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MSc Human Resource Management

**A Qualitative Exploration of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation:  
Similarities and Differences Among Public and Private Sector  
Employees in Cyprus**

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>2. Literature Review</b> .....	5
2.1. <i>The concept of motivation</i> .....	5
2.2. <i>Intrinsic Incentives</i> .....	6
2.3. <i>Extrinsic Incentives</i> .....	8
<b>3. Methodology</b> .....	19
3.1. <i>Methodological Approach</i> .....	19
3.2. <i>Sampling</i> .....	20
3.3. <i>Ethical concerns</i> .....	21
3.4. <i>Procedure</i> .....	22
3.5. <i>Analysis of findings</i> .....	23
<b>4. Findings</b> .....	24
4.1. <b>Intrinsic Incentives</b> .....	24
4.1.1. <i>The job itself (meaningful and interesting work)</i> .....	24
4.1.2. <i>Good working conditions/environment and good working relationships</i> .....	26
4.1.3. <i>Support, recognition, and appreciation from supervisors</i> .....	27
4.1.4. <i>Work ethic</i> .....	30
4.2. <b>Extrinsic Incentives</b> .....	30
4.2.1. <i>Job security</i> .....	30
4.2.2. <i>Level of salary</i> .....	32
4.2.3. <i>Performance-related pay</i> .....	33
4.2.4. <i>Benefits and rewards</i> .....	34
4.2.5. <i>Promotion and salary increase</i> .....	36
<b>5. Discussion</b> .....	37
<b>6. Limitations of the study</b> .....	42
<b>7. Suggestions for future research</b> .....	43
<b>8. Conclusions</b> .....	44
<b>References</b> .....	46
<b>Appendix</b> .....	51

# A Qualitative Exploration of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: Similarities and Differences Among Public and Private Sector Employees in Cyprus

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## **Abstract**

Due to the competitiveness and rapid change of today's business environments, managing employees effectively is one of the most challenging tasks for organizations and employers. Since employees constitute the most important asset within an organization, finding the most suitable ways to retain them is vital. Understanding therefore what *motivates* employees in performing well, and by extension remaining committed and engaged towards their tasks and the organization, is essential. Previous literature supports that public and private sector employees are differentially motivated, with public employees being more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated, in comparison to private sector employees. Consequently, the present study investigated whether this applies to Cypriot employees, as well, through conducting twelve interviews. This study however found no important differences between public and private employees in terms of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

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## **1. Introduction**

The effective management of the workforce is among the most challenging issues that organizations around the globe have to face (Chang, 2011; Delaney & Royal, 2017). This is because, business environments are nowadays changing rapidly. Hence, different job demands and expectations constantly arise from the part of employers and organizations, whereas employees' reasons behind achieving a task are differentiated from one moment to the next (Benedetti et al., 2014). Understanding therefore what those reasons are, that is, what *motivates* employees to work consistently and effectively towards accomplishing organizational goals and objectives, becomes vital

(Rashid & Rashid, 2012). This is because, motivating employees has essentially to do with satisfying particular needs, something that helps in enhancing employees' job satisfaction, keeping them motivated to efficiently perform their everyday tasks, achieving, by extension, a better overall organizational performance (Ghosh et al., 2015). Consequently, the aim, or, put differently, the challenge for organizations is to seek management practices and procedures that will ensure employees' commitment and engagement towards the organization and their duties, helping them cope with any obstacles they might face in this intensely competitive business environment, through maintaining their motivation in the highest degree possible, also reducing turnover intentions among the workforce (Gkorezis & Petridou, 2012).

Being a main and crucial issue for employers and organizations, employee motivation has been extensively studied and discussed in the literature (Bosco and Sreedhara, 2017; Ghosh et al., 2015; Islam and Ismail, 2008; Peters et al., 2010; Suttikun et al., 2018). Whereas the various motivation theorists have proposed a number of forces that are most likely to motivate the average employee, variations in the way employees are motivated do exist (Buelens & Van de Broeck, 2007; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998, Miao et al., 2013; Ristic et al., 2017). The sector of employment constitutes one of the factors that affects the way in which employees are motivated (Bryson et al., 2017; Bellé, 2015; Miao et al., 2013; Manolopoulos, 2008; Peters et al., 2013; Ristic et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1996). Many studies have therefore focused on the differences in motivation between public and private sector employees, with the majority of them suggesting that public sector employees are, or are more likely, to be more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated, in contrast to private employees who are shown as valuing extrinsic incentives more than intrinsic ones, in relation to public sector employees (Bullock et al., 2015; Gkorezis & Petridou, 2012; Manolopoulos, 2006; Rashid and Rashid, 2012; Suttikun et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, apart from a study conducted in a private bank in the occupied areas of Cyprus (Uzonna, 2013), and except from studies investigating differences between public and private sector in Greek organizations (Kontodimopoulos et al., 2009; Manolopoulos, 2006; Manolopoulos, 2008), there is no study, to the best of my knowledge, that focuses either on the motivation of public sector employees or private sector ones, or on a comparison among the two, in the Cypriot context. Moreover, apart from a few studies which use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods,

most of the studies conducted up to now use quantitative survey methods and, more specifically, a questionnaire, asking the participants for a ranking among specific motivational factors. No study, at least as for the Cypriot context is concerned, has investigated employees' perceptions on different motivational factors, using solely qualitative data and, more specifically, semi-structured interviews. Aiming therefore to fill these gaps, while building on previous research conducted, this study aims to compare the motivating factors of Cypriot public and private sector employees, based on the interviews conducted. The objective is to investigate whether public sector employees are more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated than private sector employees, through an analysis and interpretation of the different insights gained from the interviewees' reports.

Similar to Greece, human resource management practices in Cyprus are greatly centralized, with the various procedures being conducted and controlled by central authorities. Consequently, the top management in public organizations is not the one dealing with, managing, and ensuring employee motivation, punishment, or rewards (Kontodimopoulos et al., 2009). Contrary to private organizations, most of which aim to maintain their competitiveness, with a great concern with society's expectations, public sector organizations in Cyprus are often characterized by inadequate practices in determining success and measuring performance, with no clearly defined goals and insufficient financial management, being therefore frequently described as generating poor performance outcomes (Manolopoulos, 2008). It is of great interest, thus, to investigate the motivating forces for employees in each sector, looking for the differences and commonalities between the two, given the different ways under which organizations in each sector operate, and also comparing to previous studies conducted in other countries. The present study focuses therefore on answering the following question:

*RQ: Are Cypriot public sector employees more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated, than private sector employees?*

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. The concept of motivation***

Work motivation is a complex and widely investigated topic, with roots in several academic fields such as sociology, psychology, education, political science, and economics (Arbidane, 2017). Motivation as a term is derived from the Latin word “movere”, which means “to move”. It refers essentially to the “psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary activities that are goal oriented” (Mitchell, 1982, as cited in Islam and Ismail, 2008, p. 344). “Motivation is what moves us from boredom to interest” (as cited in Islam and Ismail, 2008, p. 344) – a vehicle’s steering wheel that provides direction to our behavior and activities, underlying the tendency to persist and achieve our goals (Islam and Ismail, 2008). It can therefore be defined as “an internal driving force that activates and determines behavior” (Sansone et al., 2012, as cited in Arbidane, 2017, p. 788). With regards to workplace motivation, employees are usually categorized as either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated (Islam and Ismail, 2008).

