

Drivers of employee sustainable motivation on private enterprises on Saudi Arabia during the crisis of COVID-19

Abdullah Abdulmohsen Alfalih^{a*}

^aDepartment of Business Administration, College of Business Administration, Majmaah University, Majmaah, 11952, Saudi Arabia

CHRONICLE

Article history:

Received: July 7, 2020
Received in revised format:
August 10 2020
Accepted: August 16, 2020
Available online:
August 16, 2020

Keywords:

Employee sustainable innovation
Individual factors
Organizational factors
Collective factors
Quantitative research

ABSTRACT

This study aims to define a conceptual framework for employee sustainable motivation in order to identify determinants of this phenomenon for private enterprises in Saudi Arabia. The subject seems to be critical for these enterprises currently due to the crisis caused by COVID-19. The study presents a quantitative exploratory approach to this composite concept, which aims to facilitate understanding and provide a practical tool for managers. The study reveals three possibilities for combining sustainability and motivation. Determinants of employee sustainable motivation are similar to those related to the “traditional” approach to motivation, but there are different in terms of composition and objectives. In addition to this, the intercorrelation between different factors is important to maximize employee sustainable motivation.

© 2021 by the authors; licensee Growing Science, Canada

1. Introduction

Sahir et al. (2018) demonstrate that the growth and continuity of any enterprise is based on its human resources. In this field, motivation seems to be important and can contribute to the development and survival of the organization. The importance of motivation will be discussed later in this paper. In fact, the objective here is not to define motivation or its importance but to explore the constructive approach of this concept enrich studies related to motivation in the workplace. Many researchers argue that there is a perpetual need for more research (Hitka & Sirotiakova, 2011; Hitka & Balazova, 2015). During periods of crisis, interest in motivation becomes more important because it is directly related to the security needed by employees in such periods. This point of view is adopted by many groups of researchers such as Bakanauskiene and Ubartas (2012), and Hitka et al. (2015). The difference between these groups lies in their approach to setting the determinant factors in these critical periods. For example, Hitka et al. (2015) relate motivation to appreciation, while Zavadsky et al. (2015) insist on interaction and communication: especially internal communication. Independently, these studies fix an ultimate objective of inspiration and support to overcome the crisis. Hitka and Sirotiakova (2011) highlight the great importance of good relations and a healthy workplace for employees during a crisis. Another interesting approach to motivation during crises supposes that educational efforts can contribute to motivation in the workplace, since education is considered to provide personal progress and benefits for individuals both during and after a crisis (Jelacic, 2011; Hitka and Balazova, 2015; Zavadsky et al., 2015). Currently, with the crisis caused by COVID-19, organizations are concerned with continuity and survival as added to the achievement of sustainable goal development during this crisis. To overcome this challenge, organizations need competencies and engagement from employees who are discouraged by many difficulties on different levels. Based on this, a continual process for motivation must be developed and adopted. This continuity in motivation is termed sustainable motivation. This

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +966555127773

E-mail address: a.alfalih@mu.edu.sa (A. A. Alfalih)

paper seeks to define this concept through a combined approach between sustainability and motivation. As a primary observation, sustainable motivation will be appreciated as an individual aspect which affects not only the prosperity of the organization but also its survival, and in terms of its contribution to the success of a sustainable approach. After this, a conceptual framework is put forward which could be useful for managers when implementing this new consideration of motivation, through the definition of drivers. The final part of this research evaluates the relative importance of the drivers identified in a context relevant to private enterprises in Saudi Arabia.

2. Literature review

2.1 Motivation

Xanthakis (2019) presents motivation as a force which affects adoption and orientation of behaviour in a specific way. The literature review reveals the existence of many approaches related to the concept of motivation, categorized according to specific criteria. To understand this concept, here, existing academic approaches to motivation are mapped out. The existent literature can be divided into three main approaches to motivation: theories of motivation (as process and/or content); extrinsic / intrinsic motivation factors; and a dynamic approach to motivation. Handy (1993) presents three different categories for theories of motivation; satisfaction, intrinsic and incentive theories. Based on these theories, motivation depends on factors or needs which must be satisfied. Ryan and Deci (2000), on the relation between extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors, define two levels of motivation: external, which is related to the development of a specific behaviours needed by employees for benefits; and internal, based on the current and inner needs of the individual. In this sense, Deci (1975) considers that the appropriate level of satisfaction related to an observed reward must be appreciated based on behaviour which is more important than the activity or task. In spite of the abundance of studies related to motivation and the diversity of theories of motivation development, there is no exhaustive approach to this phenomenon which can provide a broad-scale comprehension or unified understanding of the concept (Latham, 2012). However, the research of Hitka and Balazova (2015) is considered as a reference point for the current study, because the authors present a large and combined approach to motivation factors, related to the individual as needs, to social life and to a superposition of the internal and external environment of the enterprise. As a first observation, motivational factors will be discussed on three levels; personal, collective and organizational.

