	Advancement, recognition, responsibility, work itself, achievement, growth
Hur, 2018	National Administrative Studies Projects (NASP III) – public managers in Georgia and Illinois	Job security, pension and retirement plan, less red tape, low conflict work environment, benefits, family friendly policy, salary	Advancement, training and career development, responsibility, pride, authority, incentives, flexibility
Sanjeev, Surya, 2016	Pharmaceutical sales and marketing professionals in India	Job security, time utilisation, policy fairness, growth opportunity, justice, compensation	Clarity of roles and responsibilities, recognition, ability utilisation, organizational stability and prospects, technical supervision, independence and autonomy, co-worker relation, morality, creativity, communication satisfaction, interpersonal supervision
Lundberg, Gudmundson, Andersson, 2009	Seasonally employed individuals (working within the hospitality and tourism industries) in the northwest of Sweden	Wage level, rewards, interpersonal relations	Responsibility, recognition/ feedback, knowledge and training, information
Parsons, Broadbridge, 2006	Retail setting - charity shop managers in the United Kingdom	Work location, job security, working hours, working conditions, job status/prestige, salary	Responsibility, variety of work, authority, use of skills and abilities, autonomy, job difficulty, opportunities for self-development, recognition, opportunities for promotion

Source: Authors

For the purpose of this study, factors defined by Herzberg and commonly included in related research were used to develop a questionnaire. These factors included working conditions, supervision, job security, compensation, and company policy (representing hygiene factors), as well as the work itself, achievement, responsibility, possibility for personal growth, recognition, and advancement (representing motivational factors). The questionnaire included items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented “not motivated at all” and 5 represented “extremely motivated”. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they were motivated by the stated factors, e.g., “How motivated are you by the working conditions?”

Job satisfaction was measured using the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with my job” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Responses to this item were used as the job satisfaction indicator (Hur, 2018).

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Demographic information and reliability

The sample consisted of 103 participants (Table 2). The sample was predominantly female (79.6%), with most participants aged 46 or older (44.7%). Approximately 45% of the participants had a high school education. Participants were almost equally distributed between the private sector (50.5%) and the public sector (49.5%). More women were employed in the public sector (45) than in the private sector (37). The highest number of participants in the public sector were aged 46 or older, while in the private sector the largest group of participants was between 36 and 45 years old (18). In the public sector, most participants had acquired a master's degree (21), whereas in the private sector, the majority had a high school education (27).

Table 2. Demographic information of the survey participants

Variable	Categories	Frequency N = 103	Percentage %	Private sector Frequency N = 52 (50.5%)	Public sector Frequency N = 51 (49.5%)
Gender	Female	82	79.6	37	45
	Male	21	20.4	15	6
Age	18 – 25 years	11	10.7	7	4
	26 – 35 years	16	15.5	12	4
	36 – 45 years	30	29.1	18	12
	> 46 years	46	44.7	15	31
Education level	High school degree	46	44.7	27	19
	Bachelor's degree	16	15.5	7	9
	Master's degree	37	35.9	16	21
	Doctoral degree	4	3.9	2	2

Source: Authors

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the scales (Taber, 2018).

Table 3. Reliability analysis of hygiene and motivational factors

Variables	N of items	Cronbach's alpha
Hygiene factors	5	0.85
Motivational factors	6	0.93

Source: Authors

Hygiene factors (5 items,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) and motivational factors (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.93$ ) demonstrated high internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011), as shown in Table 3.

The primary objective of this study was to examine differences in hygiene and motivational factors between the public and private sectors, while considering salary level and the relationships between these factors and job satisfaction. The following sections of the paper present the hypotheses and research findings.

#### 4.2 Differences in hygiene and motivational factors based on sector

*H1: Hygiene and motivational factors motivate employees across the public and private sectors differently.*

The means and standard deviations of hygiene and motivational factors for employees in the public and private sectors, as well as the results of independent-samples t-tests comparing the two sector groups and the corresponding Cohen's d effect sizes, are presented in Table 4. Cohen's d is a standardized measure of effect size that quantifies the magnitude of differences between two groups. While the t-test indicates whether a difference is statistically significant, Cohen's d provides information about the practical significance of that difference (Sullivan, Feinn, 2012).

