

ZRINYI MIKLOS UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

Doctoral Commission

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**THE CHANGES IN WORKPLACE SATISFACTION OF THE  
PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL OF THE HUNGARIAN  
NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES BETWEEN 1996-2007**

an exposition by the author and the official judgements

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## **Actuality of the research topic**

It has become widely known all around the world that companies are only able to achieve lasting economic success if they regard their employees as partners, valuable assets, human resources. Researchers found that workplace effectiveness is closely linked to working conditions, atmosphere and workers' satisfaction. This is why job advertisements not only promise competitive wages but in several cases benefits such as a chance to attend free trainings or a promise of quick ascension on the company ladder or simply a good atmosphere.

The above is not restricted to companies and organizations operating within the tertiary sector but also - with some specifics - to the whole of the military as an organization. The modernization and professionalization of the military service also means that the military has to satisfy its HR demands from the very same market as any other organization. As such the military should not - can not - be ignorant to the satisfaction of its members, and has to attain a certain level of organizational performance in order to be able to sustainably operate.

## **Research goals**

In this paper the author attempts to reveal how the satisfaction of the professional military servicemen changed between 1996 and 2007. It was also possible to accurately evaluate the chain of core changes to the military system based on the satisfaction, workplace conditions and general quality of life of the commissioned personnel.

Obviously to present every single aspect of satisfaction of the professional military servicemen during this interval exceeds the form factor of this paper. Therefore the author focuses on a few key areas that are as follows:

- The satisfaction of the commissioned personnel with workplace conditions,
- With elements of the system of incentives,
- With elements of the system of compensations and wages,
- With elements of the social support system (services offered by the organization).

A further goal of this paper is also to systematically organize the collective knowledge and information as well as methodology on workplace satisfaction research and to offer a

concise source to those who are interested in the topic of employee satisfaction measurement.

In order to help put the results of the research into perspective it was needed to put together a list of main events occurred within the examined timeframe that could have an effect on the satisfaction of the professional and commissioned military personnel.

Due to the multi-aspect quality of the cause-effect system the paper is a trend-research spanning 14 years that is exploratory in nature and descriptive in form. To help shape the goals and hypotheses of the study I took into consideration the relevant theories covering the topic as well as the applicable international and domestic researches.

This dissertation is limited to satisfaction and does not attempt to further analyze and demonstrate the members' commitment and loyalty to the organization.

### **Hypotheses of the research**

- 1. It is assumed that by the end of the surveyed timeframe the general satisfaction of the personnel as well as its tendencies show an improvement to that of the nineties. This is based on the fact that by this time the large scale organizational transformations have ended and organizational conditions have consolidated.*
- 2. It is assumed that due to the reorganization and modernization of the military the satisfaction of its members with workplace conditions, quality and quantity of supplies, and (military) technology is improving in tendency.*
- 3. It is assumed that due to the efforts to professionalize and modernize the military the satisfaction of its members with the system of incentives, compensation and wages as well as the social support system is unequally but nevertheless tendentially improving.*
- 4. It is assumed that the age and education variables of the professional and commissioned personnel strongly whereas the martial status and sex variables weakly correlate to the examined 34 dimensions of workplace satisfaction.*

## **Research methodology**

During the research the responses regarding satisfaction from the eight questionnaire-based surveys conducted by the Department of Sociology between 1996 and 2007 among the professional military servicemen had been compared and analyzed in order to formulate the ongoing trends. First and foremost basic descriptive statistical methods of frequency and distribution were used to determine the big picture. Hypotheses were tested using a cross-table analysis within range of statistical significance. To guarantee the reliability of the statistical calculations requirements of relevant literature on methodology were met.

Questions of the surveys were either global evaluations of satisfaction or singling out one aspect of satisfaction. For example to globally evaluate satisfaction with work the following question was used: "All in all, how satisfied are you with your current job? Select the reply that is closest to how you feel." Responses could be chosen from a scale of five: very (completely) satisfied; satisfied; so-so (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied); dissatisfied; very (completely) dissatisfied.

The questionnaires of the Department always used this scale of five which was transformed into a scale of three during the analysis in order to facilitate an easier evaluation and understanding of the results. Logically inconsistent or missing data was pruned.

Secondary data file analysis was concluded using SPSS 16.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

## **Description of the research**

In the first chapter the actuality, goals, hypotheses and methodology of the research is detailed.

Chapter two deals with the short history of job satisfaction research including the available theoretical models and the possible ways of satisfaction measurement. The effect of demographic factors on satisfaction is also explained.