2.2 Sustainable motivation

The concept of sustainable motivation (SM) is defined as an association between sustainability and motivation. In this same idea, Blaskova et al. (2019) consider that “sustainability must be emphatically conditioned by and connected with motivation.” In other words, it can be supposed that sustainable motivation is determined by a synergetic effect between motivation and sustainability which means that motivation can stimulate sustainability and there is a continuity and reciprocity between them.

The first use of the term comes from Deci and Ryan (2000), who associate the qualification of autonomy with the motivation to satisfy human needs in terms of competences which enhance auto-motivation. Stone et al. (2009, p. 4) argue that “Sustainable motivation is called autonomous because it emerges from one’s sense of self, and is accompanied by a feeling of willingness and engagement”. Another field of research defines sustainable motivation according to the organization, and not based on an individual approach. In this view, sustainable motivation is the motivation which makes the firm “...lasting, constant, permanently renewed, improved, and strengthened, and brings new values and strategic competitive advantages” (Blaskova et al., 2018, p.6). Here, sustainable motivation is associated with a process which ensures continuity between motivation (individual approach) and sustainability (organizational approach). MPG International (2018) presents two dimensions of sustainable motivation; motivating sustainable activity, and sustaining motivation levels, in addressing the continuity of motivation by individuals which guarantees the continuity of the organization. Considering these aspects of motivation, it can be supposed that sustainable motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic. However, based on the literature review, it is identified that the intrinsic aspects seem to be more important and determinant for motivation, and can generate an extrinsic aspect, named by Ryan and Deci (2017, p.290) as “collective motivation.” Recent research put forward by United Nations Academic Impact (2019) presents another definition of sustainable motivation, which is qualified as being operational. Here, sustainable motivation is defined as “the sustained and consistent high degree of motivation, and resilience to forces of negative change that could cause motivation to ebb and flow”. Clearly, sustainable motivation is a dynamic concept determined by an intrinsic approach related to the individual which can generate intrinsic motivation for organizations and individuals over a long time, due to the development of an interactive and constructive approach to motivation and sustainability.

2.3 Determinants of employee sustainable motivation

To determine drivers of ESM, a progressive approach is adopted here to associate sustainability with motivation. After a deep literature review process, it is identified that the evolutionary process between these two concepts depends on three main steps; motivation in sustainability, motivation for sustainability and motivation as sustainability.

Xanthakis (2019, p. 42) argues that “the uniqueness of each employee, his interaction with the working environment and the management team, the social context of each age and the changing needs of the individual in it, make it difficult to find the “absolute” motivation factors, effective for every employee.” Thus, specific axes are sought here to maintain motivation, and the appropriate actions related to implementation are personalized. Within this, it is admitted that the definition of factors depends on the context and culture.

Table 1
Determinants of employee sustainable motivation in a crisis

Drivers	References
The nature of work Equality Achievement Material satisfaction	Hitka and Balazova (2015)
Individual needs Social workplace Environment of organization (internal and external)	Chatzopoulou et al. (2015)
The meaning of work Respect Good interaction and communication in work	Grammatikopoulos et al. (2013)
Non-monetary Motivators - Social needs - Appreciation - Leadership - Communication - Equity - work characteristics - Working environment - Professional development	Xanthakis (2019)
Money as Motivators	

To summarize, it is determined here that the development of sustainable motivation is supported by three categories of factors; individual (monetary / non-monetary), collective, and organizational. In fact, the main hypothesis related to the definition of this concept distinguishes two main aspects compared to motivation as the simple effort to stimulate and orient desired behaviour. The first is due to the effects of sustainable motivation, which must be extended to organizations as well as personal benefits. The second is the dynamic aspect of ESM, which requires interaction and continuity as collective motivation.

