

THE ROLE OF MOTIVATIONAL MECHANISMS IN MANAGING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC SERVANTS

Aksana Panzabekova,¹ Damir Fazylzhan²

Received:
November 19, 2024

Revised:
December 17, 2024
January 13, 2025

Accepted:
February 04, 2025

DOI:
10.56289/ijcsrp.177

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of motivational mechanisms in enhancing the efficiency of civil servants, using Kazakhstan as a case study. The research employs sociological survey data to analyse job satisfaction, psycho-emotional well-being, motivation, and workload. The theoretical framework includes Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory. A mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating surveys and SWOT analysis to determine the correlation between well-being and motivation. The findings indicate that job stability and social benefits are key motivators, while a lack of career growth opportunities and high workload negatively affect motivation. The study highlights the need for improved training, work-life balance policies, and psychological support programs. These results contribute to the understanding of civil service motivation and provide practical recommendations for optimizing human capital management in the public sector.

Keywords: Public Service, Motivation, Civil Servants, Human Capital, Job Satisfaction, Kazakhstan.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the success of a country and the well-being of its citizens largely depend on how effectively the government operates. At the heart of public service efficiency are the people who work in it—their skills, motivation, and ability to achieve set goals. That's why keeping civil servants motivated has become a key priority in managing human resources in the public sector. Over the past decades, studies have shown that motivation strategies that work well in the private sector don't always bring the same results in government. This is because public administration has its own unique structure, goals, and work culture, as well as civil servants with different motivations. That's why it's more important than ever to explore and adapt new, innovative ways to keep employees engaged and productive while staying true to ethical and societal values.

Despite numerous studies on work motivation, traditional private-sector approaches do not always yield the same results in public administration due to differences in organizational structures, objectives, and professional values. Understanding these unique motivational factors is essential for developing effective management strategies.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of motivational mechanisms in improving the efficiency of civil servants in Kazakhstan. Specifically, the research seeks to identify key motivational factors, analyze their relationship with job performance, and propose practical recommendations for optimizing human capital management in the public sector. To achieve

¹ Chief Researcher, Candidate of Economics, Associate Professor, Institute of Economics of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, Kazakhstan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6389-9637>, e-mail: aksanat@mail.ru

² Doctoral Student, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3743-506X>, e-mail: damir.fazylzhan@mail.ru

this goal, the study utilizes sociological surveys and correlation analysis, assessing civil servants' job satisfaction, well-being, and career incentives. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of civil service motivation and inform strategies for enhancing workforce efficiency.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study applies a quantitative sociological survey conducted among 106 civil servants in Kazakhstan, encompassing local (62.7%), regional (22%), and national (15.3%) tiers of public administration. The survey instrument comprised 35 structured items specifically designed to evaluate five core dimensions: job satisfaction, psycho-emotional well-being, motivation, workload, and career advancement incentives. The questionnaire's architecture enabled not only the assessment of current perceptions but also the identification of underlying motivational mechanisms driving employee engagement and performance. To ensure sample representativeness, a stratified sampling strategy was employed, segmenting respondents by age cohort, length of service, and administrative level. Data were collected via an online platform to facilitate anonymous participation and maintain strict confidentiality protocols throughout the research process. A mixed-method analytical approach was adopted, integrating descriptive statistics, SWOT analysis, and Spearman's rank-order correlation. Descriptive statistics were utilized to aggregate and summarize survey responses, highlighting prevailing patterns in job satisfaction, motivational factors, and workload perception. SWOT analysis provided a structured framework to categorize internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats, thereby elucidating systemic factors influencing civil servants' motivation and efficiency. Spearman's rank correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between psycho-emotional well-being (operationalized through salary satisfaction) and key motivational variables. This non-parametric method was selected due to its suitability for ordinal data and small sample sizes, enhancing the robustness of findings even in the presence of non-normal distributions. Prior to participation, all respondents were informed about the study's aims and provided explicit informed consent. Anonymity was assured, with no personal identifiers collected; all data were utilized exclusively for scholarly purposes in accordance with ethical research standards.