Table 4. Hygiene and motivational factors in the public and private sectors – t-test and Effect sizes

Variable	Public sector (N = 51) Mean	Private sector (N = 52) Mean	t	p	Cohen's d Effect size
Hygiene factors (COMPOSITE)	2.82	3.45	-3.7	<0.001	-0.73 / medium-large
Working conditions (WC)	3.10	3.90	-3.93	<0.001	-0.78 / medium-large
Supervision (S)	2.10	2.96	-3.91	<0.001	-0.77 / medium-large
Job security (JSC)	3.57	3.73	-0.85	0.398	-0.17 / small
Compensation (C)	2.88	3.52	-2.48	0.015	-0.49 / medium
Company policy (CP)	2.45	3.15	-3.17	0.002	-0.63 / medium
Motivational factors (COMPOSITE)	3.14	3.77	-3.28	0.001	-0.65 / medium
Work itself (WI)	2.96	3.54	-2.74	0.007	-0.54 / medium
Achievement (ACH)	3.31	3.83	-2.34	0.021	-0.46 / medium
Responsibility (RES)	3.12	3.60	-2.39	0.019	-0.47 / medium
Possibility for personal growth (PG)	3.08	3.90	-3.41	<0.001	-0.67 / medium
Recognition (REC)	3.24	3.77	-2.28	0.025	-0.45 / medium
Advancement (ADV)	3.12	3.96	-3.67	<0.001	-0.72 / medium-large

Source: Authors

The results provide empirical support for H1, indicating that hygiene and motivational factors motivate employees differently across the public and private sectors. Independent-samples t-tests revealed statistically significant sectoral differences for nearly all examined hygiene and motivational variables, with employees in private sector consistently reporting higher mean scores than those in the public sector. These differences were not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful, as evidenced by predominantly medium to medium-to-large effect sizes.

Regarding hygiene factors, significant differences were observed in working conditions, supervision, compensation, and company policy. The composite hygiene score differed significantly between sectors ( $t = -3.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with a medium-to-large effect size (Cohen's  $d = -0.73$ ), indicating that the perceived motivational relevance of hygiene factors varies substantially by sector. Only job security did not exhibit a statistically significant sectoral difference, suggesting that this factor may function as a baseline condition across sectors rather than a differentiating motivator.

Similarly, motivational factors displayed consistent and significant sectoral differences. All individual motivational dimensions, as well as the composite motivational score, showed higher mean values in one sector, with effect sizes ranging from medium to medium-to-large (Cohen's  $d \approx -0.45$  to  $-0.72$ ). The strongest sectoral differences were observed for intrinsic

growth-related factors such as possibility for personal growth, advancement, and the work itself, highlighting that the motivational mechanisms associated with personal development and intrinsic rewards are not equally salient in the public and private sectors.

### 4.3 Correlation between hygiene and motivational factors and job satisfaction in the private and public sectors

H2: Within the private sector, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with motivational factors than with hygiene factors.

H3: Within the public sector, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with hygiene factors than with motivational factors.

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the association between hygiene factors, motivational factors, and job satisfaction across both the private and public sectors. Table 5 shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and both sets of factors in the private sector ( $p < 0.01$ ), with correlation coefficients of  $r = 0.386$  for hygiene factors and  $r = 0.358$  for motivational factors. The correlation with hygiene factors is stronger than the correlation with motivational factors. These results indicate a moderate correlation between job satisfaction and both hygiene and motivational factors. The findings do not confirm H2.

Table 5. Correlation analysis in the private sector

Private sector		Job satisfaction	Hygiene factors	Motivational factors
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 52		
Hygiene factors	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.386 0.005 52	1 52	
Motivational factors	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.358 0.009 52	0.705 0.000 52	1 52

Notes: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed); Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

Source: Authors

A moderate correlation between job satisfaction and both hygiene and motivational factors was also found in the public sector ( $p < 0.01$ ), with slightly higher correlation coefficients of  $r = 0.491$  for hygiene factors and  $r = 0.445$  for motivational factors (Table 6). Therefore, H2 is confirmed.

Table 6. Correlation analysis in the public sector

Public sector		Job satisfaction	Hygiene factors	Motivational factors
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 51		
Hygiene factors	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.491 0.000 51	1 51	
Motivational factors	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.445 0.001 51	0.719 0.000 51	1 51

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two tailed); Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

Source: Authors

Subsequently, correlation analysis was used to examine more precisely how job satisfaction correlates with specific factors representing hygiene and motivational constructs.