Extrinsic motivation refers to when “employees are able to satisfy their needs indirectly, most importantly through monetary compensation” (Osterloh et al., 2002, p. 64, as cited in Manolopoulos, 2006, p. 618; Manolopoulos, 2008, p. 1740; Ristic et al., 2017, p. 207). By contrast, intrinsic motivation refers to the orientation towards satisfying inherent psychological needs rather than gaining material rewards (Ryan and Deci, 2000 as cited in Manolopoulos, 2006, p. 618; Manolopoulos, 2008, p. 1740; Ristic et al., 2017, p. 207). It is generally perceived as emanating from oneself and one’s desires, rather than external demands (Benedetti et al., 2015). Intrinsic motivation, thus, refers to variables such as interesting and meaningful work as well as feelings of involvement and career development (Hassoo and Akbay, 2020). However, it also refers to good working relationships and feelings of recognition, appreciation, and support, all of which facilitate being satisfied and enjoying one’s job (Hassoo & Akbay, 2020). Extrinsic motivation, in turn, concerns factors such as salary, job security, bonuses, and other monetary rewards (Hassoo & Akbay, 2020).

Empirical evidence has been strongly suggesting over time that public sector employees are more intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated, in relation to their private

sector counterparts (Gkorezis & Petridou, 2012; Islam and Ismail, 2008; Manolopoulos, 2006; Rashid & Rashid, 2012; Suttikun et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the perspective from which surveys are conducted, determined from the methodology utilized, can formulate, or affect, at least, the results obtained, due to the different ways in which variables under investigation are tested (Butina et al., 2015). Consequently, in what follows, an analysis of the results of different surveys conducted will be introduced, so as to provide an overview of the various viewpoints revolving around the topic of motivation in public versus private sector employees.

Results by Bullock et al. (2015) using data from 30 different countries from the International Social Survey Programme strongly suggested that public sector employees demonstrate higher levels of public service-oriented motives, being more intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated through monetary gains, than their private sector counterparts. Findings showed that greater emphasis is placed on work rewards such as helping others and serving the public, rather than on factors like income (p. 486). Also, results by Manolopoulos' (2006) study showed that it was more likely for public sector employees to be provided with extrinsic rewards. However, in expressing their own perceptions, employees reported that intrinsic rewards are those related to better organizational outcomes, meaning thus that they constitute a better motivational force for them, in relation to extrinsic rewards. In what follows, therefore, intrinsic incentives such as meaningful and interesting work, good working conditions, good working relationships as well as recognition, support, and appreciation, will be discussed, in terms of their difference in importance among public and private sector employees, and in relation to extrinsic incentives, as well.

## ***2.2. Intrinsic Incentives***

Indeed, in Miao et al.'s (2013) study, social rewards such as co-worker support and building strong relationships with supervisors and co-workers strongly influenced the affective and normative commitment of public sector employees, suggesting therefore their importance as motivational forces. However, when it comes to a supportive working environment, a factor that is considered an intrinsic incentive, mean scores in Rashid and Rashid's (2012) study indicate that private sector employees are more strongly motivated by the particular factor than public sector employees (pp. 28-29). These findings are further supported by Kontodimopoulos et al.'s (2009) study, in

which ‘achievements’, constituting the umbrella term for the intrinsic motivators of ‘work meaningfulness’, ‘appreciation’, and ‘respect’, were ranked higher by Greek health professionals of both sectors than the –according to Herzberg’s two factor theory (Islam & Ismail, 2008)– hygiene factors of ‘salary’, ‘social belongingness’ and ‘work collegiality’ (as cited in Kontodimopoulos et al., 2009, p. 9).

Similarly, evidence again from Greece’s public and private hospitals obtained by Gkorezis and Petridou (2012) suggests that the use of social intrinsic rewards, such as relations with supervisor and peers, are more appreciated than financial ones for public sector employees. In contrast, organizational extrinsic rewards such as monetary incentives and promotion opportunities were considered as strong motivational factors among private sector health workers (pp. 3605-3606), with this finding supporting previous studies arguing that intrinsic incentives are more highly valued by public sector employees than private ones. Nevertheless, the fact that the participants under investigation were health workers may have affected the results in the case of public sector employees, in the sense that people in health-related positions often tend to be more concerned with the public good rather than with monetary incentives provided by their organizations.

In referring specifically to recognition as an intrinsic incentive, respondents of the study by Uzonna (2013) in the private banking sector of the occupied areas of Cyprus, agreed that the use of nonmonetary rewards is an effective and cost-efficient way of motivating employees, with recognition being ranked as the first motivational force (p. 205). In a similar vein, Ghosh et al.’s (2016) results demonstrated that rewards and recognition, which were tested as a single variable rather than independently, are highly correlated with employee engagement and normative commitment, being therefore considered an effective motivational mechanism for private bank employees in India (p. 10).

Peters et al. (2013), in turn, revealed that factors relating to job content and work environment such as challenging work and good working relationships with colleagues, which fall under the category of intrinsic incentives, were the most important motivators for both public and private sector health workers. Also, Houston (2000) and Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007) suggested that public employees are more motivated through challenging and meaningful work that provides a sense of accomplishment, whereas private employees are shown to be more motivated through



monetary incentives. However, results demonstrated that the highest rated motivational characteristic was ‘meaningful work’, for both sectors (p. 720). Similarly, results by Aworemi et al. (2011) obtained from various companies in Nigeria, showed that good working conditions and interesting work were the first two most important motivating factors for employees. Therefore, the fact that public employees may not place salary as the first motivational factor, in contrast to private employees, does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they are intrinsically motivated, or less extrinsically motivated than their private sector counterparts. In contrast, ‘meaningful work’ is what demonstrates an intrinsically oriented perception towards work motivation. Consequently, the above findings contradict in a way, or do not fully represent, the view and evidence suggesting that private sector employees value extrinsic motives more than intrinsic, with money and extrinsic rewards being more appreciated than intrinsic ones.

### ***2.3. Extrinsic Incentives***

Job security as well as financial incentives and, in particular, salary, are also factors discussed in the literature, and for which findings differ between public and private sector (Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998). Job security is an incentive that is highly valued by public sector employees, whereas income, as a financial incentive, is considered as a more important motivator for private sector employees (Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998). Indeed, in Houston’s (2000) study, job security was rated higher by public sector employees than private sector ones (p. 725). Similarly, Jurkiewicz, Massey, and Brown (1998) revealed, too, that a stable and secure future was the first ranked motivational factor among public sector employees and high salary the fourth one, in contrast to private sector employees who ranked the former one as fourth and the latter as the number one motivational “want”. This finding might indeed be in accordance with previous literature suggesting the importance of income in private sector employees, in relation to their public sector counterparts. Nevertheless, I argue that job security cannot be considered an intrinsic incentive but rather an extrinsic benefit provided by public organizations which has monetary implications, even though it is not a financial incentive per se. This is because, whereas job security in private sector employees usually gives the sense of stability and permanence, removing any feelings of uncertainty and enhancing thus employees’ loyalty towards their tasks and

the organization (Jyothi, 2016), in the case of the public sector, job security operates differently. Since public employees cannot be fired, I would argue that job security is important, not in terms of enhancing their performance but, rather, of ensuring a financially secure future. Hence, if this is indeed the case, it cannot be inferred that public sector employees are more intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated, just because salary is placed on a lower position than job security.