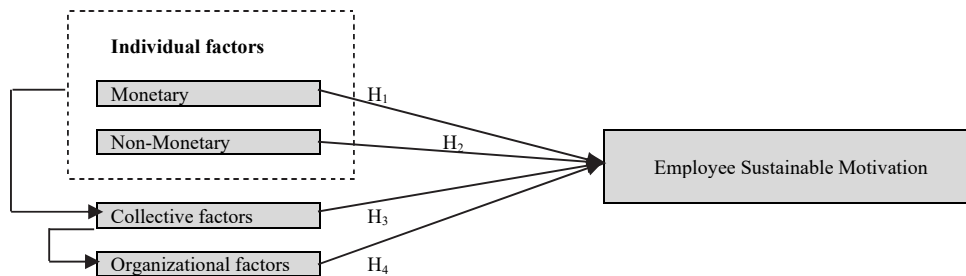


Fig. 1. The research model

Five main hypotheses will be treated based on this model:

H₁: Individual monetary individual factors positively affect ESM

H₂: Individual non - monetary factors positively affect ESM

H₃: Collective factors positively affect ESM

H₄: Organizational factors positively affect ESM

H₅ : There is a positive correlation between different factors.

3. Methodology

This research is conducted to evaluate the power of employee sustainable motivation as identified and developed through the literature review. The population for the study is composed of employees of private enterprises in Saudi Arabia across different activity sectors; health, industry and banks. The questionnaire for the study was administrated online and created through Google forms. Overall, 230 questionnaires were collected in the course of two months. Items used in the construction of the questionnaire were adopted from different previous studies and responses recorded on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Table 2 presents the variables, dimensions and references used in this study.

Table 2

Items and references

Variable	Dimensions	Items	References
SEM	Path to change (P2C scale)	12 items	Stone et al. (2009)
Individual factors	Autonomy	4 items	Tafvelin and Stenling (2018)
	Job satisfaction	4 items	Safety Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) Helmreich et al. (1993)
	Stress recognition	4 items	Helmreich and Merritt (1998) Safety Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) Helmreich et al. (1993) Helmreich and Merritt (1998)
Collective factors	Lateral Organizational Communication	4 items	Yang (2005)
	Upward Organizational Communication	4 items	Yang (2005)
	Teamwork climate	6 items	Safety Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) Helmreich et al. (1993) Helmreich and Merritt (1998)
Organizational factors	Working conditions	3 items	Safety Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) Helmreich et al. (1993) Helmreich and Merritt (1998)
	Perception of unit management	6 items	Safety Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ) Helmreich et al. (1993) Helmreich and Merritt (1998)

4. Results and discussion

At the beginning of this study the number of required questionnaires was fixed at 150, but the results seem to be impossible, and a second data-collecting process was adopted. Fig. 2 shows the results of a descriptive analysis of the population studied here based on gender, age, educational qualifications and work experience.

