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Motivation process during the economic crisis: The evidence of Greek structural design engineers

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ABSTRACT

During the period of 2008-2017 the work environment in Greece changed in a great number of organizations due to the devastating outcomes of the financial crisis. This sudden change of organization, in political and economic contexts generated new topics in the field of organizational research. To look into that concept, an empirical research was conducted within the Greek structural design Engineers. The aim of this paper is to investigate the motivation process at the workplace during the economic crisis. Generally, employee motivation has been studied and analyzed by dozens of scholars who apparently have exhausted the subject, others created theories and others did empirical research. The current research focuses on the in-depth analysis of a small group of employees (qualitative research) in a workplace with a strong influence of the current crisis.

KEY WORDS

Motivation, economic crisis, Greece, motivation, schematic presentation, HR management

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1 INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a force which acts in each man making him act in one way or another. Different assumptions result in various motivation theories. The classic motivation theories in the management context are American (Maslow, McClelland, Herzberg etc.) and they reflect the culture in which they were developed. The American motivation theories reflect the cultural environment of the United States of their day. Most of the theorists were middle-class intellectuals, so their theories reflect the national intellectual middle-class culture background of 19th and 20th century. This period covers a period of rapid economic growth (1865-1928), the Wall street crash (1929), the Great Depression period (1930-1940), World War I (1940-1945). The second half of the twentieth century was a time of high economic growth (1945-1964), sexual freedom and drugs, while the concept of 1980's based on huge consumption of money and goods. In general, it was a period of economic growth and recovery.

In Greece during the current economic crisis, the biggest issue, with no doubt, is the sharp increase in unemployment. The unemployment rate was around 10% in the first half of the previous decade. In May 2008, the unemployment rate reached the highest level of the last decade (6.6% of the workforce). Then it began to grow as the country plunged into the recession. In May 2013, the number of unemployed was almost 1.4 million and the unemployment rate was 27.5%, while the corresponding rates in the other European countries were much lower: 26.3% in Spain, 17.2% in Portugal, 13.5% and 12.1% in Ireland and Italy respectively (Eurostat, 2013).

2 MAPPING MOTIVATION RESEARCH

The systematic review of existing literature highlights the different approaches to motivation in the workplace. After carefully studying the research work on motivation and related theories, we have come to the following categorization of the theoretical approaches:

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1. *Motivation Theories (Content vs. Process theories)*

Content theories of motivation are based on the assumption that all people have a similar set of (unchanged) human needs and behave to meet these needs. Meeting these needs is a motivation factor. At the other hand Process theories consider that the behavior of the employees is determined and shaped by both the external environment and the individual. It is the individual who will eventually decide on how to behave and determine the intensity of the effort he will make in his work. Process theories assume that although the needs of individuals are similar, the importance and weight of them are different for the individuals (dynamic view), quite subjective and lead to different behaviors.

2. *Extrinsic / intrinsic motivation factors*

A large part of the literature on work motivation has been developed around the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. External motivation concerns the formation and maintenance of a particular behavior linking it to specific (and desirable by the employee) benefits. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, results from the inner, psychological needs of the individual and their satisfaction through work (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The behavior with intrinsic/ internal motivation is observed when there is no apparent reward other than the activity itself (Deci, 1975).

3. *The dynamic and multiple character of motivation*

Motivation in workplace is one of the most discussed subjects in organizational studies, and more generally in social sciences. As an object in direct relation to human behavior and internal psychological and cognitive processes, motivation is directly influenced by the specific environment in which each person operates (socio-economic, environment-work environment). Despite the many related theories and approaches that have been developed and the many studies that have been conducted, no approach to work motivation has so far been able to offer a satisfactory holistic interpretation of the phenomenon (Latham, 2011), in order to develop a unified theory (ground theory). Hitka and Balazova (2015) point out in their research that motivation factors vary according to:

- a) human needs,
- b) social conditions and lifestyle, and
- c) the internal and external environment of the company (Mikro-Makro environment).

2.1 MOTIVATION DURING AN ECONOMIC CRISIS

The motivation generally at work as a subject to be studied has been explored by many scholars during the years worldwide. 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. At the same time above conditions give an interest in any new work whose setting its own research framework (research sample, current socio-economic conditions) illuminates and analyzes another aspect of the "motivation" phenomenon party space.