In addition, even though findings of the Chinese public sector in Miao et al.'s (2013) study suggested the importance of social intrinsic rewards for employees, results demonstrated an impact of extrinsic benefits, as well, including financial incentives such as pay, performance-related pay, social security, etc., on public sector employees' commitment. Also, findings of the study by Manolopoulos (2008) focusing on the Greek extended public sector, illustrate a different image of the public sector than the one previously discussed from the same researcher. More specifically, extrinsic rewards such as job security and financial incentives were shown to have a stronger influence on public employees' preferences and expected work outcomes than intrinsic motives such as public and altruistic service. Hence, this also confirms what was aforementioned in the very beginning, that the variables under investigation as well as the point of view according to which the survey is approached can alter and even determine the survey's results. As seen, findings obtained from the same researcher and among the same type of population (that is, Greek public employees) vary. This stems from the fact that the aim of the first study (Manolopoulos, 2006) was to provide an understanding of the relationship between work motivation and organizational performance, whereas in the second case (Manolopoulos, 2008), the study's aim was to investigate motivational preferences of employees. Consequently, although both studies concern motivation among Greek public sector employees, results vary due to the different items under investigation.

Results by Ristic et al. (2017) in Serbia demonstrated, as well, that public sector employees are more motivated by extrinsic rewards and, more specifically, through high salary. These findings contradict again the evidence supporting that public sector employees value extrinsic incentives less than intrinsic ones. However, the results of this study cannot apply to the public sector as a whole, since they stem mainly from the fact that Serbia was, at the time of the survey, a post-socialist transformed society in which the unemployment rate as well as poverty were increased. This means that people

were definitely more concerned with financial security during that period, rather than seeking any kind of nonmonetary incentives (Ristic et al., 2017, p. 213). Similar results are provided by Bosco and Sreedhara (2017), as well. According to the study's results, 44.5% of the respondents in public high learning institutions in Rwanda answered that low remuneration and recognition could block their motivation, whereas 35.6% of the respondents answered that harmonization of salary among public institutions would enhance employees' motivation, and 31.1% responded that recognition and rewards are factors that can improve motivation. More intrinsically oriented motives such as collaboration and involvement in decision making received much lower percentages of response (p. 19-20). These results are not compatible with neither previous studies focusing on the public sector motivation, nor with the general concept of public employees' motivation as suggested by previous literature.

Contrary to the above results in Peter et al.'s (2010) study, the ratings for extrinsic benefits such as good employment benefits and good income, were significantly lower for private sector workers than public sector ones (p. 6). This is a somewhat unexpected finding, taking into consideration the literature contending that private employees are less intrinsically motivated than public sector ones. This might stem from the fact that private sector health workers may already enjoy more benefits than their public sector counterparts, due to the differences in management among the two sectors (Kontodimopoulos et al., 2009). Whereas in private organizations the use of monetary incentives is a common practice of motivating employees, this cannot be easily implemented in public organizations, especially in those operating in a weak national economy (Jyothi, 2016).

Literature suggesting that being a public employee does not negate the possibility of being extrinsically motivated, as well, is further supported through the study by Snyder et al. (1996), which demonstrated that promotion and monetary incentives are significant motivational factors for public sector employees' performance. In accordance with evidence showing salary as a strong motivating force for private sector employees, and in contrast to the studies discussed above, results by Rashid and Rashid (2012) reveal that the mean scores for public sector employees regarding financial/monetary rewards was significantly lower than those of private sector ones. Similarly, results by Manolopoulos (2006) indicated that Greek R&D employees are

mainly directed by extrinsic incentives and, more specifically, by financial rewards such as salary and bonuses, as well as by opportunities for hierarchical advancement.

Furthermore, with regards to the role of salary, results derived by Islam and Ismail (2008) in Malaysia indicated that 'high wages' constituted the most effective motivating factor (p. 352). Nevertheless, for the particular study, no information regarding the sector under investigation was provided. Even if we assume, however, that the study was conducted with private-sector employees, the use of a questionnaire as a methodological tool for obtaining data provides us with no information about the background or the rationale behind the particular rankings. Similarly, in the case of public sector employees, who are considered to be serving the public and therefore being more motivated through public-oriented forces, the use of a questionnaire might prevent them from reporting their actual beliefs regarding extrinsic incentives such as salary or monetary benefits, if they cannot provide a reasoning, as well, behind their ranking, clearly expressing their insights.

The usefulness of an interview in capturing a deeper understanding compared to a questionnaire as a research method is further evident through the study by Suttikun, Chang, and Bicksler (2018), conducted with day spa therapists in Thailand. One of the general themes that arose concerned 'tangible benefits', something that could again assign those employees into the 'less intrinsically motivated' groups of employees. However, the participants had the opportunity throughout the interviews to express their insights as to which tangible benefits are considered as important. In the case of income, for example, employees could introduce their background to the interviewer and explain that income is important, not as an incentive per se, or in the sense of desiring a high salary to enjoy a luxurious life. Rather, taking into consideration their educational background and their past salaries, their current job's income satisfies them more than previous incomes and gives them the opportunity to satisfy their families' financial needs, as well (p. 6). It seems therefore that salary is considered important, not as a motivating factor in staying in or leaving a company, but, rather, when considering specific circumstances and comparing it to other, worse cases. After all, the motivational effect of money varies across and depends heavily on the different pay levels. For instance, the opportunity of getting an additional amount of 100 euros would undoubtedly be more motivating for an individual earning 12,000 per year than for someone who gets 100,000 per year (Rynes et al. 2004, p. 388).

Hence, taking into consideration all the above studies, empirical evidence suggests that extrinsic and intrinsic motives can coexist, even in public sector employees, indicating that their importance depends also on the employees and what they themselves consider as important, rather than the sector of employment *per se* (Weske & Schott, 2018), demonstrating that “human behavior is influenced by both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation” (Frey, 1994, p. 746, as cited in Weske & Schott, 2018, p. 418). This is further supported in a way by Benedetti et al. (2015), whose findings suggested that the time of the day is also something that contributes to whether employees report themselves as being more intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Specifically, results obtained from office staff employees in a Midwest University demonstrated that early in the workday, they get motivated from both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives for pursuing a work task. However, as the time progresses and the cognitive resources get eliminated, with the tasks becoming more laborious, the psychological incentives of performing a task decrease, with the extrinsic motivation therefore being dominant late in the day (p. 42).

In answering the question of whether intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relate differently to employee outcomes, Kuvaas et al. (2017) suggested a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and positive outcomes such as work performance and affective organizational commitment, and a negative one with negative outcomes such as turnover intention and burnout. Extrinsic motivation, by contrast, was negatively related or not related at all to positive outcomes, while consistently associating with negative outcomes (p. 251). Similarly, Kuvaas and Dysvik’s (2010) results from respondents drawn from Norwegian organizations, indicated that intrinsic motivation remarkably moderates the relation between perceived empowerment and work performance, affective organizational commitment as well as turnover intentions (p. 2346). On a somewhat different note, De Gieter and Hofmans’ (2015) results demonstrated that turnover intentions of employees, which suggests by extension a lack of satisfaction towards particular aspects and thus the importance of them as motivational forces, are negatively related to satisfaction with all three types of rewards, namely financial rewards, material rewards and psychological rewards. However, task performance was negatively associated with satisfaction with solely financial rewards, while almost half of the respondents’ turnover intentions were exclusively affected by their satisfaction with psychological rewards (p. 211). This illustrates thus the

importance of taking into consideration the individual differences of employees rather than solely the occupation or the sector of employment.