Table 7. Correlation analysis of hygiene factors in the private sector

Hygiene factors	JS	WC	S	JSC	C	CP
Job satisfaction (JS)	1					
Working conditions (WC)	0.323*	1				
Supervision (S)	0.249	0.640**	1			
Job security (JSC)	0.238	0.553**	0.560**	1		
Compensation (C)	0.375**	0.602**	0.491**	0.581**	1	
Company policy (CP)	0.354**	0.560**	0.519**	0.550**	0.561**	1

Notes: Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Source: Authors

Table 7 shows a significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and working conditions ( $r = 0.323$ ,  $p = 0.020$ ), compensation ( $r = 0.375$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ), and company policy ( $r = 0.354$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ) in the private sector. The analysis results indicate a moderate correlation for three out of five hygiene factors.

Table 8. Correlation analysis of hygiene factors in the public sector

Hygiene factors	JS	WC	S	JSC	C	CP
Job satisfaction (JS)	1					
Working conditions (WC)	0.491**	1				
Supervision (S)	0.322*	0.365**	1			
Job security (JSC)	0.359**	0.511**	0.214	1		
Compensation (C)	0.436**	0.769**	0.376**	0.395**	1	
Company policy (CP)	0.262	0.554**	0.642**	0.333*	0.562**	1

Notes: Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Source: Authors

In the public sector, a significant positive correlation was found between job satisfaction and all hygiene factors, except for company policy ( $p$ -values ranging from 0.000 to 0.021; Table 8). The strength of the correlations is moderate, with correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) between 0.322 and 0.491. The weakest correlation was found between job satisfaction and supervision ( $r = 0.322, p = 0.021$ ), while the strongest correlation was observed between job satisfaction and working conditions ( $r = 0.491, p = 0.000$ ).

Table 9. Correlation analysis of motivational factors in the private sector

Motivational factors	JS	WI	ACH	RES	PG	REC	ADV
Job satisfaction (JS)	1						
Work itself (WI)	0.263	1					
Achievement (ACH)	0.388**	0.672**	1				
Responsibility (RES)	0.233	0.639**	0.595**	1			
Possibility for personal growth (PG)	0.358**	0.660**	0.817**	0.602**	1		
Recognition (REC)	0.286*	0.600**	0.846**	0.573**	0.735**	1	
Advancement (ADV)	0.327*	0.682**	0.860**	0.539**	0.889**	0.840**	1

Notes: Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Source: Authors

In the private sector, a significant positive correlation ( $p$ -values ranging from 0.004 to 0.040) was found between job satisfaction and four motivational factors: achievement, possibility for personal growth, recognition, and advancement (Table 9). The correlation is considered weak to moderate, with correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) ranging from 0.286 to 0.388. The weakest correlation was observed between job satisfaction and recognition ( $r = 0.286, p = 0.040$ ), while the strongest correlation was observed between job satisfaction and achievement ( $r = 0.388, p = 0.004$ ).

Table 10. Correlation analysis of motivational factors in the public sector

Motivational factors	JS	WI	ACH	RES	PG	REC	ADV
Job satisfaction (JS)	1						
Work itself (WI)	0.354*	1					
Achievement (ACH)	0.424**	0.694**	1				
Responsibility (RES)	0.387**	0.452**	0.548**	1			
Possibility for personal growth (PG)	0.351*	0.679**	0.680**	0.686**	1		
Recognition (REC)	0.386**	0.561**	0.760**	0.677**	0.782**	1	
Advancement (ADV)	0.380**	0.570**	0.704**	0.614**	0.862**	0.797**	1

Notes: Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Source: Authors

Table 10 shows a significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and all motivational factors in the public sector (p-values ranging from 0.002 to 0.012), with correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) ranging from 0.351 to 0.424. Therefore, the results indicate a moderate correlation. The highest correlation was found between job satisfaction and achievement ( $r = 0.424$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), while the weakest correlation was found between job satisfaction and possibility for personal growth ( $r = 0.351$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ).