To substantiate the selection of research methods, existing theoretical and empirical studies on human capital in Kazakhstan's civil service were reviewed. Although human capital represents a broader concept than motivational mechanisms, its core dimensions—such as professional competencies, motivation for self-development, and career growth—directly influence employee motivation levels.

The McKinsey Global Institute's study *Human Capital at Work: The Value of Experience* emphasized the importance of collecting direct data to inform effective management strategies (Madgavkar et al., 2022), supporting the choice of a survey-based research design. Additionally, A.B. Maidirova's work *Human Capital in the Civil Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan* identified key indicators relevant to human capital quality, including assessments of motivation and self-development (Maydyrova, 2014). These indicators were adapted to formulate sections of the questionnaire aimed at diagnosing the motivational environment within public administration.

Further, domestic researchers such as Yu. Nemets, A. Kazakova, K. Sadikova, and A. Kazakov have successfully employed survey methods to evaluate civil servants' human capital, revealing critical issues related to motivation, career advancement, and social security (Nemets et al., 2017,

p. 32). These findings informed the design of our survey instrument, particularly the sections addressing career incentives and psycho-emotional well-being.

It is important to note that substantial changes have occurred in Kazakhstan's civil service landscape since these earlier studies, including structural reforms and legislative amendments such as the 2023 update to the Law on Public Service (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). These developments further justified the need for updated empirical data, focusing specifically on motivational mechanisms as a key driver of human capital effectiveness.

Moreover, the study by Beisembina A.N. et al. highlighted the centrality of human knowledge accumulation for Kazakhstan's innovation-driven economic development, reinforcing the importance of investing in human capital through education and skill development (Beisembina et al., 2023, p. 108). This perspective underlined the relevance of examining motivational factors within the civil service, particularly in the context of knowledge-intensive tasks and public sector modernization.

Therefore, based on this body of evidence, a quantitative survey method was chosen, allowing for statistically significant and generalizable insights into the motivational mechanisms currently influencing civil servants in Kazakhstan.

While the quantitative survey provided a structured and replicable method for evaluating motivational mechanisms in the civil service, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. First, the use of correlation analysis, although suitable for identifying associations between variables, does not establish causality. Second, potential bias may arise due to the online nature of the survey and the voluntary sampling, which may have influenced who chose to participate. Third, the findings are embedded within Kazakhstan's specific cultural and socio-economic context, potentially limiting their generalizability to other administrative systems.

Nonetheless, the stratified sampling approach, high response anonymity, and multi-dimensional questionnaire design offer a robust foundation for assessing motivational patterns. The chosen methodological framework contributes practical value by informing human resource policy decisions and supporting the development of evidence-based management strategies in the public sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