As shown by Delaney and Royal's (2017) findings, though, a motivation gap exists in general, in the sense that extrinsic motivation is consistently lower than intrinsic one, irrespectively of the sector, occupation, or any other variable that could influence and differentiate the motivational factors that are mostly appreciated by each employee. As mentioned, "70% of employees globally report feeling intrinsically motivated, whereas only 59% of employees report feeling extrinsically motivated" (Delaney & Royal, 2017, p. 132). According to Rynes et al.'s (2004) research however, pay is revealed to be a much more important motivating force for employees' actual choices and behaviors than it is reported to be on self-administered questionnaires, with many surveys generating results regarding the importance of specific motivational factors that are not compatible with studies testing actual employee behavior. "In fact, meta-analytic results do not reveal any motivational interventions that work better than performance-contingent pay for enticing people to attain higher performance level" (Rynes et al., 2004, p. 385). This leads us therefore to the question of how effective performance-contingent pay or performance-related pay is in motivating public and private sector employees.

Performance pay (PP) or performance-related pay (PRP), or pay-for-performance (PFP), or pay-for-individual-performance (PFIP), all notions referring to the very same concept of, according to Pandleton et al. (2009), "an individual-based incentive offered by an assessment of individual employees' work effort in relation to their contribution to organisational goals" (as cited in Ogbonnaya et al., 2017, p. 95), is a well-established practice in the private sector but less prevalent in the public one (Bryson et al., 2017). This is because, as extensively discussed above, public sector employees are expected to be more motivated through intrinsic incentives, and thus a PP practice, which is essentially an extrinsic, financial reward, is considered as a potential diminishing-intrinsic-motivation practice (Fang & Gerhart, 2012).

In investigating the effects of contingent pay, Ogbonnaya et al. (2017) concluded that performance-related pay was positively related to job satisfaction as well as employees' commitment to the organization and trust in management. Similarly, results in Chang's (2011) study demonstrate that, when the PFIP system is perceived as contributing to

the achievement of motivating employees and enhancing performance, employees are more likely to be motivated by the particular pay practice (p. 3942). Therefore, it seems that it does constitute a positive force in motivating employees, in the sense of receiving an exchange for the commitment towards achieving the organizational goals (pp. 105-106). A similar outcome is derived by Fang and Gerhart (2012), who found a positive association between PFIP and intrinsic motivation rather than a negative one, as proposed by the literature. More specifically, PFIP was strongly linked to high perceived autonomy and competence, motives that are associated with intrinsic motivation, consistent therefore with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Fang & Gerhart, 2012). Motivation in SDT is considered “as a continuum ranging from controlled (extrinsic) to autonomous (stemming from the person itself), depending on the degree of internalization of external pressures, which depends on the satisfaction of three basic needs (need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness).” (as cited in Weske & Schott, 2018, p. 417). Consequently, intrinsic motivation, which stems from the individuals’ interest in the activity itself, is viewed as an autonomous or self-determined condition (Weske & Schott, 2018).

In a study by Bryson et al. (2017) comparing public versus private sector employees in regard to the job attitudes concerning PP, results revealed a positive relationship between job attitudes and PP, with a positive effect on intrinsic job satisfaction and organizational commitment among private sector employees. In contrast, PP was found to be negatively associated with workplace performance in the public sector employees, whereas public sector workplaces applying the PP practice perform more poorly than their counterparts that do not use such a pay practice (p. 592). This suggests a negative relationship between PP and public sector employees’ motivation, but not necessarily in terms of diminishing intrinsic motivation. In a randomized control-group experiment with public health workers in Italy (Bellé, 2015), results demonstrated that PRP had a stronger effect on nurses’ task performance when the rewards provided were kept secret, and a negative effect when those were disclosed. This negative interaction between performance and visibility of rewards was stronger in the case of participants who perceived a benefit in their efforts, that is, making a positive contribution in people’s lives (pp. 237-238). Consequently, the reported negative effects of PRP on public employees’ motivation seem to stem, among others, from the fact that public organizations rely heavily on transparency concerning the compensation policies,

whereas private companies in which the use of monetary incentives is successful, rely mostly on pay secrecy (Colella et al. 2007, as cited in Bellé, 2015, p. 231). Therefore, PFP is not a diminishing-intrinsic-motivation practice per se, but it seems rather to be an undesirable incentive to public sector employees since, apart from the fact that the majority of public sector employees are not paid according to their individual performance, applying a PRP in public organizations in which transparency is dominant, would lead also to perceptions of unfairness, as also proposed by Equity Theory, if the pay practice is not applied appropriately (Islam & Ismail, 2008; Lussier & Hendon, 2019, p. 1109).

Extensive literature has therefore focused on employees' motivation, and whether this varies among public versus private sector employees. Nevertheless, based on the literature reviewed above, it cannot be clearly inferred whether public sector employees are more intrinsically motivated than private sector employees, since there are findings both in favor but also against this view. Consequently, taking into consideration existing literature, the present research aims to fill the gap as to whether public sector employees are more intrinsically motivated than private sector ones, in the context of Cypriot organizations. Table 1 below depicts the similarities and differences among the articles reviewed above. As demonstrated through the table, differences among the studies' findings seem to stem, not only from national context, but also from the variations in the methodology utilized and the factors under investigation.



**Table 1: Differences and Similarities among the reviewed studies' findings**

	<b>Author and Year</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Geography</b>	<b>Method</b>
<i>Intrinsic Incentives</i>	Miao et al., 2013	Employees were influenced by co-worker support and building strong relationships with supervisors and co-workers.	239 public employees	China	Questionnaire
	Gkorezis and Petridou 2012	Relations with supervisor and peers are more appreciated than financial rewards by public sector employees. In contrast, monetary incentives and promotion opportunities were regarded as strong motivational factors among private sector health workers	258 public and private hospital employees	Greece	Questionnaire
	Rashid and Rashid, 2012	Private sector employees are more strongly motivated by a supportive working environment than public sector employees.	150 public and private bank employees	Pakistan	Questionnaire
	Uzonna, 2013	Recognition was ranked as the first motivational force among private bank employees.	134 private bank employees	Occupied Cyprus	Interviews
	Ghosh et al., 2016	Rewards and recognition, tested as a single variable, are highly correlated with employee engagement and normative commitment.	176 private bank employees	India	Questionnaire
Kontodimopoulos et al., 2009; Peters et al., 2010; Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007; Aworemi et al., 2011	Both public and private sector employees were more influenced by intrinsic rewards such as work challenge and meaningfulness as well as good working conditions, rather than by extrinsic rewards.	1600 public and private health professionals; 1916 public and private health workers; 3723 private and public	Greece; India; Belgium; Nigeria	Questionnaire	