In the years 2010-2015, due to the global economic crisis, studies focus on changes in motivation factors due to this. The need for security that the employees were looking for in the workplace at the time is something that is highlighted in all studies on motivation during the crisis, mainly by the team of Hitka and Sirotiakova (2011), Bakanauskiene and Ubartas (2012), Zavadsky et al. (2015), Hitka and Balazova (2015), Hitka et al (2015) from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In the work of Hitka et al. (2015) it is stated that employees enjoy the appreciation from the company and that could act as a motive. Zavadski et al. (2015) proposed the interaction with the management team as an alternative way of motivation, while communication within the organization is ranked third.

Hitka et al. (2015) report internal communication as a potential motivation factor (at no cost), that companies should not ignore. Employees are looking for support from the organization and open communication. They are looking for a leader to inspire them, and together they will go out and out of the crisis. Good relations with colleagues, good working conditions are ranked in high positions among the motivation factors during the crisis (Hitka & Sirotiakova, 2011). In Jelacic (2011, Croatia), the education factor was in the third place between the motivation factors, considering it as a professional asset for the post-crisis era. In several surveys during the economic crisis (Hitka & Sirotiakova, 2011; Hitka & Balazova, 2015; Zavadsky et al., 2015) an equity motivation factor and a fair assessment system are highlighted and discussed.

At last, I would like to refer to two surveys, which took place in Greece at about the same time, considering different target population, and have resulted in completely different results, which seem to ignore the current intense and prolonged economic crisis.

The first survey, Chatzopoulou et al. (2015) took place in the Regional Unit of Grevena (Western Macedonia) in April 2014, the sample consisted of 85 local government employees and as independent variables gender, age, educational level of employees and hierarchy within the organization were used.

The survey concluded that in the current period of economic downturn, employees (permanent) employees in Local Government indicate as factors of motivation and satisfaction the following (in order of priority):

- a) interesting work,
- b) equal and fair treatment,
- c) objective assessment, and
- d) satisfactory salary.

While the eleventh position shows the factor of security and stability at work.

The second research by Grammatikopoulos et al. (2013) took place in the field of mental health professionals. Four categories of health professionals (doctors, nurses, administrators, other employees) who worked in two psychiatric hospitals (Thessaloniki and Corfu) participated. The results of the study have shown the most important factors of motivation in the field:

- a) meaningful work,
- b) respect, and
- c) good interpersonal relationships at the workplace.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The subject we are examining and focusing on is the wider field of HR management, leadership- employee's motivation and especially under conditions of an economic crisis. The research focused on a specific professional team: the Structural Design Engineers and especially those who work with a dependent employment within a firm. The current research attempted to investigate the impact of an economic crisis on the motivation factors in the work environment.

The individual objectives of the current survey are set at two levels. On the first level, there is an overview of motivation and motivational factors, based on a literature review of existing research work. At the second level, the study tried to explore the potential changes in the content and importance of motivational factors related to the economic circumstances and the particular characteristics of the target population.

4 METHODOLOGY – GROUNDED THEORY

The research was integrated in two phases:

Phase A

Literature review (theories and researches) based on a dynamic approach to needs

Phase B

On field research was done using a qualitative method, a small sample (12 workers in total) and semi-structured face to face interviews. The respondents worked as civil engineers in two consultancies: A (Building Design Projects) and B (Bridge Design Projects).

The present qualitative research is informed by a *constructivist* grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2009) which is a modification of the classic grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory approach aims to create a conceptual framework that is grounded in the data rather than to verify an existing one. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that by using the grounded theory approach “a theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other.

Grounded theory is well suitable with the research aim of this study - to describe and explore the construction of motivation process within structural design consultancy field. The design of the study is not based on predetermined assumptions about the content, meaning, and functions of the employee motivation. However, it is inevitable for all researchers to have former knowledge of their field of study. The previous knowledge about motivation concept does not function as a lens constraining my inquiry; on the contrary, it enables me to have a wider knowledge concerning the motivation in workplace.

The classic grounded theory is grounded on the assumption that reality is single, and researcher can discover it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Many scholars characterize the classic grounded theory as “objectivist” because it sees the researcher as having “a separate, unbiased, unobtrusive, researcher role in collecting and analyzing data and focus on the content of expressed verbalizations and observable behaviors” (Lal et al., 2012). In the classic grounded theory, the theory that emerges is assumed to be an objective portrait of the reality and independent from the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The **constructivist grounded theory** (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) differs from the classic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) grounded theory approach in its beliefs about reality and the role of researcher. The constructivist grounded theory

approach assumes that a) there is not a single reality but multiple (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and b) reality is not discovered by the researcher, but co-constructed between the researcher and the people under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The constructivist grounded theory accepts the subjectivity of researchers and their role in the co-construction of reality. Charmaz (2006) points out that the theory that emerged from data is not separate from the researchers, but they “construct ... [the] grounded theories through ... [their] past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and the research practices”.