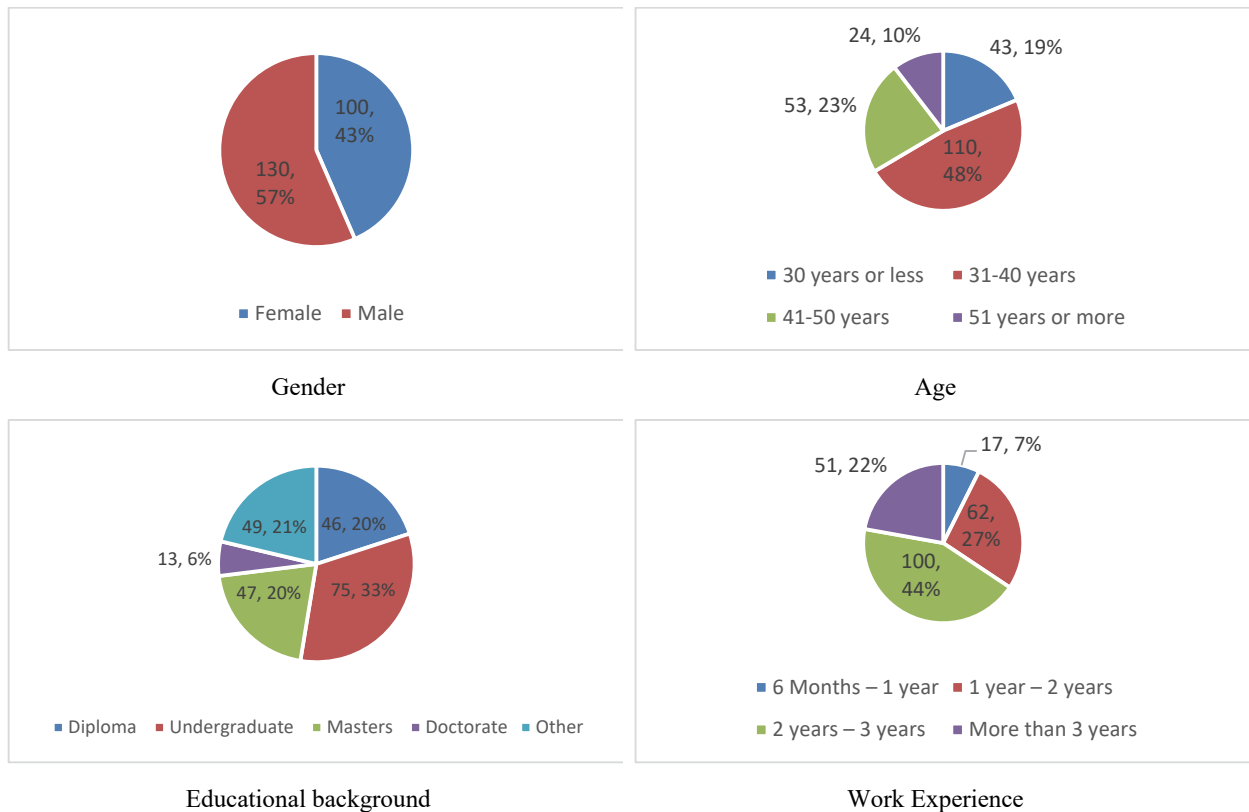


Fig. 2. Personal characteristics of the participants

Conducting a test of reliability through Cronbach's alpha is important for any study. In order to apply this test, SPSS 24 was used, and the results show that all values of alpha for all constructs are acceptable.

To consolidate this result, composite reliability (CR) must be verified. Based on Pallant (2010), acceptable values of CR must exceed 0.7. In this case, the results related to this indicator are considered satisfied.

The next step was the application of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to verify the validity of the items adopted here. Hair et al. (2010) argue that CFA determines how well items used explain the construct measured. A good CFA is always determined by the factor loading (>0.5) and the fit indices of the model tested (Hair et al., 2010). Based on the output the validity of the model is verified. The results from this step are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Measurement of the construct

Code	Construct and items	Factor loading	Alpha de Cronbach
	Autonomy (Aut)		0.72
Aut1		0.45	
Aut2		0.53	
Aut3		0.55	
Aut4		0.49	
	Job satisfaction (JS)		0.80
JS1		0.63	
JS2		0.57	
JS3		0.66	
JS4		0.65	
	Stress Recognition (SR)		0.78
SR1		0.59	
SR2		0.55	
SR3		0.69	
SR4		0.52	
	Lateral Organizational Communication (LOC)		0.85
LOC1		0.68	
LOC2		0.75	
LOC3		0.59	
LOC4		0.69	
	Upward Organizational Communication (UOC)		0.79
UOC1		0.57	
UOC2		0.54	
UOC3		0.47	
UOC4		0.49	
	Teamwork climate (TEAM)		0.77
TEAM1		0.71	
TEAM2		0.69	
TEAM3		0.65	
TEAM4		0.61	
TEAM5		0.64	
TEAM6		0.59	
	Perception of unit management (PUM)		0.88
PUM1		0.63	
PUM2		0.56	
PUM3		0.57	
PUM4		0.52	
PUM5		0.47	
PUM6		0.49	

The dimension related to work conditions was deleted due to the low loading contribution of its items. Once satisfactory results for reliability (through SPSS 24) and validity (through AMOS 24) had been achieved, address the structural model, as presented in Fig. 3. The fit indices are acceptable, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Fit indices of the structural model

Fitting index	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
Evaluation criterion	<3	>0.9	>0.8	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.05	<0.08
Test value	2.67	0.920	0.811	0.934	0.913	0.961	0.035	0.079

The structural model related to the research model is presented in Fig. 3.