#### 4. 4 Differences in hygiene and motivational factors based on sectors and salary level

*H4: Hygiene and motivational factors motivate employees in the public and private sectors differently, depending on salary level.*

The means and standard deviations of hygiene and motivational factors for employees in the public and private sectors, stratified by salary level, as well as the results of independent-samples t-tests and the corresponding Cohen's  $d$  effect sizes, are presented in the following tables (Tables 11 and 12). The average salary of €1,000 (at the time of the survey in 2023) was used to classify participants into two income groups: average and above-average salary, and below-average salary.

Table 11. Hygiene and motivational factors composite in the private and public sector stratified by salary level – t-test and Effect sizes

Variable	N	Hygiene factors Composite (Mean)	Motivational factors Composite (Mean)	t	p	Cohen's d Effect size
Private sector / Average and above-average salary	23	3.504	3.913	2.83	0.00	0.59 / medium
Private sector / Below-average salary	29	3.414	3.649	1.93	0.06	0.36 / small to medium
Public sector / Average and above-average salary	20	3.180	3.642	2.69	0.02	0.60 / medium
Public sector / Below-average salary	31	2.587	2.812	1.76	0.09	0.32 / small to medium

Source: Authors

Differences in hygiene and motivational factors according to sectors and salary level were examined using independent-samples t-tests. The results suggest that salary level is associated with differences in the perception of both motivational and hygiene factors; however, the magnitude of these differences varies between the public and private sectors.

In the private sector, employees with average and above-average salaries reported significantly higher levels of motivational factors compared to hygiene factors ( $t = 2.83, p < 0.01, d = 0.59$ ). Among private-sector employees with below-average salaries, the difference followed the same direction but with marginal significance ( $t = 1.93, p = 0.06, d = 0.36$ ), indicating a weaker and less stable pattern. A comparable pattern was observed in the public sector. Employees with average and above-average salaries reported significantly higher motivational than hygiene factors ( $t = 2.69, p = 0.02, d = 0.60$ ). In contrast, among public-sector employees with below-average salaries, the difference was not statistically significant ( $t = 1.76, p = 0.09, d = 0.32$ ).

To assess the practical significance of these differences, Cohen's d was calculated. The overall effect size was moderate ( $d = 0.45$ ), while the largest effects were observed among higher-paid employees in both sectors ( $d \approx 0.59 - 0.60$ ). In lower-salary groups, effect sizes were smaller ( $d \approx 0.32 - 0.36$ ), suggesting that the predominance of motivational factors emerges primarily when basic hygiene conditions are adequately satisfied.

Overall, the results indicate that among employees with higher salary levels, motivational factors are perceived as more salient than hygiene factors in both sectors. This pattern suggests that higher salary may be associated with more favourable perceptions of working conditions and a stronger sense of being valued as an employee, which is broadly consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory. Importantly, effect sizes for the composite measures were similar across sectors, indicating no systematic advantage for either sector in terms of the magnitude of salary-related differences. The findings partially confirm H4.

To further explore these patterns, sectoral comparisons of individual hygiene and motivational factors stratified by salary level were conducted (Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12. Hygiene factors in the private and public sector stratified by salary level – t-test and Effect sizes

Hygiene factors	Salary	Private sector		Public sector	
		M	SD	M	SD
Working conditions	Below-average	3.86	0.99	2.77	1.09
	Average and above-average	3.96	0.93	3.60	0.99
	t	-0.35		-2.79	
	p	0.725		0.008	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.10 / very small		-0.79 / medium	
Supervision	Below-average	2.93	1.07	1.94	1.03
	Average and above-average	3.00	1.13	2.35	1.31
	t	-0.22		-1.2	
	p	0.824		0.239	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.06 / very small		-0.36 / small	
Job security	Below-average	3.69	1.04	3.48	0.93
	Average and above-average	3.69	1.04	3.70	1.08
	t	-0.35		-0.74	
	p	0.724		0.466	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.10 / very small		-0.22 / small	
Compensation	Below-average	3.38	1.27	2.48	1.36
	Average and above-average	3.70	1.06	3.50	1.28
	t	-0.98		-1.51	
	p	0.332		0.137	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.27 / small		-0.43 / small	
Company policy	Below-average	3.21	1.08	2.26	1.15
	Average and above-average	3.09	1.12	2.75	1.12
	t	0.39		-1.51	
	p	0.699		0.137	
	Cohen's d / effect size	0.11 / very small		-0.43 / small	

