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Influence of Covid-19 pandemic on employees' quality of life in Romania

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Abstract. In this research we describe the quality of life in Romania during the Covid-19 pandemic, factors that impact the Romanian employees' quality of life. The objective of this paper was to conduct a study on the quality of life of employees in public and private organizations in Romania and how it influenced their motivation and self-esteem during the Covid Pandemic 19.

Keywords. quality of life, organization, pandemic

1. Quality of life in Romania during the Covid-19 pandemic. Factors that impact the Romanian employees' quality of life

Quality of life is a global concept, which involves an interdisciplinary approach, from an economic, social and psychological perspective. Research findings (Cummins, 1996; Diener and Suh, 1997, 1999; Easterlin, 1974, 1995, 2001; Hagerty et al., 2001; Layard, 2005, 2007; Veenhoven, 2000, 2005, 2009) on the quality of life and its evaluation, revealed the factors that determine the complexity of their measurement.

The quality of life measurement model identifies two environments to which it relates - the external environment and the internal environment of quality of life. In turn, they are divided into four groups of factors, including natural, political, social and economic environments, as well as physical, personal, social and material well-being, which form the basis of the theoretical model for measuring quality of life.

"Measuring quality of life requires a systemic approach that involves identifying ***quality of life factors*** and determining the relationships between them: material living conditions,

- housing conditions,
- employment,
- time use,
- education,
- health,

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- social relations,
- safety,
- governance,
- environment,
- overall life satisfaction". (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/qol/index_en.html)

Article I. „The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes in the lives of most people around the world. Like other pandemics throughout history, COVID-19 has a profound effect on people's anxiety, distress, fear, uncertainty". (Harper, C.A.; Satchell, L.P.; Fido, D.; Latzman, R.D. 2020)

Romania ranks again 45th out of 163 countries and is surpassed by all the other EU member states, according to the 2020 Social Progress Index, which analyzes the quality of life and social wellbeing and is conducted by the non-profit organization Social Progress Imperative with the support of Deloitte. With a score of 78.35 points out of 100, slightly higher than last year, Romania follows Barbados, Bulgaria and Mauritius, ranking in the 3rd country category.

"The Social Progress Index (SPI) measures the quality of life and social wellbeing of citizens from 163 countries, based on the analysis of three main dimensions.

The methodology consists of assigning a score for basic needs category items:

- nutrition and basic medical care, water and sanitation, shelter and personal safety, for wellbeing category items

- access to basic knowledge, access to information and communications, health and wellness, environmental quality

- and for opportunities category - personal rights, personal freedom and choice, inclusiveness, access to advanced education".

"The study points out that, in the absence of immediate measures which can contribute to a sustainable recovery of the world economy, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to set social progress back by ten years. In Romania's case, the current crisis emerged right after the best economic year recorded in our country's history, 2019, which leads to the fact that its effects, which are already visible in indicators such as unemployment or economic decline, are not yet obvious in the social progress index, whose level is slightly higher than last year. Nevertheless, the threat of regression which is lying upon the entire world is also valid for us." (Alexandru Reff, Country Managing Partner, Deloitte Romania and Moldova, 2020)

2. Research methodology

2.1. Objectives and assumptions

The objective of this paper was to conduct a study on the quality of life of employees in public and private organizations in Romania and how it influenced their motivation and self-esteem during the Covid Pandemic 19.

The research hypotheses are:

I1. It is assumed that there are statistically significant differences in the quality of life of public and private sector employees.

I2: It is assumed that there is a correlation between work motivation and the quality of life of public and private sector employees.

I3: It is assumed that there is a correlation between quality of life and self-esteem of public and private sector employees.

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2.2. Sample presentation

The participant sample was one of convenience and included 79, public and private sector employees. The sample analyzed by this study presented at least two characteristics constituting the deviations of the sample from these characteristics:
- the percentage to the female populatione exceeded the average percentage of the empoyed population. The percentage of the urban population exceeded the average percentage of the employed population.

2.3. Presentation of the research tools

The following instruments were used in this study:

- Self-Esteem Scale of Toulouse (ETES),
- Motivational Dominance Questionnaire (Constantin T., 2004) and
- Quality of Life Inventory (Frisch, M.B., 1992).

2.3.1. Inventory Self-esteem

The first instrument applied to the analyzed sample aimed at quantifying self-esteem. The "Self-Esteem Inventory", a variant of the Toulouse Inventory, focused on 4 of the five dimensions, namely: the physical self, the emotional self, the social self and the professional self.