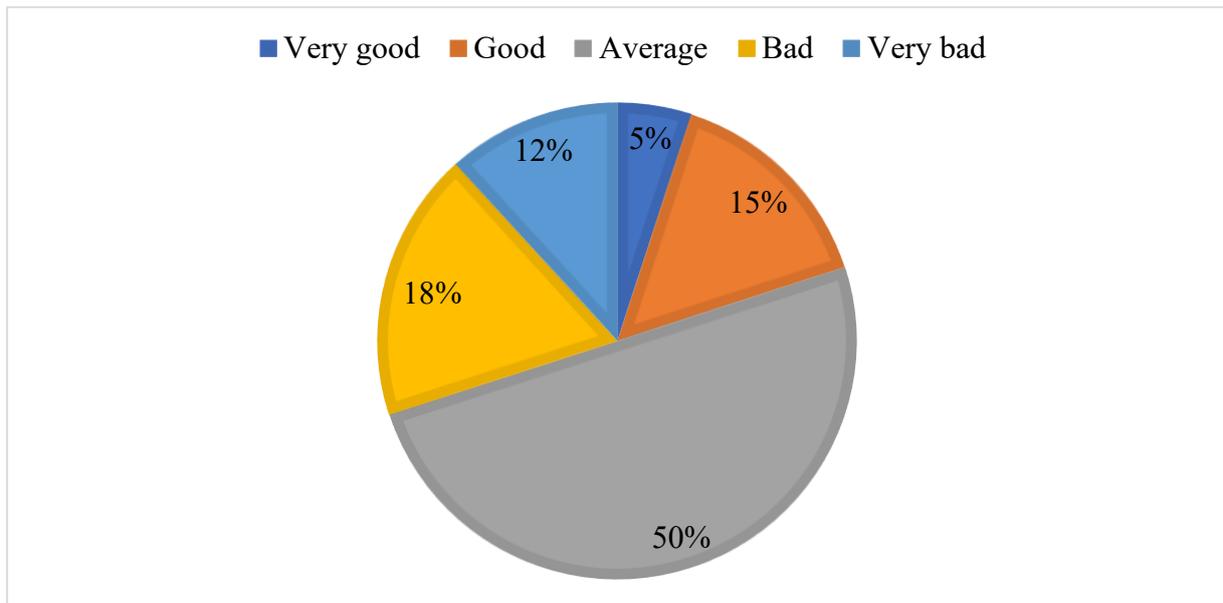
Gary Dessler (1988), in his works, focuses extensively on motivation mechanisms and their impact on employee productivity in different organizational contexts. He emphasizes that effective human resource management requires integrating motivational strategies that align both with organizational goals and employees' individual needs. One of the most well-known and widely applied motivation theories in psychology is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. According to this theory, human needs are structured in a hierarchy, ranging from basic physiological needs to higher-level psychological needs, all of which individuals strive to fulfill (Maslow, 1943: 376). Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides an empirically grounded framework for understanding human motivation, development, and well-being. Their research examines how social environments either support or hinder fundamental psychological needs, which in turn influences the type and strength of motivation. Factors such as autonomy support, compared to controlling environments, have a significant impact on motivation, behavior, mood, and overall well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008: 184). In their work *The Motivational Foundations of Public Service*, Perry and Wise analyze how declining public trust in government institutions affects the motivation and efficiency of civil

servants. Special attention is given to motivation in public service and how it can be leveraged to improve performance and effectiveness in public administration (Perry & Wise, 1990: 368). The monograph *Revisiting the Motivational Foundations of Public Service: Two Decades of Research and Future Directions* highlights major advancements in public service motivation research since 1990. This academic work explores new definitions and theoretical approaches to understanding motivation in the public sector (Perry et al., 2010). The article *Toward a Public Administration Theory of Public Service Motivation: An Institutional Approach* aims to establish a general theory of motivation in public service, examining both its causes and consequences. By adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, the author integrates elements of institutional theory and motivational psychology to develop an operational theory of public service motivation (Vandenabeele, 2007: 550).

In 2018, the Astana Civil Service Hub, the UNDP in Pakistan, and the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence in Singapore jointly conducted a study titled "Motivation of Civil Servants in Kazakhstan." The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and focus groups, covering 740 civil servants across Kazakhstan. It focused on their perspectives on career development, organizational culture, workplace climate, and the key motivational factors and barriers affecting their efficiency (ACSH et al., 2018). Kenneth Kernaghan's article (2000), "The Post-Bureaucratic Organization and Public Service Values," examines recent public sector reforms, particularly those associated with the New Public Management (NPM) movement, and their impact on public service values. The article highlights how reformers aim to reorganize and manage public service using new approaches, including aligning traditional public service values with new values inspired by private sector practices.