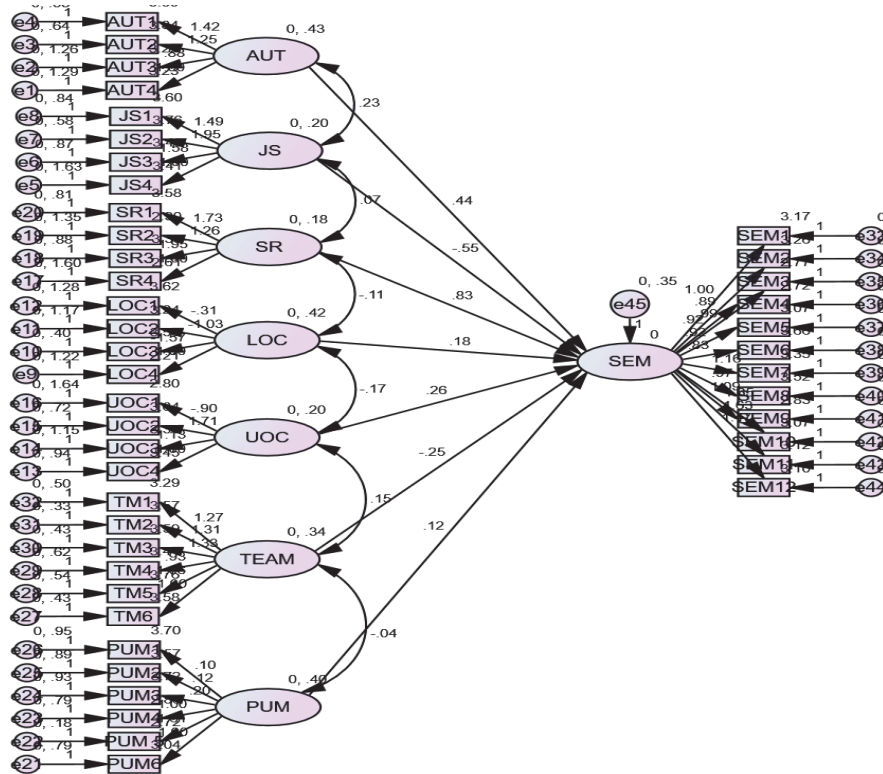


Fig. 3. Structural model

The regression results in Table 5 demonstrate that a positive and strong effect exists between autonomy, stress recognition and employee sustainable motivation in periods of crisis. A negative effect is demonstrated between job satisfaction, teamwork climate and ESM.

Lateral organizational communication, upward organizational communication and perception of unit management are also determinant, but not strongly significant, for the development of ESM.

Table 5 provides all results reported for the hypothesis tests as fixed through the literature review.

Table 5
Results of hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Std. Estimation β	S.E.	C.R. t-value	P	Support
Autonomy \rightarrow SEM	0.44	0.242	3.621	***	Yes
Job satisfaction \rightarrow SEM	-0.55	0.055	3.752	0.067	No
Stress Recognition \rightarrow SEM	0.83	0.063	4.123	***	Yes
Lateral Organizational Communication \rightarrow SEM	0.18	0.123	4.353	***	Yes
Upward Organizational Communication \rightarrow SEM	0.26	0.211	5.101	***	Yes
Teamwork climate \rightarrow SEM	-0.25	0.077	3.422	0.091	No
Perception of unit management \rightarrow SEM	0.12	0.033	5.432	***	Yes

The objective was to determine drivers of employee sustainable motivation according to hypothesis developed through the existing literature review. The results as discussed in the previous section confirm that stress recognition is the greatest determinant, followed by autonomy. These dimensions are related to individual factors, and this result confirms the definition of ESM as autonomous (Stone et al., 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Comparing, ESM for the crisis period and motivation, it can be concluded that there is a great difference in terms of the nature of the determinants. In fact, our results demonstrate that a teamwork climate and job satisfaction during the crisis period negatively affect ESM. It is suggested here that in this period, the most important aspect for the individual is stability, and the nature of the predominant needs are related first to personal needs and then collective factors, especially communication, across different organizational levels. Finally, organizational factors are less important: working conditions and perceptions of unit management do not matter.

5. Conclusion

The importance of this research can be viewed on two principal levels; theoretical and operational. The theoretical contribution is represented by a progressive combination of motivation and sustainability in order to provide a clear vision of this composite concept. In fact, three possibilities for association of these two concepts can be defined through the literature review; motivation in sustainability, motivation for sustainability and motivation as sustainability.

In spite of this, this research has some limits, and its findings could be consolidated by further studies. The first limit is related to the size of the study, as a larger size of sample than that adopted could bring additional benefit and could facilitate the generalization of results. Added to this, the effects treated here could be reinforced by some other variables in order to make the model more efficient, such as extending the study by activity sector or culture.