2.3.2. Motivational dominance

For the evaluation of the motivational dominance we used the questionnaire ***"Motivational dominants" (Constantin T, 2004).*** From the perspective of the validity criterion, the questionnaire is divided in the following four factors:
1. "Leadership (needs for power): the desire to influence those around by mobilizing them for success or manipulating them in self-interest; to be in charge, to lead or not to depend on others (decision making independence).
2. Expertise (needs for achievement): the tendency or desire to excel in the activities in which they are engaged, to be considered an expert, a professional; to be the "shadow man" who influences decisions (professional expertise).
3. Relationship (affiliation needs): the desire to establish and manifest friendly relationships with others; the desire to work with pleasure in a pleasant team, with understanding people (harmonious relationships).
4. Subsistence (necessities of existence): one concern for the basic needs of existence (rest, stability, money, food, security)" (Ticu C., 2004).

Quality of Life Inventory (Frisch, M.B., 1992).

Quality of Life Inventory (QOLI) "assesses an individual's quality of life by self-reporting the importance it attaches to each of the 16 areas of life (on a 3-point rating scale) and their current satisfaction with each area (on a 6 point rating scale). Significance scores are multiplied by satisfaction scores for each area, and then these scores are added to determine a current overall quality of life for each individual. This measure is very rapid to achieve and has been standardized in a community sample of adults, and higher scores indicate a higher overall quality of life." (Frisch, M.B., 1992).

2.4. Results and discussions

I1. It is assumed that there are statistically significant differences in the quality of life of public and private sector employees.

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To prove this hypothesis, we started from the presentation of descriptive statistics of the two subsamples in terms of quality of life, continuing with the verification of the normal distribution of values recorded by it depending on the membership of respondents in public or private sectors.

Following the generation of starting indices regarding the distribution of scores obtained on quality of life, it results that at the level of the subsample of persons employed in the public environment, the quality of life average score obtained is equal to 3,241 in the context of a standard deviation of 1,189. -1.12 and maximum of 5.38, the value of the median being 3.214.

On the subsample of persons employed in the private sector, the average total score obtained for quality of life is equal to 3.469 in the context of a standard deviation of 1.157, with a minimum self-esteem equal to 0.47 and a maximum of 5.38, the value of the median being 3.548.

It follows that there are a number of differences between the two subsamples in terms of scores obtained on quality of life, both in terms of the value of the average and the deviation, respectively the minimum and maximum values, but also the median.

To identify whether the existing differences are significant, which we want to prove by this hypothesis, we initially tested the normality of the distribution.

Tests of Normality							
	Persons employed in the public and the private sectors	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Quality of life score	public	.122	37	.178	.919	37	.011
	private	.142	42	.033	.915	42	.004
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

Table 1. Normality test of the self-esteem score for employees in public versus private institutions

Following the application of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, there is a normal distribution for the total quality of life score of the persons employed in the public environment and a non-normal distribution for those employed in the private environment, context in which we will use nonparametric tests. Thus, for testing this third hypothesis we will proceed to apply a nonparametric test, namely the Mann-Whitney U test.

Test Statistics[a]	
	Quality of life score
Mann-Whitney U	658.000
Wilcoxon W	1361.000
Z	-1.169
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.242
a. Grouping Variable: Persons employed in the public and the private sectors	

Table 2. Statistical testing of the hypothesis 1

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Analyzing the value of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) equal to 0.242, greater than 0.05 results that there is no statistically significant difference between the total score quality of life during the Covid Pandemic 19 at the level of the two samples - persons employed in the public and the private sectors in Romania. This indicator suggests that during the Covid 19 Pandemic, the quality of life of people employed in both the public and private sectors in Romania was affected.

However, older and newer research studies seem to support the opposite. Thus, the authors Rawls, Ullrich and Nelson (1975) "found that public sector employees have a higher quality of life than those in the private sector. Similar results were obtained in another study by Bhatt P. (2011), which concluded that public sector employees enjoy professional life to a large extent compared to private sector employees".

The study conducted by Stănescu DF, Mateiana R. (2012) on the Romanian population showed "that in terms of quality of life, phenomenological interpretive analysis is focused on understanding the personal experience of each individual, thus exploring how people understand or is involved in certain events or processes in life".

It offers the possibility to research, describe and interpret the meaning in which individuals understand their own experiences. The lack of organization specific to public institutions and companies was emphasized by the less professional or even illegal managerial practices that the participants told about and that had an impact on the quality of life of those study participants whose values they suffered.

Participants reported conditions such as melancholy and regret talking about their activities in public. During the interviews, a series of secondary benefits of working in the public environment were also identified, the main motivating factors specific to the public work environment being the schedule, convenience in performing tasks, excessive lightness and free time.

The frustrations and resentments accumulated as a reply to the activity in the public environment dissipated once they entered the private system, due to some experiences that managed to drive away these states. Thus, "open communication, collegiality, simplicity and especially participatory management have contributed to increasing the professional satisfaction of the participants" in the research undertaken by Stănescu and Mateiana (2012). This study concludes that the "quality of life, private employees than public employees, there are significant differences" (Stănescu D.F, Mateiana R. 2012).