The present study follows a *constructivist* grounded theory approach because its ontological and epistemological assumptions are compatible and suitable with the corresponding assumptions of the present research.

4.1 TARGET POPULATION – THE SAMPLE

Initially, the employees, six civil engineers of company A, were selected. In this company the researcher had a long working experience. At the time of the interviews (2012-2013), we no longer belonged to the body of employees, but our privileged access to this area allowed for an in-depth understanding of respondents' answers.

Six more employees were selected by company B. Company B was chosen because, unlike A, its client was the Greek public sector. Initially, we had assumed that B's employees would have less insecurity given the nature of their clientele.

Company A mainly deals with private sector business/buildings (hotel units, warehouses, residences, commercial developments) while company B mainly deals with the public and design of concrete bridges projects. Company A has a wider range of projects, smaller budget projects, shorter-term studies, and it is dependent on private initiative. Company B, on the other hand, is fully specialized in the subject of its studies, has a small number of projects, but has a long duration and budget and is fully dependent on the public sector.

In this study, knowing that the specimen is not representative, sampling will be used without probability and, more particularly, *convenience* sampling. Convenience sampling is a sampling method that utilizes participants that are available to the researcher due to accessibility (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 190). The participants were familiar to the author from before. Nevertheless, the participants were primarily chosen for the research because of their relevance for the research question and not simply because of their accessibility to the author. This type of sampling is used in pilot surveys, where there is no intention of generalizing the results. In this sampling, people close to the researcher are selected and represent a common feature that is attempted to study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008). The above type of sampling is chosen as the most appropriate because of the researcher's access to research facilities due to his work in the specific consultancy in the past.

The sample of the survey was 12 employees, 5 men and 7 women who have worked as Structural Design Engineers for 3 to 15 years, 6 worked in company A and 6 in company B. The sample, all the individuals have a higher level education (5 year study diploma) and 3 of them hold a postgraduate degree. They are 30-45 years old. The majority (9 employees) were born outside Athens and moved to Athens to find a job.

Table 1: Interviews Schedule

Before crisis
Would you please describe in short your life until now?
Tell me about your family, your childhood, your studies, and your decision to look for a job in Athens.
Please describe how working at company A /B was.
Describe your role, your responsibilities.
Are you happy working here?
During crisis
Please describe what the first days of the crisis within the organization were like.
How would you describe the leadership within your firm during the economic collapse of 2008?
Please take me into a positive experience that stemmed from the recession.
Please take me into a negative experience that stemmed from the recession
Please describe your thoughts, feelings and perceptions you experienced during the months following the economic collapse.
Please describe your thoughts, feelings and perceptions you experienced during the months following the economic collapse
Have your thoughts, goals, or behavior, both personally and within the organization changed in any way due to economic crisis?
Would you please describe the most transforming moment through the entire experience of the economic crisis.

4.2 COLLECTING DATA – INTERVIEWS

Interviewing - and particularly the semi-structured technique – is the most widely used method. (Silverman, 2010). The use of interviews in a grounded theory approach is an appropriate and suitable method for data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2002; Silverman, 2010) and complements other methods such as participant observation. I decided to include the technique of face to face semi-structured interviews in the design of the study in order to gain deep understanding of group members' ideas, perceptions, and meanings.

Prior to entering the field, I designed a semi-structured interview guide (See Table 1) with few, broad and open-ended questions that would enable the group members to offer their own perspectives, but also allow unexpected accounts and stories to emerge (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Before each interview I ensured employees of their anonymity, confidentiality and also provided them with the opportunity to ask any questions. Finally, I asked - and all employees agreed - if I could record their interview. During interviews I also took notes, but I stopped whenever I felt that note-taking was distracting either me or the participant. The interviews were conducted in Greek and typically lasted between 50 minutes and one hour and fifteen minutes. After each interview I kept a short record about the interviewing experience with each member, ideas, impressions, and incidents that emerged during the interview.

The interviews took place in 2013 and were completed in the second half of the year. The selected employees worked there before the start of the crisis (2008) until December 2012. This restriction was deemed necessary to delimit and stabilize the sample of the research given the continuing rate of reductions in the sector.