Chapter three lists the major reorganizational events in the defense sector each year between 1996 and 2007. The results of the repeated changes in military structure can be summarized as follows: the organizational structure, the system of leadership and methods of application, the defense-readiness and conscription structure, the system of

supplies, the training and education, the financial management and the system of material and technical supplies, the number and rank of members, the life and work conditions of the personnel, the social and existential status of the personnel, the social connections of the military and finally the organizational system of human resources and development as a whole have altered.

In chapter four the satisfaction of the professional and commissioned personnel is analyzed regarding the 34 dimensions of workplace conditions, compensations, wages and the social support system.

Chapter five offers a summary of the results, a position on accepting or rejecting the initial hypotheses and an opinion on the possibilities of extending the research.

### **Summary**

All in all the satisfaction of the professional and commissioned personnel with workplace conditions, compensations, wages and the social support system have not increased due to the military reforms going on between 1996 and 2007 as much as the author had initially expected. One possible reason of that would be that people are slow to alter their emotional and cognitive status in connection with workplace conditions and the examined timeframe was too short to facilitate large-scale paradigm shifts. Secondly most of the dimensions examined during the research belong to the hygiene factors in Herzberg's theory (detailed in the chapter on theoretical background) and as such these factors cannot be expected to increase satisfaction, only their absence has an effect of causing immediate dissatisfaction.

Directly comparing the data from 1996 to 2007 22 of the 34 dimensions show an increase in satisfaction, albeit the ratio of this growth is varied. Trends show a decrease in gross dissatisfaction and show an increased number of generally satisfied personnel.

The satisfaction with work conditions is differentiated and the increase is only meager. The reason for this is that despite of the efforts in modernization the replacement of the severely obsolete equipment and military technology with new up-to-date machinery was too slow to cause a significant breakthrough in satisfaction ratios.

Of the 19 examined elements of incentives, compensations, wages and the social support system 10 showed an unequal increase in satisfaction by the personnel.

Based on the results the education and age proved to be the decisive variables of satisfaction differences in workplace conditions. Martial status and sex only show a weak correlation to the satisfaction disparities.

## **Observations based on the research**

1. Of the material elements of workplace conditions the greatest dissatisfaction was due to the bad state of military buildings and facilities. It is advised to propagate the continued effort in facility renovation and refurbishment.
2. Satisfaction with military technology shows no statistically significant change in ten years. The professional officers have in mind a military operating with a much more modern technology than it does now which accentuates the need to increase the ratio of the budget for technology development.
3. Information management within the organization is severely lacking according to every second officer. There is a need for a much more effective internal information management system than the current.
4. In 2007 more than 40% of the commissioned personnel is dissatisfied by rights protection and the ratio of the satisfied is not even half of that. It is necessary to ensure the effective working conditions of the organizations dealing with rights protection and the better representation of the professional personnel by the leadership.
5. During the examined period chances of self-improvement, education and the availability of language studies continued to be a source of dissatisfaction. An improvement in the system of incentives regarding these factors could be a successful element of motivation for the professional and commissioned personnel.
6. The majority is very dissatisfied with the objectivity of the performance evaluation system. It is unavoidable to revamp and correct the issues with performance evaluation in the new military system.
7. The gross dissatisfaction with opportunities and progression indicate core issues with the system of ranks. There needs to be a harmonization of progress opportunities with the new military system in order to facilitate member satisfaction.
8. Wages and chances for additional income are a cause for dissatisfaction for the majority of the responders. This indicates that a member of a modern professional military believes that a more competitive wage is necessary to be in proportion with the changes in expectations. Dissatisfaction with bonuses and chances to gain additional income show narrowing opportunities as well as a need of the officers

that - since additional income is not possible - their wage would be enough to sustain their families and secure their financial status.

9. The social support system - specifically housing - is lacking according to the responders. Moreover while officers with a family enjoy a preference most of the time the needs of single unmarried should not be forgotten either. The increase in the number of young unmarried personnel demands a greater attention to their support. This is mainly caused by changes in marriage customs and a general shift towards establishing a family at a later age than before.

### **Possibilities of extending the research**

There exist different directions towards which the author sees an opportunity of extension. For one the research can be extended by including more dimensions of satisfaction. Moreover it is possible to involve a wider category of personnel within the military system in the survey and conduct comparative research. A third way would be to enhance the research material with a deeper analysis of organizational commitment and loyalty.

### **New scientific results**

1. The current research revealed:
  - a. the changes in *general satisfaction* of the military personnel with 34 workplace dimensions between 1996-2007;
  - b. the effect of the modernization of the military to the changes in *satisfaction with workplace conditions of military personnel*,
  - c. the changes in satisfaction of the military personnel with *19 factors of incentives, compensations, wages and the social support system*.
2. The research is first to apply *an examination of trends for a 11 year timespan* on the topic of job satisfaction within the military
3. The research revealed the *correlation of workplace satisfaction and the variables of education, age, martial status and non-demographic factors* of the military personnel