*Extrinsic Incentives*

		employees; 280 randomly selected employees		
Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz et al., 1998	Job security was ranked higher than salary among public sector employees, in contrast to private sector employees who ranked salary higher than job security.	101 public and 1356 private sector employees;  296 public sector and 333 private employees	Midwestern United States	General Social Survey  Questionnaires
Miao et al., 2013; Manolopoulos, 2008; Ristic et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1996; Peters et al., 2013	Public sector employees were more motivated by financial incentives such as monetary benefits and salary than private employees.	239 public and private employees; 1226 public and private employees; 455 public and private employees; 99 public and 108 private employees; 1916 public and private health workers	China; Greece; Serbia; USA and Costa Rica; India	Questionnaires
Bosco and Sreedhara, 2017	The majority answered that low remuneration and recognition could block their motivation, whereas intrinsic motives such as collaboration received much lower percentages of response.	90 public employees	Rwanda	Questionnaires and Interviews
Rashid and Rashid, 2012	Mean scores for public sector employees regarding financial/monetary rewards was significantly lower than those of private sector ones.	150 public and private bank employees	Pakistan	Questionnaire

*Performance-related Pay*

Manolopoulos, 2006; Islam and Ismail, 2008; Suttikun et al., 2018	Private sector employees were more motivated by financial rewards such as salary and benefits.	1544 private sector employees; 505 employees; 15 employees	Greece; Malaysia; Thailand	Questionnaire; Questionnaire; Interviews
Ogbonnaya et al., 2017; Chang, 2011, Fang and Gerhart, 2012	A positive association was found between performance-related pay and motivation, job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, enhanced performance, and, in more general terms, between performance-related pay and intrinsic motivation.	21,981 public and private sector employees; 604 private employees; 609 white-collar employees	Britain; Korea; Taiwan	Questionnaires
Bryson et al., 2017	In comparing public versus private sector employees, results revealed a positive relationship between job attitudes and PP, with a positive effect on intrinsic job satisfaction and organizational commitment among private sector employees. In contrast, PP was found to be negatively associated with workplace performance in the public sector employees.	21981 public and private employees	Britain	Questionnaire
Bellé, 2015	PRP had a stronger effect on nurses' task performance when the rewards provided were kept secret, and a negative effect when those were disclosed. This negative interaction between performance and visibility of rewards was stronger in the case of participants who perceived a benefit of their efforts in making a positive contribution in people's lives	300 public nurses	Italy	Action Research

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1. Methodological Approach***

This study adopts a qualitative research design to investigate employees' motivation in public and private organizations in Cyprus. Through qualitative research, we can gain a deeper understanding on "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, as cited in Butina et al., 2015, p. 186). The aim of this research was to explore if public and private sector employees are differently motivated, in terms of whether public sector employees are more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated than private sector employees. Consequently, interviews as part of qualitative research methods were utilized in obtaining the data needed, with the aim of generating shared beliefs and interpretations to experiences among specific groups of people (Suttikun et al., 2017). According to Morgan and Spanish (1984), interviews give the opportunity to respondents to express their views and thoughts on different aspects through an open discussion (as cited in Suttikun et al., 2017, p. 4), something that provides the researcher with detailed and justified opinions of an incident, gaining therefore a deeper understanding of the various contexts discussed (Hodges, 2011, as cited in Suttikun et al., 2017, p. 4; McGrath, 2019). This also provided the researcher with a more accurate picture of participant perceptions, as compared to asking participants to assign the level of importance of each motivating factor based on a Likert scale, which would leave no room to the employees to explain their rationale behind their rankings. The choice of the method was also further influenced and enhanced by the fact that the majority of the studies conducted have used quantitative survey methods, that is, a questionnaire, in exploring the factors that motivate employees. Therefore, this study is also a means of filling this gap in research methods.

### *3.2. Sampling*

Convenience sampling was utilized for participant recruitment. It is “a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study” (Dörnyei, 2007, as cited in Etikan et al., 2015, p. 2). In this study, convenience sampling refers to the accessibility of the subjects by the researcher, as well as their availability and willingness to participate, ‘imposed’ by the limited amount of time in the researcher’s disposal. Random sampling techniques, on the other hand, would require that some specific companies and organizations would be chosen, from which people would be randomly selected, a process that may result in unwillingness to participate, something which could become extremely time-consuming. Convenience sampling, in contrast, has a higher likelihood of recruiting people who are willing to participate, all of whom were immediately available to be interviewed. Moreover, due to the fact that employees could be either in the public or the private sector, convenience sampling, through which specific people were contacted, would assure the existence of the desired homogeneity in the population needed for the purposes of the study (Etikan et al., 2015). However, in convenience sampling, the population “is determined by all kinds of unspecifiable biases and influences introduced to the sampling procedure” (Robson, 1993, as cited in Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012, p. 785). Moreover, there is a risk of the participants to not provide the data needed, therefore collecting poor quality data that do not help in answering the research question(s) (Etikan et al., 2015). Fortunately, in this case, the participants selected provided the researcher with helpful and interesting data in answering the question under investigation.

There were no specific criteria such as age, gender, years of experience, or level of education for selecting the subjects, apart from the fact that they needed first of all to be citizens working in Cypriot organizations, above 18 years old, belonging either to the public or the private sector of employment. Six participants from three different organizations of the private sector were interviewed, and six participants from four different public organizations. Consequently, a total of 12 employees participated in the study. Nine out of 12 interviewees were females. The sample consisted of employees

in the age range of 40-55, with years of experience ranging from 7 to 30 years, in various job positions. After all the interviews were conducted, participants were assigned pseudonyms, namely “Interviewee 1-12”, so as to maintain their anonymity. Interviewees 1-6 are public sector employees, whereas interviewees 7-12 are private sector employees. Table 2 below contains more detailed and descriptive data regarding the interviewees:

**Table 2: Demographics and descriptive data for Interviewees**

Interviewees	Sector of employment	Position	Years of experience	Gender
<b>Interviewee 1</b>	Public	Technician	7	Male
<b>Interviewee 2</b>	Public	Architect	15	Female
<b>Interviewee 3</b>	Public	Officer	22	Female
<b>Interviewee 4</b>	Public	Secretarial staff	27	Female
<b>Interviewee 5</b>	Public	Officer	13	Male
<b>Interviewee 6</b>	Public	Disability pension department and responsible for orphan-related benefits.	14	Female
<b>Interviewee 7</b>	Private	Deals with secretarial but also accounting tasks.	28	Female
<b>Interviewee 8</b>	Private	Sales Employee	8	Female
<b>Interviewee 9</b>	Private	Bank employee	30	Female
<b>Interviewee 10</b>	Private	Sales Employee	30	Female
<b>Interviewee 11</b>	Private	Estimating Engineer	20	Female
<b>Interviewee 12</b>	Private	Accountant	7	Male

### ***3.3. Ethical concerns***

Even though intimacy is developed among researchers and participants in qualitative research, there are nevertheless some ethical challenges that need to be taken into

consideration by the researcher, so as to avoid any misrepresentations, maintaining the confidentiality required. An integral part of ethics in qualitative research is obtaining a consent form (Sanjari et al., 2014). In this case, participants were provided with a letter specifying and informing them in advance of the aim of the research, the way in which the data will be collected as well as how those will be used, assuring them that anonymity will be maintained, ensuring at the same time that no data presented could reveal participants' identity.