ANALYZING THE DATA

Initially the interviews were transcribed in a high level of detail and the transcripts were checked for accuracy. The data analysis was an emergent, iterative process. The data analysis includes a thematic approach (Riessman, 2003) in which the emphasis is “on the content of the data” – in “what was said”. Thematic analysis, along with grounded theory requires more involvement and interpretations from the researcher's side (Guest et al, 2012). The authors state that thematic analysis shifts away from the counting of explicit words or phrases and turns the attention to identifying and describing the implicit and explicit ideas within the data, these being the themes. Codes generated in the process are usually developed to identify the themes and linked to the raw data as summarizing elements for later analysis (Guest et al, 2012). The reason for why thematic analysis was chosen for the main method of data analysis for this research, was that thematic analysis can be said to be the most useful method for catching the complexities of meaning in a textual data set (Guest et al, 2012). Moreover, it is also the most common method of analysis utilized in qualitative research. Furthermore, the process of thematic analysis allows for guideline-oriented, problem-centered, and focused interviews. (Kuckartz, 2014).

The process begins by initial work with the text, which indicates that the text produced from the interviews is carefully read and particularly important passages of it are highlighted (Kuckartz, 2014,). In the next phase the coding process begins, and the second step is to develop the main topical categories. These topics usually stem from the research question and have already impacted the way in which the data has been collected. According to the author, in the first coding process the researcher works through the text in a sequential manner and assigns text passages to categories. After the main coding process the text passages should be compiled to each of the main categories, and subcategories should be determined for categories that the researcher wants to differentiate. Once the sub-categories have been defined, the second coding process can begin. Here, coded text passages within each main category are now assigned to newly constructed subcategories. The final, and important, phase of the process is the analysis and presentation of results. (Motivation Factors during economic crisis).

In practice the process was executed as follows.

- 1) Firstly, the transcripts were reviewed and important sentences or phrases, in relation to the research question were highlighted.
- 2) Then, all the highlighted sentences were organized under each question to be able to review their similarities and differences. Following from this, the data was reviewed again to construct first order concepts.
- 3) After this, the data was viewed again to see what second order concept could be derived from the found first order concepts and to examine if more first order concepts would be found.
- 4) After the formation of the second order themes, the aggregate dimensions/core categories were formed based on what would simply describe each theme found.

As the form of analysis is thematic analysis, the first order concepts, second order themes and finally aggregate dimensions/Core categories are closely related, and constructed, based on what surfaced many times from the data. The process is presented in Table 2 and is related to that of employee motivation during economic crisis, as it is the core of this study and of the research question.

5 RESULTS – MOTIVATION FACTORS DURING ECONOMIC CRISIS

This Research work explored the motivation in a dynamic environment, taking into account the socio-economic context in which the research was conducted. In order to achieve this, a qualitative research with twelve personal face to face semi-structured interviews was conducted. There are *eight* distinct conclusions that can be drawn in relation to the sources of work motivation.

First of them is that employees during economic crisis are motivated by **social aspects at work**. The socialization can be with the management team and / or with colleagues, and equal importance is placed on both kinds of socialization. The motivation factor of stability and security has been replaced by the satisfaction of the need to belong to a social / workplace.

Second factor that was presented to be of importance for the motivation employed in this specific period that, namely, managers voice their **appreciation towards their employees**. This aspect was valued very highly, even among those women who felt like they never receive praise for their work, or whose managers simply do not show their appreciation towards their staff. This was in some cases valued even more than receiving additional compensation. The participants who had received appreciation, continued to appreciate it and acknowledge its impact on their work motivation.

Third, it is clear that the **management and leadership** styles that are adopted by a firm business and its management will have a determining effect on the motivation level, the morale and the job satisfaction of the employees. Nevertheless, the relationship between the management style that is used within the business and the level of motivation within the workforce is a subject of much debate within industry. In many circles, there is continuous debate about whether leaders are born or developed. Reflecting on the discussions about motivation, it is evident that humans are very complicated and are made up of a number of traits. With motivation, these influences are both inherited and acquired from our environment and influences. It is in this regard that the study seeks to establish the role of leadership on employee motivation. The characteristics of the good boss (as a motivating factor) have been greatly modified from a "person responsible and man with knowledge and skills to solve any technical problem at work" and turned into "the one who will discuss with their employees their daily problems, support and will be their link with the management team".