It is also suggested that a qualitative exploratory approach should be implemented in order to develop the appropriate drivers of employee sustainable motivation in the research context. This approach could generate new items or dimensions, and other factors which can be integrated to establish an exhaustive model of ESM

References

- Blaskova, M., Figurska, I., Adamoniene, R., Polackova, K., & Blasko, R. (2018). Responsible decision-making for sustainable motivation. *Sustainability*, *10*, 3393.
- Blaskova, M., Majchrzak-Lepczyk, J., Hrinikova, D. & Blasko, R. (2019). Sustainable academic motivation. *Sustainability*, *11*, 5934. Doi:10.3390/su11215934
- Chatzopoulou, M., Vlacvei A., & Monovasilis T. (2015). Employee's motivation and satisfaction in light of economic crisis: Evidence of Grevana Prefecture-Greece. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, *24*, 136-145.
- Deci, E. L. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. Plenum.
- Grammatikopoulos, I., Koupidis, S., Moralis, D., Sadrazamis, A., Athinaiou, D., & Giouzevas, I., (2013). Job motivation factors and performance incentives as efficient management tools: A study among mental health professionals. *Archives of Hellenic Medicine/Arheia Ellenikes Iatrikes*, *30*(1), 46-58.
- Handy, C. (1993). *Understanding organizations (4th ed.)*. Penguin Books.
- Helmreich, R.L., & Merritt, A.C. (1998). *Culture at Work in Aviation and Medicine: National, Organizational, and Professional Influences*. Ashgate.
- Helmreich, R.L., Merritt, A.C., Sherman, P.J., Gregorich, S.E., & Wiener, E.L. (1993). *The Flight Management Attitudes Questionnaire (FMAQ)*. NASA/UT/ FAA Technical Report. 93-94. University of Texas;. 18.
- Hitka, M., & Balazova, Z. (2015). The Impact of age, education and seniority of motivation employees. *VERSIAS/praktika: Business: Theory and practice*, *16*(1), 113-120.
- Hitka, M., & Sirotiakova, M. (2011). *The impact of the economic crisis on change in motivation of furniture company employees - case study*. Wood technology Institute.
- Hitka, M., Zavadzka, Z., Jelasic, D., & Balazova Z. (2015). Qualitative Indicators of Employee Satisfaction and their Development in a particular period of time. *Drvna Industrija* *66*(3), 235-239.
- Jelačić, D. (2011). Motivating of wood processing and furniture manufacturing companies employees in the time of economic crisis // *Human resources management and ergonomics*, *5*(1), 55-64
- Latham, G. P. (2012). *Work Motivation: History, theory, research, and practice*. Sage
- MPG International. (2011) , *Sustainable Motivation Attitudinal and Behavioral Drivers for Action. (Report on a UNEP project sponsored by ESOMAR, the World Association of Research Professionals)*. https://www.griequity.com/resources/integraltech/GRIMarket/MPG_Intl_Sustainable_Motivation_Report.pdf
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist Journal*, *1*, 68-78.
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2017). *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*. The Guilford Press.
- Sahir, M.I., Phulpoto, N.H., & Zafar, Z. (2018). Impact of intrinsic factors of motivation on employees intention to leave. *New Horizons*, *12*(1).
- Stone, D.N., Deci, E.L., Ryan, R.M. & Beyond, T. (2009). Creating Autonomous Motivation through Self-Determination Theory. University of Kentucky. . Selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/.../2009_StoneDeciRyan_JGM
- Ubartas, M., & Bakanauskienė, I. (2012). The changes of employee's motivation in the crisis conditions: the case of a telecommunication company. *Impresa Progetto-Electronic Journal of Management*, *1*, 1-10.
- Tafvelin, S., & Stenling, A. (2018). Development and initial validation of the need satisfaction and need support at work scales: A validity-focused approach. *Scandinavian Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *3*(1), 1-14.
- United Nations Academic Impact (2019). Sustainability. <https://academicimpact.un.org/content/sustainability>
- Yang, J. (2005). *The role of trust in organizations: do foci and bases matter?* Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College.
- Zavadsky, J., Hitka, M., and Potkany, M. (2015). Changes of employee motivation of Slovak enterprises due to global economic crisis. *E&M Ekonomie a Management*, *18*(1), 57-66.



© 2020 by the authors; licensee Growing Science, Canada. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).