### ***3.4. Procedure***

Participants were firstly approached by people in the researcher's social circle, and as long as they expressed willingness, a letter informing them about the research was sent to them. After agreeing to participate, the researcher was contacted by the interviewees through a phone call, whereby the interview sessions were arranged. Some of the interviews were conducted online, whereas others were conducted face-to-face, either at the participant's or the researcher's home. All the online interviews were conducted either through Teams or Zoom, depending on the interviewee's preference.

The interviews were semi-structured: based on research previously conducted around the research topic area, an interview guide was formulated (see Appendix). The questions were therefore determined beforehand, covering the main issues that needed to be discussed in addressing the study's topic. Nevertheless, the purpose of the interview guide was more of providing a focused structure of the topics that needed to be addressed and discussed throughout the interview, without the need to be strictly followed. The interviews started with a general question, namely, "What motivates you most in your organization?", therefore the rest of the questions largely depended on interviewees' answer to this question. Also, there were cases in which follow-up questions were improvised or the order in which the questions were asked was altered, based again on the participant's responses (Kallio et al., 2016).

In facilitating the note-taking process, interviews were audio recorded (permission was sought and given by the participants beforehand). For online interviews, recording was done through the recording option of the online platform used as well as through the researcher's mobile phone, whereas face-to-face interviews were recorded on the researcher's mobile phone. The duration of the interviews ranged from 15-25 minutes.

All the interviews were conducted in Greek, since all the participants were Greek speakers, therefore feeling more comfortable in expressing themselves in Greek. Then the researcher listened to the recordings and translated from Greek into English. Therefore, all the information was transcribed in English.

### ***3.5. Analysis of findings***

Upon completing the word-for-word transcription for all the recorded data, the researcher went through all the interviews' transcriptions so as to get an overall idea of the participants' ideas and perceptions and ensure that everything that needed to be discussed was covered. Subsequently, the researcher examined each individual's transcript, identifying what was mentioned for each predefined theme, searching also for any new arising themes. Each theme was given a specific color, and everything related to a particular theme was highlighted with the relevant color. This process was repeated for all 12 participants. After this procedure was completed, the researcher identified commonalities and differences across the transcripts, both in terms of same-sector-employees, but also of those belonging to different sectors, which was the overall aim. Interpretations of results were based on the interviewees' wording, but also on their tone of speaking.

Thematic analysis refers to a method of analyzing qualitative data, which includes examining each participant's data so as to identify, report, and analyze the repeated patterns that emerge (Braun and Clarke, 2006, as cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020, p. 2). In the case of the particular study, therefore, thematic analysis constituted the most appropriate means for analyzing the data gathered, since this is a suitable method to search for common or shared beliefs across a set of data, rather than investigating unique perceptions of a single person. Consequently, since the aim of the particular study was to identify perceptions of a particular group of people, in relation to another, examining the shared meanings as well as the discrepancies, both among members of the same group but also in comparison to the other, thematic analysis was a suitable method in providing the researcher with an understanding of a set of thoughts and behaviors of public and private sector employees (Braun and Clarke, 2012, as cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020, p. 2).



Analysis of the interviews resulted in 9 different themes, 7 of which were predefined through the interview guide, and 2 of which emerged through the discussion with the interviewees, concerning both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives. These themes refer to (1) *meaningful and interesting work (the job itself)*, (2) *good working conditions/environment and good working relationships*, (3) *support-recognition-appreciation*, (4) *work ethic*, (5) *job security*, (6) *salary*, (7) *performance-related pay*, (8) *benefits and monetary rewards*, (9) *promotion and salary increase*.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Intrinsic Incentives**

#### **4.1.1. *The job itself (meaningful and interesting work)***

This theme represents the degree to which the job itself, that is how meaningful and interesting it is for the employees, constitutes an important motivator. Findings demonstrate that for all 12 participants, the job itself, regarding to the degree of meaningfulness and interest stemming from it, constitutes an important motivator. Interviewee 6 from the public sector, when asked about what motivates her most in her workplace, said:

*“The only motivator provided within my workplace at the time being is the job itself... the fact that through what I do, I can help people. I really love my job. It is very important to feel that you offer a kind of help to people who need it.”*

Similarly, interviewee 11 from the private sector stated:

*“First of all, I love my job. Enjoying what you do is a motivator itself.”*

Similarly, interviewee 10 (private sector) said:

*Enjoying your job is particularly important. I have been in the same position for the past 30 years and there has not been one day when I was looking at the clock and looking forward to leaving. My day is so full with tasks I really enjoy doing that the*

*time to leave comes and I wonder how 8 hours have passed so quickly, and this is particularly important to be happening in a workplace.”*

When asked directly about the importance of the job itself as a motivator, both public and private sector employees highlighted its significance. More specifically, as interviewee 9 (private sector) mentioned:

*“The job itself is indeed an important motivator. If your job becomes a repetitive, standardized task, a routine, let’s say, at some point you get bored and tired, therefore less motivated to do it, because you find no interest in it. In this way, your performance is also decreased.”*

Similarly, interviewee 3 (public sector) answered:

*“I really like what I am working on, and this is very important because I feel happier within my workplace and thus more motivated to execute my tasks and perform well.”*

Additionally, the significance of the job itself was demonstrated through the fact that, both public and private sector employees mentioned that throughout their years of experience, since they had been in various positions, there have been times when they did not enjoy their tasks so much, something that dissatisfied them. As interviewee 5 (public sector) mentioned:

*“The job itself is very important... for example, in the past, I had been doing something I did not really enjoy for many years, so at some point I got tired, a saturation occurred. Now that I am working on tasks I enjoy and find interesting, I feel much more motivated to execute my tasks.”*

Similarly, asked also about what they could change in their working environment, if they had the opportunity to do so, interviewees 4 (public sector) and 7 (private sector) mentioned, among others, that they would prefer that the majority of their working time and duties would be occupied by the tasks they enjoy the most.

All these findings demonstrate that the job itself constitutes an important motivating force for all 12 employees interviewed, without any differences occurring among the two different sectors of employment. Both public and private sector employees valued the meaningfulness and, most importantly, the degree to which the job is interesting to them.