The success of every organization depends on its employees' drive to thrive through their efforts, commitment, engagement, practice and persistence. Thus, motivation is an important topic because leadership competencies include the ability to motivate employees as one of the crucial duties or jobs. Leadership begins with the initial effort made to recruit a new employee; proceeds through the entire induction process; and continues every day until the employee departs the organization. This process is cultivated by a manager/leader, motivating new employees and it highlights, once again, the importance of leadership in an organization. The quality of a manager's relationship with an employee is the most powerful element of employee motivation. It creates a professional, positive and respectful attitude and employees are more likely to adopt a similar approach with their peers and enjoy work

Fourth conclusion that can be drawn is that feedback and **communication** is tremendously important for employees. They tend to value the feedback received from their colleagues, managers. Feedback is also very closely related to the amount of work motivation that employee feel. Feedback indicates how they do their work and without indications of this work motivation is harder to achieve. Communication with the management team, information about their plan and their schedule to deal with the crisis is fundamental for employees and their wiring in this. The need for communication / information from management on the current situation, future actions and plans to exit the crisis has emerged as a key driver of motivation.

Fifth a form of **social equality / sharing** of economic losses act as a factor of motivation. The financial difficulties combined with the parallel reduction of income they face make them feel socially degraded while their employers still hold their position. Employees are looking to see the consequences of economic losses on their employers as well.

Sixth, a situation that might easily be overlooked when considering work motivation, but proved to be of significance, is simply thriving at work, **good working environment**. Enjoying what you do and principally enjoying going to work is something that proved to be important for achieving work motivation. It can be said that thriving at work might be a result from other aspects being "in order", but generally enjoying going to work is something that affects the overall sensation of work motivation.

Next conclusion, the potential of **development** was also an important element when considering work motivation. Being able to develop within the work that you do, through job rotation or education courses, was identified as one of the primary motivators among the participants. The theoretical framework also supports the importance of personal development when trying to achieve work motivation. Therefore, the importance of possibility for development cannot be overlooked. Even though the factor continued personal development is important especially for those employees of lower hierarchy scale (younger engineers).

Finally, employees found the **characteristics of the job** (interesting job, personal responsibility for the result, which requires knowledge and skills and can be fulfilled from start to finish) which continue to motivate the employees, are important to have an influence on their work motivation, but their strength decreased because of the difficulties faced

during this period. Nevertheless, they were greatly appreciated and experienced as motivating to be able to influence the work. Variance/interesting job are also something that was identified as a quality within work that motivates women. Not wanting to do the same tasks and things day after day was strongly indicated. Job rotation, varied job tasks and -situations were identified to be especially motivating. Prior research supports this notion as a key motivation factor.

Moreover, financial rewards did not prove to be among the top motivators for the employees during the economic crisis. It was stated many times that when other aspects are in order, money has very little motivational impact in the specific environment. The money incentive replaced a (possible) fixed monthly compensation of the employee.

Table 2: Analyzing Data

Non-Monetary Motivators		
First Order Concept	Second Order Concept	Core Categories
Co-worker support and interaction Time at work goes quickly and creatively Not anxious going to work Staying at home is boring Been doing the same job for years Working is important for them	Interaction with other people Happy to work Importance of work	Social needs
Increased responsibility at work Signaling appreciation Full working hours Be proud of your work Design of known buildings	Your effort is being noticed Comments on the quality of work	Appreciation
Co-workers feedback Manager comments Freedom to execute	Comments on the quality of work	
Looking for a confident and skillful leader A leader who support the employees Leader with action plan Leader who will inspire them A leader who will analyze the situation and then act	Employees looking for a leader with skills, willing to lead them out of the crisis	Leadership
Supportive manager A manager with understanding A manager who can discuss with them A manager who will be their connection with the management team	Manager	
Be informed about the future plans Know what the management team thinks Is there any action plan? What is the financial situation? I want to be faced honestly.....	Communication at all levels Discussion with employees	Communication

Table 2: Analyzing Data (continued)