DATA ANALYSIS

A sociological survey was conducted among 106 civil servants in Kazakhstan at local (62.7%), regional (22%), and national (15.3%) levels. The questionnaire assessed job satisfaction, psycho-emotional well-being, work motivation, workload, and career incentives. The SWOT analysis revealed key strengths and weaknesses in civil service motivation. Strengths included high educational attainment (65.8% had higher education) and a prevalence of professional certifications (69.4%). Weaknesses included limited career development opportunities (47.9% of respondents noted a lack of professional growth) and excessive workload (45% reported high, 31.7% very high workload). Spearman's correlation analysis was applied to assess the relationship between well-being and motivation. Results showed a weak negative correlation (-0.115) between salary and job stability motivation, suggesting that as income increases, stability becomes less of a motivating factor. Conversely, a weak positive correlation (0.240) was found between income level and the desire to influence national policies, indicating that higher-paid civil servants may feel more empowered to contribute to policy-making. Below is the evaluation provided by respondents regarding the level of medical care available to civil servants (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Respondents' assessment of the level of medical care provided to civil servants*

*Based on data from an online survey conducted by the authors.

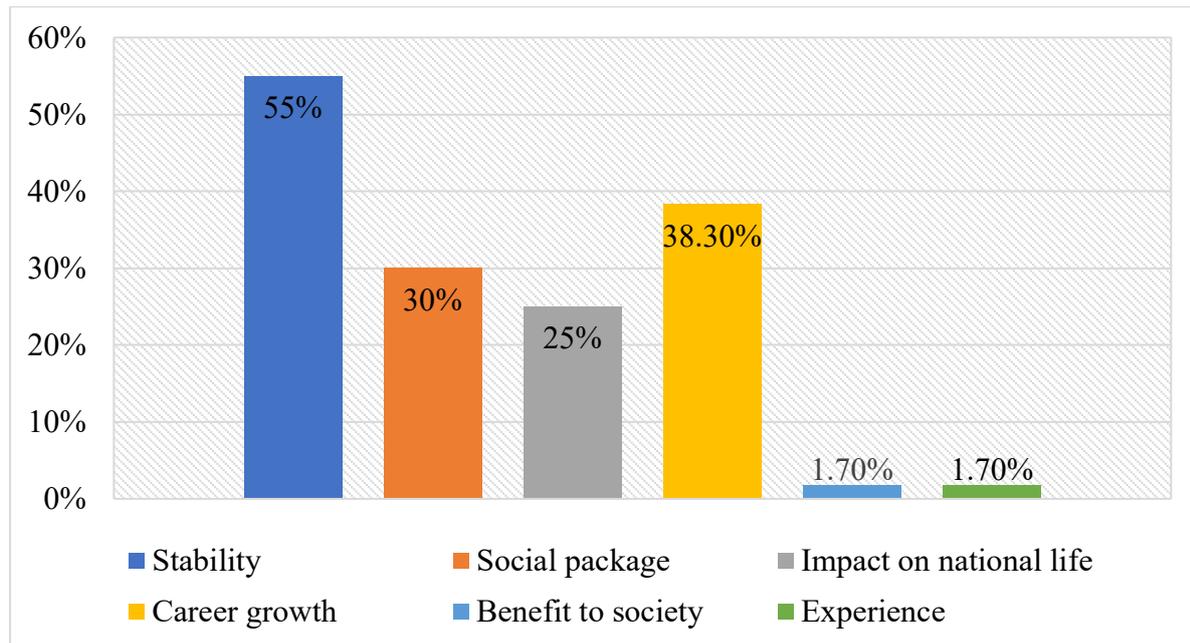
These data indicate the presence of certain issues and shortcomings in the medical service system, which some civil servants perceive as insufficient or of poor quality. The overall picture reflects diverse opinions regarding the level of healthcare for civil servants, including both positive and negative assessments. This highlights the need for further analysis and improvement of the healthcare system for this category of employees.