#### **4.1.2. Good working conditions/environment and good working relationships**

This theme refers to whether good working environment and good relationships among co-workers, or among employees and supervisors, constitute an important motivating force for interviewees. Again, analysis of the interviews revealed that all of the interviewees, irrespectively of the sector of employment, agreed that good working conditions/environment with good working relationships constitutes one of the most important motivators, if not the most important one. Specifically, as interviewee 8 (private sector) highlighted from the very beginning of the interview, what motivates her most is the fact that:

*“In general, a climate of calmness prevails here. It is a very friendly environment, something that is particularly important. It is like everyone belongs to the same family and this attracted me from day one at this company and makes me want to stay here.”*

Similarly, interviewee 12 from the same sector agreed that what motivates him most is:

*“The working environment... the fact that we are all very close to each other, everyone is willing to help each other, and everyone appreciates the other, both in personal and professional terms. This is the most important for me.”*

In the same vein, when interviewee 3 (public sector) was asked about the role of good working environment and working relationships in motivating her, the answer was:

*“They play the important role, not just an important role. Most of your time is spent at work rather than with your family, so it is important to feel that there is a good atmosphere in your working environment.”*, a statement which most of the interviewees agreed with. Interviewee 6 also states:

*“Good working conditions and good working relationships is a very important issue for each and every employee. When good relationships occur among the various colleagues, you will also be able to perform well. If there are issues, conflicts among the employees or among employees and supervisors, this undoubtedly affects your motivation and your performance in a negative manner.”*

Conflicts, lack of effective communication, competitiveness, jealousy, and malice among employees or even among employees and supervisors were the factors that would negatively affect all of the employees' motivation, because they would

negatively affect their psychological state. Interviewee 7 (private sector) also emphasized:

*“At some point in time when I experienced jealousy and competitiveness on the part of some of my colleagues, this affected my overall job behavior and my motivation to perform well, since it was something that upset me, to the point that I did not even want to go to work.”*

#### **4.1.3. Support, recognition, and appreciation from supervisors**

The particular theme refers to the degree to which support demonstrated from the part of supervisors, with recognition of their performance and appreciation of their effort, is considered as an important motivator. With only one exception, all employees from both the public and the private sector perceived that these were among the most important motivating forces. Interviewee 1 (public sector) reported:

*“My supervisor is indeed very supportive, and she recognizes my work, and this is something I really appreciate... it satisfies me. Whenever I contribute to a project, she always mentions my name and praises me. This makes me feel that she indeed recognizes and appreciates what I offer to the organization.”*

Similarly, interviewee 2 (public sector) mentioned:

*“...we need to feel that our performance is recognized and appreciated, in order for us to be willing and have the motivation to work harder and perform better.”*

Interviewee 6 (public sector) in turn said:

*“... It is what will give me the moral satisfaction that everything I offer to this organization is recognized and appreciated.”*

Interviewee 4 stated, in her attempt to describe what supportive supervisor means to her, that:

*“It means being in a position of asking for help whenever you need it, whether this concerns a job-related or personal-related problem. It means to be understanding and, of course, recognizing and appreciating employees’ efforts. All these make you feel important and thus boost your motivation to perform well.”*

Employees from the private sector also agree that support, recognition, and appreciation on the part of the supervisors is indeed very significant. More specifically, interviewee 7 reveals:

*“It is of vital importance to belong to a working environment in which my superiors recognize, not only my performance, but my value as an employee and what I offer to the organization, while appreciating all my efforts. This is also what supportive means to me. Being understanding, recognizing my performance, and encouraging me to continue.”*

Similarly, interviewee 10 talked about the importance of recognition and appreciation as a motivator, through expressing her dissatisfaction regarding their absence in her workplace:

*“Zero recognition. Your contribution to a project might be of vital importance, and no one tells you a “Well done, you did a great work, thank you for your contribution”. Many times, I get disappointed with this situation, because this shows a lack of appreciation for you, which, even though it might exist, it is not expressed.”*

Contrary to the rest of the results however is the fact that, for interviewee 11 (private sector), recognition is not considered as an important motivating force:

*“‘Bravo’ etc., had an effect only at a younger age. When I was younger, a ‘wow’, ‘well done!’ – recognition, in general – constituted a significant motivation. As you get older, as your career progresses and as you spend more and more years within a company, ‘bravo’ does not work.*

[...]

*It is important to know that you have done your job well, but it is also important to bring something home, as a result of this job. Your reward is your salary – this constitutes a kind of recognition, as well.”*

It seems therefore that, in this case, receiving recognition in nonmonetary and intangible terms was important for the beginning of the interviewee’s career, functioning as a motivation boost in putting more and more effort so as to become better and performing as well as possible, also generating the desire of staying at the company and being productive. As one gets older, and recognition on the part of the supervisors

has been expressed and employees felt valued in their organization, more tangible means of recognition become more important. This seems to be also a result of the change in people's lives, as a result of having a family, for instance.

Interviewee 5 (public sector) contradicted himself. At the beginning of the conversation he stated:

*“The most important thing is to feel that your work is recognized and appreciated by your supervisor, and to make you feel that you constitute an important asset within the organization. If anything, this provides you with the willingness to continue working.”*

As the discussion progressed, he stated:

*“Knowing my capabilities, knowing that I try to always give my best and that there is indeed an appreciation towards me from my supervisors, it would be disappointing to see, when the time comes, that other people with lower performance have been promoted, while I did not. It is therefore a way of perceiving that your work is indeed appreciated.”*

Reports demonstrate thus that, irrespectively of the sector of employment, there are employees who, in contrast to the vast majority, consider and perceive extrinsic incentives such as salary, or promotion, for example, as a form of recognition and appreciation expressed from the part of their supervisors. This might relate to the expectancy theory. People who have been working for many years in an organization, where they strive for the best, and have indeed been recognized and appreciated for their job by their supervisors, they expect that this recognition and appreciation towards their effort and performance is also expressed, as the years pass, through more tangible and monetary means. On the other hand, it might also be the case that, as individuals become older, tangible rewards become more important than nontangible ones, due to the existence of a family, for example, as mentioned above, or the financial independence of the individual, something that is unavoidably linked to more expenses, making therefore tangible rewards such as bonuses or salary increases more important than before.

#### **4.1.4. Work ethic**

In discussing about job security, the theme of work ethic as a motivator for employees emerged, which was not pre-defined through the interview questions and which can be mostly regarded as an intrinsically oriented motive, mentioned by 7 out of 12 employees, with 6 of them belonging to the public sector. Interviewee 5 highlighted:

*“Sometimes I feel disappointed with things. However, I will never stop performing well as a sign of protest, having in mind the job security that the public sector provides me with. It is a matter of character and mindset. It has to do with how decent and conscientious you are and how well you need to feel about yourself.”*

Interviewee 6 also agrees:

*“... it is a matter of character. If someone is an ethical employee who respects both themselves but also the money of the taxpayers, who pay our salaries, they have the duty to offer to the organization and perform well.”*

Also, interviewee 1, asked about what is it that motivates him most, he immediately answered: *“Work ethic!”*

An interesting finding was also that of interviewee 11 (private sector), who associated job security with a feeling derived from the employees themselves, rather than the job security offered by the sector of employment per se:

*“For me, it has to do with the employees themselves. If you are an ethical employee and feel the need to perform well, job insecurity decreases. On the other hand, if you are not ethical enough to be a consistent and hard-working employee, job insecurity increases.”*

## **4.2. Extrinsic Incentives**

### **4.2.1. Job security**

This theme refers to the level of importance attached by employees to feeling secure within their workplace, and whether and how this acts as a motivator. All of the

employees considered job security as an important motivator within a workplace. More specifically, when asked about the role of job security, and how the lack of full security, affects their motivation, private sector employees mentioned:

Interviewee 7: *“Job security is quite important, especially in the private sector, in terms of feeling that you do not hang by a thin thread, being constantly stressed by whether you are going to leave or stay at the company.”*

[...]