Notes: M: mean, SD: standard deviation

Source: Authors

Table 13. Motivational factors in the private and public sector stratified by salary level – t-test and Effect sizes

Motivational factors	Salary	Private sector		Public sector	
		M	SD	M	SD
Work Itself	Below-average	3.34	0.94	2.68	1.17
	Average and above-average	3.78	1.27	3.40	1.27
	t	-1.96		-2.04	
	p	0.055		0.050	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.53 / medium		-0.60 / medium	
Achievement	Below-average	3.79	1.11	3.03	1.22
	Average and above-average	3.87	0.92	3.75	1.02
	t	-0.27		-2.27	
	p	0.788		0.030	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.07 / very small		-0.62 / medium	
Responsibility	Below-average	3.48	1.02	2.84	1.19
	Average and above-average	3.55	0.83	3.74	0.75
	t	-1.04		-2.52	
	p	0.303		0.010	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.28 / small		-0.67 / medium	
Possibility for personal growth	Below-average	3.69	1.28	2.68	1.35
	Average and above-average	4.17	0.98	3.70	0.86
	t	-1.54		-3.3	
	p	0.130		0.000	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.42 / small		-0.86 / large	
Recognition	Below-average	3.76	1.18	2.94	1.26
	Average and above-average	3.78	1.09	3.70	0.86
	t	-0.08		-2.31	
	p	0.939		0.030	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.02 / very small		-0.64 / medium	
Advancement	Below-average	3.83	1.14	2.71	1.27
	Average and above-average	4.13	1.01	3.75	0.91
	t	-1.01		-3.40	
	p	0.316		0.000	
	Cohen's d / effect size	-0.28 / small		0.91 / large	

Notes: M: mean, SD: standard deviation

Source: Authors

The results reveal a heterogeneous pattern of salary-related effects. In the public sector, some of the largest effect sizes were observed for developmental motivational factors among higher-paid employees, particularly for advancement and the possibility for personal growth, suggesting that salary level may amplify the perceived relevance of long-term career development opportunities. In the private sector, salary-related differences were also evident for several factors, but effect sizes varied considerably across dimensions and were not consistently larger than those observed in the public sector.

Taken together, these results indicate that salary level moderates the relationship between hygiene and motivational factors in both sectors. However, the direction and magnitude of these effects depend on the specific factor examined rather than on sectoral affiliation alone. While higher salary levels are associated with a clearer predominance of motivational factors in both sectors, the largest salary-related effects are not confined to the private sector but are also evident for selected motivational factors in the public sector. These findings provide context-dependent support for Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and underscore the importance of contextual and economic conditions in shaping motivational dynamics.

#### **4.5 Correlation between hygiene and motivational factors and job satisfaction in the private and public sector by salary level**

*H5: The correlation between job satisfaction and motivational and hygiene factors differs between the private and public sectors depending on salary level.*

*H5a: In the private sector, among employees with below-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with hygiene factors than with motivational factors.*

*H5b: In the private sector, among employees with average and above-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with motivational factors than with hygiene factors.*

*H5c: In the public sector, among employees with below-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with hygiene factors than with motivational factors.*

*H5d: In the public sector, among employees with average and above-average salary levels, job satisfaction will correlate more strongly with motivational factors than with hygiene factors.*

Further details of the correlation analysis are presented below.

Table 14. Correlation analysis in the private sector for group below-average salary level

Private sector / Below-average salary		Job satisfaction	Hygiene factors	Motivational factors
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	29		
Hygiene factors	Pearson Correlation	0.505	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005		
	N	29	29	
Motivational factors	Pearson Correlation	0.324	0.770	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.086	0.000	
	N	29	29	29

Source: Authors

The findings support H5a (Table 14). In the private sector, employees with below-average salaries exhibit a stronger and significant association between hygiene factors and job satisfaction ( $r = 0.505, p = 0.005$ ), while the correlation with motivational factors is weaker and not significant ( $r = 0.324, p = 0.086$ ). This suggests that even in competitive environments, basic extrinsic conditions dominate job satisfaction when salary levels are low.