The psycho-emotional well-being of employees directly affects their work efficiency, motivation, and overall quality of life. The level of psycho-emotional well-being depends on workplace support, understanding, and the quality of working conditions. In this regard, a survey was conducted among civil servants with the question: "In your opinion, is sufficient attention given to the psycho-emotional well-being of employees at work?" Below, respondents' answers are presented by age group, showing how different age categories perceive this issue.

Opinions on the level of attention given to psycho-emotional well-being at the workplace vary among civil servants. However, looking at the age-based responses, the majority of respondents aged 26-35, 36-45, and over 55 answered "no," while most respondents under 25 answered "yes," and those aged 46-55 were equally divided on the issue.

Understanding the motivation of civil servants is crucial for increasing their work efficiency and improving the overall quality of public service. The factors motivating each employee to work in the public sector may differ: some consider stability the main motivation, while others seek career growth or the opportunity to influence national affairs. These data provide insight into the diversity of motivational factors in public service and help better understand employees' motivational profiles (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: "What is your main motivation for working in public service?"*



*Based on data from an online survey conducted by the authors.

The responses indicate that stability (55%) and the social package (30%) play a decisive role in motivating individuals to work in public service. This highlights the priority of job security and interest in social benefits provided by the state. Additionally, there is noticeable interest in career growth (38.3%) and the opportunity to influence national life (25%). These responses reflect a desire for professional and personal development, as well as an aspiration to contribute to social processes. However, the motivation to benefit society, gain experience, and influence national affairs is mentioned less frequently, suggesting that these factors play a secondary role in motivating public servants.

Workload is a crucial factor that directly affects job satisfaction, health, and productivity. Excessive workload can lead to psychological and physical exhaustion, reducing motivation, whereas an optimal workload contributes to increased work efficiency. Below are the results of employees' responses regarding this issue.

The presented data show that the majority of survey participants rated their workload as high (45%) or very high (31.7%). This indicates that most employees experience a significant workload and a high level of job engagement. A considerable portion also assessed their workload as moderate (23.3%). The absence of responses for "low" or "very low" workload options suggests that none of the respondents feel underworked. This may reflect the intensity and volume of responsibilities assigned to public servants, highlighting the need to ensure a balance between workload and available resources. These indicators suggest that while most employees are neither highly satisfied nor highly dissatisfied, there are aspects that could be improved to enhance workplace well-being.

The results of the SWOT analysis based on the survey of civil servants highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach to human capital development within the civil service (Table 1).

Table 1. SWOT Analysis Based on Research Findings*

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A high level of education, with 65.8% of civil servants having higher education. - A significant proportion of civil servants hold professional certifications (69.4%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of consistent opportunities for professional development and education, with 47.9% of respondents highlighting the rarity of such opportunities. - Low evaluation of the effectiveness of workplace training and development systems, with 17.8% of respondents considering them ineffective. - Insufficient attention to employees' psycho-emotional well-being, identified as a problem by 45% of respondents. - High workload, with 45% reporting a high workload and 32% indicating a very high workload.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve training and development systems to enhance work efficiency and employee satisfaction. - Implement programs to support employees' psycho-emotional well-being to reduce stress and increase productivity. - Develop measures to improve work-life balance to reduce workload and enhance employee well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of decreased motivation and productivity due to insufficient opportunities for professional growth and development. - Potential decline in work quality and increased employee turnover due to high workload and workplace stress. - Possible employee dissatisfaction and reduced loyalty due to low well-being levels and inadequate social benefits.

* Developed by the authors

A high level of education and the widespread possession of professional certifications among civil servants serve as a strong foundation for further enhancing the effectiveness of public administration. However, weaknesses such as the lack of continuous professional development opportunities, insufficient attention to psycho-emotional health, and high workload require immediate attention and action.