The difference in results between our study can be attributed to the sampling method (convenience sampling), contextual differences (Covid-19 crisis), the preponderance of executives among respondents, and the preponderance of employees in the field of services.

I2: It is presumed that there is a correlation between work motivation factors and the quality of life of employees in public and private organizations in Romania, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In demonstrating this hypothesis, we started from the verification of the normal distribution of the values of the scores recorded by the five variables involved.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
lead	.184	79	.000	.855	79	.000
evaluation	.268	79	.000	.715	79	.000
networking	.206	79	.000	.778	79	.000

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subsistence	.202	79	.000	.842	79	.000
Total quality of life score	.110	79	.018	.925	79	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 3. The normality test related to the scores of work motivation factors and the quality of life score

The distribution obtained is non-normal one, according to the values centralized in table 2 a non-normal one. To check the correlations, we therefore calculate the non-parametric coefficient Spearman.

			lead	evaluation	networking	subsistence	Total quality of life score
Spearman's rho	lead	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.732**	.578**	.483**	.267*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.017
		N	79	79	79	79	79
	evaluation	Correlation Coefficient	.732**	1.000	.737**	.705**	.319**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.004
		N	79	79	79	79	79
	networking	Correlation Coefficient	.578**	.737**	1.000	.652**	.187
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.098
		N	79	79	79	79	79
	subsistence	Correlation Coefficient	.483**	.705**	.652**	1.000	.118
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.302
		N	79	79	79	79	79
	total quality of life score	Correlation Coefficient	.267*	.319**	.187	.118	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.004	.098	.302	.
		N	79	79	79	79	79

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Correlation table related to work motivation factors with the total quality of life score

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Results show that the only correlations established in the verification of the fifth hypothesis are those between the total score quality of life and "Leadership" as a factor of motivation at work and between the quality of life and "Expertise". This is a positive correlation of 0.267 significant at the threshold of 0.05 in the first situation and 0.319 significant at the threshold of 0.01 in the second (both being weak correlations).

Conclusion: the hypothesis is only partially confirmed for a small part of the motivation factors.

In support of the findings, we note that, according to specialized studies, the redesign of jobs and work systems is frequently done to increase organizational productivity and improve the quality of work experiences of members of the organization.

Four theoretical approaches to job redesign (activation theory, motivation-hygiene theory, job characteristics theory and sociotechnical theory) were reviewed and compared, discussing the types of personal and work outcomes that can reasonably be expected from job restructuring. Numerous problems have been associated with routine work and repetitive tasks such as decreased alertness, decreased ability to react to new stimuli and even impaired muscle coordination.

The most influential theory of work is Herzberg's theory of the two factors of satisfaction and motivation. This theory suggests that the intrinsic factors of work determine how satisfied people are at work. These factors, called motivators, include the recognition, achievement, responsibility, advancement, and personal growth of individuals' overall skills and satisfaction. Following these theories, a study by Hackman, J. R. (1980) suggested the existence of a significant correlation between work motivation and overall quality of life.

I3: It is assumed that there is a correlation between the total score of the quality of life of employees in Romania during the Covid-19 Pandemic and their self-esteem.

In demonstrating this hypothesis we started from the verification of the normality of the distribution of the values registered by the two variables involved.

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Self-esteem score	.118	79	.008	.944	79	.002
QLI score	.110	79	.018	.925	79	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 5. Normality test for self-esteem scores and total score on the quality of life indicator

The distribution of values is a non-normal one, according to the data contained in table. To check the correlations, we calculate, as in the previous cases, the non-parametric Spearman coefficient.

			Self-esteem score	QLI score
Spearman's rho	Self-esteem score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.330**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	79	79

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QLI score	Correlation Coefficient	.330**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
	N	79	79

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Correlation test related to self-esteem scores and total score on the quality of life indicator

In the context of a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.330, significant at the level of 0.01, it results that in the verification of this hypothesis a positive correlation is established between the score obtained for self-esteem and the total score of quality of life.

Conclusions

The conclusion drawn from the verification of the hypothesis is that the hypothesis formulated is confirmed on the studied sample. According to specialized studies, "self-esteem is a construct much discussed by organizations of psychologists and practitioners" since the beginning of its theorizing by Maslow (1943).

Some influential publications aimed at promoting the well-being of workers by participating in decision-making at work have concluded "that increasing self-esteem brings many benefits on the overall quality of life and thus on the quality of professional life" (Tharenou, P., 1979). Consequently, our hypothesis is consistent with most of the evidence and research in the field.

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