Table 15. Correlation analysis in the private sector for group average and above-average salary level

Private sector / Average and above-average salary		Job satisfaction	Hygiene factors	Motivational factors
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	23		
Hygiene factors	Pearson Correlation	0.161	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.462		
	N	23	23	
Motivational factors	Pearson Correlation	0.401	0.580	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.058	0.004	
	N	23	23	23

Source: Authors

H5b is partially supported (Table 15). Although the correlation between motivational factors and job satisfaction does not reach conventional statistical significance ( $r = 0.401, p = 0.058$ ), it is notably stronger than the weak and non-significant correlation observed for hygiene factors ( $r = 0.161, p = 0.462$ ). This trend aligns with theoretical expectations but may reflect limited statistical power.

Table 16: Correlation analysis in the public sector for group below-average salary level

Public sector / Below-average salary		Job satisfaction	Hygiene factors	Motivational factors
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	31		
Hygiene factors	Pearson Correlation	0.541	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002		
	N	31	31	
Motivational factors	Pearson Correlation	0.451	0.744	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.011	0.000	
	N	31	31	31

Source: Authors

The results support H5c (Table 16), showing that among public sector employees with below-average salaries, job satisfaction is more strongly correlated with hygiene factors ( $r = 0.541$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) than with motivational factors ( $r = 0.451$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ). This suggests that under lower income conditions, hygiene factors play a more prominent role in shaping job satisfaction, consistent with Herzberg's assumption that unmet basic needs heighten the importance of extrinsic work conditions.

Table 17: Correlation analysis in the public sector for group average and above-average salary level

Public sector / Average and above-average salary		Job satisfaction	Hygiene factors	Motivational factors
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	20		
Hygiene factors	Pearson Correlation	0.086	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.719		
	N	20	20	
Motivational factors	Pearson Correlation	0.029	0.529	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.905	0.017	
	N	20	20	20

Source: Authors

As shown in Table 17 H5d is not confirmed, as no significant correlations were found between job satisfaction and either hygiene ( $r = 0.086$ ,  $p = 0.719$ ) or motivational factors ( $r = 0.029$ ,  $p = 0.905$ ). This pattern indicates a saturation effect whereby, once economic expectations are met, further variations in these factors have limited influence on job satisfaction.

Overall, these results demonstrate that salary level moderates the relationship between hygiene and motivational factors and job satisfaction across both sectors, refining Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory by highlighting the combined influence of sectoral context and economic conditions.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide partial support for Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and suggest that the relationships between hygiene and motivational factors and job satisfaction are shaped by sectoral context and salary level. Additionally, high positive correlations were found among all hygiene factors in both the private and public sectors, except between job security and supervision, while motivational factors were highly positively correlated with each other in both sectors. Accordingly, employees who perceive one factor as positive (for example, working conditions or recognition) are likely to perceive other factors positively as well.

Hypothesis H1 was supported, as statistically significant differences were observed between the public and private sectors for both factor types, with higher mean values generally reported in the private sector.

Hypotheses H2 and H3 were partially supported. In both sectors, job satisfaction was significantly associated with hygiene and motivational factors. However, hygiene factors generally showed slightly stronger correlations than motivational factors. While this pattern does not fully align with Herzberg's original assumptions, it is consistent with more recent studies suggesting that the distinction between hygiene and motivational factors may be less pronounced in contemporary work settings.

The results provide partial support for Hypothesis H4, indicating that salary level moderates the relationship between hygiene and motivational factors in both the public and private sectors. Specifically, motivational factors were more prominent among higher-paid employees, whereas among lower-paid employees the distinction between motivational and hygiene factors was weaker and less consistent. As expected, higher-paid employees are likely to have their basic needs satisfied and are therefore more motivated by factors such as advancement opportunities and personal growth.

Stronger evidence was found for Hypothesis H5, which proposed a moderating role of salary level. Consistent with H5a and H5c, hygiene factors were more strongly associated with job satisfaction among employees with below-average salaries in both sectors. Hypothesis H5d was not supported, as correlations between job satisfaction and both factor types were weak and non-significant among higher-paid public sector employees, suggesting a possible saturation effect. Hypothesis H5b received partial support, as motivational factors showed a stronger, though marginally non-significant, association with job satisfaction among higher-paid private sector employees.

Overall, these results indicate that the motivational relevance of hygiene and motivational factors may depend on both organizational sector and economic conditions. When interpreted in this context-sensitive manner, Herzberg's framework continues to provide a useful, though not exhaustive, perspective for understanding job satisfaction across different employment settings.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Our findings support most of the hypotheses concerning differences in work motivation and job satisfaction between the public- and private-sector employees. Hygiene factors have proved more important for both private- and public-sector employees. Given the limitations of relying solely on monetary rewards, particularly in the public sector, where financial incentives are often constrained by regulations, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that managers can more effectively motivate employees by fostering intrinsic motivation derived from achievement, recognition, responsibility, possibility for personal growth, and advancement.