Spearman's correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between well-being levels and the motivation of civil servants. This method was chosen due to its ability to work with ordinal data and its robustness against outliers in the dataset. The calculation of Spearman's correlation was demonstrated using a sample case to assess the association between well-being levels and motivation among civil servants. For this analysis, a selection of five data points was taken, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Values obtained to determine the correlation between the well-being level of civil servants and their motivation.

Well-being Level (X)	Motivation: Stability (Y)	X Rank	Y Rank
2 (200 001 - 300 000 KZT)	1 (Does not motivate)	1	1
4 (400 001 - 500 000 KZT)	0 (Motivates)	4	4
3 (300 001 - 400 000 KZT)	0 (Motivates)	3	3
5 (500 000 and above)	0 (Motivates)	5	5
1 (Up to 200,000 KZT)	1 (Does not motivate)	2	2

* Developed by the authors

The data were arranged in ascending order, and rankings were assigned based on the order outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Calculation of Rank Differences (di) and Their Squares (di²).

X Rank	Y Rank	$d_i = X Rank - Y Rank$	d_i^2
1	1	0	0
4	4	0	0
3	3	0	0
5	5	0	0
2	2	0	0

* Developed by the authors

This table 3 presents the differences in rankings (di) between well-being levels and motivation factors, along with the squared values of these differences (di²). These calculations serve as the foundation for determining Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, which quantifies the strength and direction of the relationship between civil servants' well-being and motivation.

Substituting the values into Spearman's formula,

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \times \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)} = 1 - \frac{6 \times 0}{5(25 - 1)} = 1 - 0 = 1$$

In this example, $\rho=1$ indicates a perfect positive correlation. This means that as well-being (salary) increases, stability ceases to be a motivating factor, which is a logical conclusion given that a higher income ensures stability. This example illustrates the methodology used for data analysis.

The unique salary values vary and are classified into distinct categories. For further analysis, we converted these values into numerical format:

- Up to 100,000 KZT: 1
- 100,001 – 200,000 KZT: 2
- 200,001 – 300,000 KZT: 3
- 300,001 – 400,000 KZT: 4
- 400,001 – 500,000 KZT: 5

- Over 500,000 KZT: 6

Subsequently, we encoded the data and performed a correlation analysis with motivational variables using the method described above. Spearman's correlation analysis revealed the following correlation coefficients between well-being level (salary) and the motivation of civil servants:

- Stability -0.115 – weak negative correlation.
- Social benefits package: 0.051 – very weak positive correlation.
- Opportunity to influence national affairs: 0.240 – weak positive correlation.
- Career growth: -0.193 – weak negative correlation.

The opportunity to influence national affairs exhibits the strongest positive correlation with well-being levels, suggesting that higher-income civil servants may perceive greater opportunities to impact societal processes. The negative correlation between stability, career growth, and well-being levels indicates that civil servants with higher salaries tend to place less value on stability and have lower motivation for career advancement, possibly due to having reached their desired career level or being more satisfied with their current position. The very weak correlation with social benefits suggests that well-being levels do not significantly affect how employees perceive the value of social benefit packages.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings suggest that job stability and social benefits remain key motivators for civil servants, yet excessive workload and limited career progression opportunities diminish job satisfaction. The weak correlation between salary and stability motivation aligns with previous studies, suggesting that financial incentives alone do not sustain long-term engagement in the public sector. To address these challenges, policy recommendations include expanding professional development programs to enhance career growth opportunities; implementing work-life balance measures to reduce excessive workload; strengthening psychological support programs to improve overall well-being. These measures could enhance civil servants' motivation and job performance, ultimately contributing to a more effective public administration system.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of motivational mechanisms in enhancing the efficiency of civil servants in Kazakhstan. The results indicate that stability (55%) and social benefits (30%) are the primary motivators, whereas excessive workload (45% high, 31.7% very high) and limited career growth opportunities (47.9%) negatively impact motivation. The correlation analysis revealed a weak negative relationship (-0.115) between salary and stability motivation, suggesting that higher-income civil servants value stability less. In contrast, a weak positive correlation (0.240) between salary and the desire to influence national affairs indicates that financially secure employees may feel more empowered to contribute to policymaking. The development and implementation of an effective motivational system that incorporates both material and non-material incentives will enhance civil servants' motivation for high-performance work and their commitment to public service. These measures will not only help overcome existing weaknesses but also leverage identified opportunities to improve the quality of public administration by fostering its key resource—human capital. Implementing these recommendations will require coordinated efforts at all levels of the public administration and should be prioritized in the strategy for civil service development.