First Order Concept	Second Order Concept	Core Categories
Unequal contribution of economic losses They continue to lead a luxury life Economic status is the same as pro-crisis Just their profit reduced Go on holidays but don't pay our salaries We face economic problems They don't care about these	Employees looking for equity They feel a form of social inequality	Equity
Personal responsibility for the outcome Can accomplish from start to finish Job that requires knowledge and skills Independence at work Autonomy	Responsibility Knowledge and Skills Independence Variance/interesting job	Job characteristics as intrinsic motivation quality at work
Fair balance work/personal life Freedom of initiative Correlation rewards/personal targets Support and understanding of employee's needs I want to be faced honestly.....	Working conditions Relationships between employees	Working environment
Improve myself every day Develop at work everyday Exploit my scientific knowledge Gain experience - expand my knowledge Refresh existing knowledge	Continue working on my profession Develop my knowledge	Professional development
Money as Motivators		
Demanding nature of the job Mean to achieve an end Importance of money recognized Motivation found from other sources	Money as a primary motivator Money as a second order motivator	Overall motivational Effect of money

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 PROPOSALS TO MANAGEMENT

As proposed management measures that will strengthen the specific motivation factors the followings are suggested:

- 1) Verbal praises, that emphasize the appreciation of the employee work offered. Developing a climate of collaboration between management and employees and mutual support and appreciation.
- 2) Work environment, where calm and good relations between colleagues predominate.
- 3) Manager supportive and understanding of the employee personal / family problems.
- 4) A sense of security in the workplace (as far as feasible).
- 5) Opportunities for progress and development / education. Organizing internal seminars where the existing knowledge in the organization will spread between older and younger employees and the team's working relationships will become stronger.
- 6) Open communication and interaction with the organization's management. Organizing meetings and discussing the latest developments.

- 7) Organization of social events within the firm will stimulate links between management and employees.

6.2 REFLEXIVITY

An important feature of qualitative research is “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) that is called reflexivity. Reflexivity plays an important role in the constructivist grounded theory approach since this approach views the researcher not as an objective or neutral observer but as part of the world that is studied (Charmaz, 2005). The constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher - the researcher co-constructs reality with the people who participate in the study (Charmaz, 2006) - and encourages the researcher to reflect on the effects she/he might bring in the study (Neill, 2006). Author's reflexivity starts with the understanding of the assumptions and values that he/she brings in the research process.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current research has several limitations. The first limitation regards the role of the researcher during the field work and the potential impact in the research process. A second limitation is that research took place in the setting of a time and place of the employees' group that may differ in terms of purpose and structure from other workgroups. The findings are not easily transferable to other settings although they could offer useful insights in studying employee motivation, in general. This last limitation produces a recommendation for future research to include additional employees' groups in the single study. The comparison between different workgroups could enable a more fruitful exploration of the role of motivation. A third limitation regards issues like power relations that are not addressed in the study. Future research should explicitly take them into consideration since power relations could further enhance our understanding of motivation in workplace (Zanoni et al., 2010).

6.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The current study attempts to make a contribution in the field of motivation in workplace. Taking into consideration the suggestions of several scholars (Hitka and Sirotiakova, 2011; Hitka and Balazova, 2015; Zavadsky et al., 2015), who point out the need for additional research on employee motivation in the workplace. The research findings position the present study along other studies in the literature that emphasize the multiple character of motivation.

6.5 PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The current research examines the motivation factors in the field of structural design and was conducted in Athens (commercial and financial center of Greece) during the period 2008-2012 using the qualitative research method.

During the third stage of crisis, the stage of maturation, the symptoms are obvious. The organization is forced to do something to save everything. At this stage, the organization tries to "cure" the various symptoms that arise from the crisis while the crisis has become part of the body functioning and coexisting with it. Based on the findings of the current research, the survey could be repeated in the same population as described above using a larger sample and the quantitative method of analysis (using questionnaires and statistical analysis), trying to verify the assumptions of this work.

A related workplace (with similar work and working/social characteristics) is that of lawyers working in large companies who could be investigated checking the validity of the findings of the current research. The recording of similarities and differences would lead to the extension of the conclusions in the field of higher education employees. Also the research could be extended to sectors with completely different labor and social characteristics, such as sellers, a place where a large proportion of workers are employed and are heavily facing the consequences of the economic crisis. It would also be interesting to extend the survey to public sector workers, where labor conditions have changed significantly over the last few years due to the necessary reforms to it, which followed the signing of economic memoranda.

A research challenge would also be to extend this research to the "tomorrow" employees - the current students of Greek universities. It would be interesting to look for motivation factors in an almost "dead" labor market. Schools such as those of Civil Engineering and Business Administration, whose graduates will have a major job search problem, are believed to be interesting target populations. Finally, exploring leadership in times of economic crisis in connection with motivation and communication within business would lead to interesting and constructive executives for executives.

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