The theoretical contribution lies in advancing Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory by offering a contextual and sector-sensitive examination of motivational and hygiene factors. A comparative analysis of employees in the public and private sectors shows that the motivational impact of specific factors is not universal but depends on institutional context and salary conditions. By highlighting these contextual variations, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Herzberg's framework and emphasises the need to reconsider the existing classification of motivational determinants in modern organizational settings. The practical contribution lies in guiding HR managers to design tailored motivation strategies. The findings indicate that hygiene factors play a crucial role in employees' overall job satisfaction, making it essential for management to ensure these needs are adequately addressed.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the small sample size reduces the possibility of generalizing the conclusions. Second, job satisfaction was measured using only a single item; using a validated multi-item scale could yield different results. Third, the public sector encompassed all organizations financed by public funds and under public ownership (Anušić, 2024). This is country-specific, as the definition of the public sector, specifically which organizations are considered public or private, is determined by national regulations. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited. Fourth, economic conditions change over time, affecting salary levels, unemployment rates, and perceptions of job security. Repeating the study at a later time point could yield different findings. Existing evidence does not clarify whether differences between sectors remain stable over time.

Future research may extend these findings by employing longitudinal designs and larger, more diverse samples to better capture sector-specific and salary-related dynamics. Moreover, variations in work motivation are often shaped by demographic and job-related factors, including gender, age, organizational level, and job content. It would be interesting to determine how these elements would affect motivation and job satisfaction across the private and public sectors. Contemporary research also extends Herzberg's model. Recent studies highlight the relevance of these factors, demonstrating that, for example, work-life balance and remote work arrangements influence job satisfaction across industries (Dahal *et al.*, 2024; Belaid *et al.*, 2025). These findings emphasize the continued applicability of Herzberg's framework in addressing evolving work environments. Qualitative approaches could further

enhance understanding of how employees perceive hygiene and motivational factors across different organizational contexts.

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## NOTE

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) for linguistic support, including translation, rephrasing, and clarity improvements.

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# TESTIRANJE HERZBERGOVE DVOFAKTORSKE TEORIJE MOTIVACIJE U PRIVATNOM I JAVNOM SEKTORU – POSTOJI LI RAZLIKA?

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## SAŽETAK

Motivacija je stalna tema istraživanja, a brojne teorije nastoje objasniti što pokreće zaposlenike. Jedna od najutjecajnijih je Herzbergova dvofaktorska teorija motivacije, koja razlikuje higijenske i motivacijske faktore. Glavni cilj ovog istraživanja bio je ispitati razlike između tih faktora među zaposlenicima u privatnom i javnom sektoru. Podaci su prikupljeni putem online upitnika. Uzorak je obuhvatio 103 ispitanika (50,5 % iz privatnog sektora i 49,5 % iz javnog sektora). Rezultati su pokazali statistički značajne sektorske razlike i u higijenskim i u motivacijskim čimbenicima, pri čemu su više prosječne vrijednosti općenito zabilježene u privatnom sektoru. Razina plaće utjecala je na percepciju obje skupine faktora, ali s različitim intenzitetom u dva sektora. Nadalje, analiza korelacija pokazala je umjerenu povezanost između zadovoljstva poslom te higijenskih i motivacijskih faktora u oba sektora, pri čemu su korelacije bile nešto jače u javnom sektoru. Teorijski doprinos ogleda se u rezultatima koji djelomično potvrđuju Herzbergov model i ističu sektorske razlike u dinamici motivacije. U oba sektora, higijenski faktori općenito su pokazali jaču povezanost sa zadovoljstvom poslom nego motivacijski faktori. Detaljnija analiza ovih faktora pruža korisnu perspektivu menadžerima koji žele oblikovati učinkovite motivacijske modele u privatnom i javnom sektoru, čime se ostvaruje važan praktični doprinos.

**Ključne riječi:** Herzbergova dvofaktorska teorija, motivacija, zadovoljstvo poslom, privatni sektor, javni sektor