This study has confirmed well-established trends in human resource management while also contributing new insights into the specific characteristics of civil servant motivation. Consistent with previous research, our analysis confirms the close relationship between motivation and job satisfaction. Additionally, the identified negative correlation between the desire to influence national affairs and well-being levels highlights unique challenges in motivating civil servants, opening new avenues for further research. The findings illustrate the complexity of civil servant motivation, where financial incentives play different roles depending on motivation types. This suggests that universal approaches to motivation may be ineffective and that a more personalized strategy, tailored to employees' individual and professional aspirations, is necessary.

The key findings of our study emphasize the importance of a differentiated approach to motivating civil servants, particularly in providing social benefits and professional growth opportunities. These insights are directly relevant for human resource management policies aimed at increasing efficiency and job satisfaction in the public sector. Based on the analysis, we recommend developing personalized motivation programs that consider both material and non-material aspects of motivation. It is essential to design initiatives that support employees in achieving their professional and personal aspirations. Further research is needed, incorporating a larger sample and qualitative analytical methods, to gain a deeper understanding of civil servants' motivational structures. Additionally, exploring the impact of cultural and economic factors on work motivation and satisfaction across different regions and countries is crucial.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The study was carried out within the framework of grant funding by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Modernization of the system of distribution relations and reduction of income inequality of the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan" BR21882165.

REFERENCES

- Desler, G. (1988). *Principles of Management*. Translated by D. Madani. Tehran: Aryan.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 49(3), 182-185.
- Perry, J. L., & Wise, L. R. (1990). The motivational bases of public service. *Public Administration Review*, 50(3), 367-373.
- Perry, J. L., Hondeghem, A., & Wise, L. R. (2010). Revisiting the motivational bases of public service: Twenty years of research and an agenda for the future. *Public Administration Review*, 70(5), 681-690.
- Vandenabeele, W. (2007). Toward a public administration theory of public service motivation: An institutional approach. *Public Management Review*, 9(4), 545-556.
- Astana Civil Service Hub, UNDP Pakistan, & UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (2018). *Motivation of civil servants in Kazakhstan*. Available at:

https://www.astanacivilservicehub.org/uploads/research_pdf/RUS_Motivation_KZ_10-2018_PDF.pdf [In Russian].

Kernaghan, K. (2000). The post-bureaucratic organization and public service values. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 66(1), 91-104.

Madgavkar, A., Schaninger, B., Smit, S., Woetzel, J., Samandari, H., Carlin, D., Seong, J., & Chockalingam, K. (2022). Human capital at work: The value of experience. McKinsey Global Institute. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/human-capital-at-work-the-value-of-experience>

Maydyrova, A. (2014). Human capital of public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan. *Public Administration and Civil Service*, (4), 123-131. [In Russian].

Nemets, Y., Kuzekova, A., Sadykova, K., & Kuzekov, A. (2017). Human capital of public service of the Republic of Kazakhstan. *Issues of Public and Municipal Administration*, (3), 29-50. [In Russian].

Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023). "On Public Service," No. 214-VII ZRK. Available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2300000214> [In Russian].

Beyssembina, A., Kunyazova, S., Nurgaliyeva, A., & Kunyazov, Y. (2023). Human capital of the innovative economy of Kazakhstan. *Bulletin of the Kazakh University of Economics, Finance, and International Trade*, 1(50), 104-111. [In Russian].