*The fact therefore that I feel secure in my job affects my overall psychological state in a positive manner and helps me, by extension, to be more willing and motivated to perform well, since I am not consumed by anxiety.”*

Interviewee 8: *“... It’s not like you do a mistake, the door opens, and you leave. And this is very important. This is what gives you the motivation but also the opportunity to develop. When you are in a company where you live with the fear of getting fired, you just do not develop as an employee. You mechanically execute your tasks and that’s it. When you feel secure, however, you also want to perform well so as to prove that you deserve the position you have within the company.”*

In the case of public sector employees, however, job security is valued quite differently since their jobs are secure and permanent. As reported by interviewee 2:

*“Of course, it is important to know that you have stability and security in your job... now, if you mean that this affects us in terms of not putting an effort to perform as well as possible, this is not true in my case. Being an architect, I know that I have to undertake a project that needs to be completed, so there is just no room for not putting an effort. You want the result to be the desired one.”*

Also, as interviewee 1 agreed: *“... I don’t feel that I am more or less productive due to job security. It is of great importance, but not something that makes me feel like I don’t need to put an effort in my tasks.”*

Nevertheless, as many of public sector employees mentioned, job security and stability is the reason why someone chooses to become a public employee. Interviewee 1 again, for instance, said:



*“I think that this is the reason why someone chooses to become a public sector employee, for the stability and security it offers. Apart from exceptional and rare cases, people do not get fired.”*

However, as highlighted by interviewee 3:

*“In general, job security constitutes an anti-motivator for many public sector employees, because this does not challenge them in putting an effort and trying to offer 100% of their potential, since there are no consequences in whatever behavior.”*

Therefore, it is not clear whether job security constitutes a more important motivator for public employees than private ones in performing well, but it is definitely considered important under different terms. On the one hand, most of the public sector employees seem to not consider job security as a safety cushion for not performing well. On the other hand, though, they do acknowledge that job security does constitute the advantage that the public sector provides, a factor that is definitely attracting them. In the case of private sector employees, job security is quite important, in terms of not feeling that they hang on by a thin thread, so as to be in a good psychological state to perform well and be efficient.

#### **4.2.2. Level of salary**

This theme refers to the degree of importance for the level of the salary received by the employees. All 12 interviewees agreed that salary is indeed an important motivator.

*“Salary does play an important role, but up to the point that you can make ends meet, satisfying your family’s and your personal needs.”* (Interviewee 4 – public sector)

*“It is important, not in terms of receiving a large amount of money, but rather in the sense that I need to be in a decent financial situation in order to financially support and contribute to my family’s needs.”* (Interviewee 7 – private sector)

In addition, as many of the private sector employees mentioned, belonging to a good working environment with good interpersonal relationships is much more important than receiving a high salary. Interviewee 8 stated:

*“When I came to this company, I received approximately 70% of the salary I received in my previous job. However, things here are more humane, both in terms of the working conditions but also of the interpersonal relationships. And this is what I appreciate the most.”*

Interviewee 6, on the one hand, reported that intrinsic incentives, such as the job itself, constitute the most important motivating forces. On the other hand, salary was a reason for her leaving the organization. This is contradictory, since, although she appreciates the existence of intrinsic incentives in her job, she is willing to sacrifice them for a better salary. However, she clarifies that:

*“I am among the most low-paid employees within the organization, with a heavy workload, and also executing tasks which are not part of my duties, and which should be done by higher level employees [...] If I had specific duties and my salary was, at least, in accordance with those duties, I would be more satisfied.”*

This interpretation seems again to be relating to the notion of the expectancy theory, in terms of the fact that she expects to put an effort in her tasks, and for that effort to result in a good performance and, in turn, to the desired reward – in this case, the salary (Aworemi et al., 2011; Islam & Ismail, 2008; Lussier & Hendon, 2017, p. 1109).

#### **4.2.3. Performance-related pay**

During the discussion about the salary, interviewees were also asked about whether the salary linked to individual performance would be motivating for them. All six private sector employees agreed that, although their salary is not 100% based on their individual performance, it is nevertheless based on a great extent on their performance, and this is indeed positive. More specifically, interviewee 11 reports:

*“Remuneration is not the same as in the public sector. Even though salaries are correlated to your level within the organization, and this is inevitable, I guess, you do not get a salary increase, or a promotion, because you have been working in the company for 20 years, for example, and you get a promotion, as in the public sector... no... you get it because you are a high performer, because you have proven yourself and your worth.”*

Similarly, interviewee 9 mentions:

*“In our company, employees are given 75% of their salaries, and the remaining 25% is earned according to their individual performance. This is very significant because it differentiates low from high performers, while providing a strong motivation in enhancing your performance so as to achieve this additional 25%.”*

Likewise, even though public sector employees do not have this type of payment, they all agreed that if their salary was linked to their individual performance rather than solely to the level of seniority, it would be very motivating, since, as employee 3 states: *“[I]t would make employees feel that they need to try as much as possible, to earn, by extension, as much as possible.”* However, as interviewee 5 says:

*“It would definitely be motivating. However, I do not think that this can be applied in the public sector. Salaries are unavoidably linked to the different scales existing in the public sector. So, for this to be implemented, scales need to be removed.”*

Private sector employees seem therefore to be satisfied with the fact that remuneration is linked to their performance. Public employees, on the other hand, would find it motivating if this existed, but they do acknowledge that this cannot be easily applied in the public sector, due to the different management practices existing.

#### **4.2.4. Benefits and rewards**

This theme represents the extent to which employees' motivation is affected either negatively or positively by either the absence or presence of benefits and rewards. Perceptions on this matter differ, not only between public and private employees, but among same-sector employees, as well. More specifically, interviewee 1 (public sector) emphasized:

*“The fact that dissatisfies me most is that there are no monetary rewards and benefits. Everything is based on the years of service. Whether you are the best or the worse, remuneration is similar.”*

Interviewee 6, in turn, agrees, that:

*“There are no rewards or benefits provided according to your performance and this is something that negatively affects the motivation of everyone, I guess. Everyone is in the same boat, and this is demotivating.”*

However, as interviewee 5 highlights: *“It could work positively in enhancing employees’ motivation to work harder and perform better. However, if my supervisor wishes to provide me a bonus, for example, for my performance, this will probably generate reactions on the part of the rest of the employees. I do not think that the public sector is ready and mature enough for implementing such practices.”*

Other public sector employees, on the other hand, report that, even though the presence of rewards and benefits according to individuals’ performance would indeed be motivating, their absence does not dissatisfy or demotivate them in not performing well. For instance, interviewee 2 mentions:

*“I believe that any form of reward would enhance employees’ motivation, but, personally, I don’t feel that their absence demotivates me in executing my tasks as effectively as possible and have a good performance.”*

Opinions differ among private sector employees, as well. For instance, according to interviewees 7 and 10 who have been working in the same company for 28 and 30 years respectively, they used to be provided with a number of benefits and rewards in the past, something that has changed since the economic crisis of 2013. This was mentioned as something they appreciated and liked within their working environment. However, both of them agreed that being recognized and appreciated for their performance, with their contribution being praised verbally or through their supervisors’ behavior, is much more important than any kind of benefit or reward. Additionally, according to interviewee 9:

*“Benefits and rewards constitute a motivating force, indeed [...] If you know that according to your performance, you will be one of the five people, let’s say, who will receive a bonus, for example, of course it’s a motivator to perform better.”*

Other private sector employees do not feel however that the absence of various benefits or rewards affects their motivation in a negative way. As interviewee 8 mentions, for instance:

*“I cannot complain. There are other things, much more important, which are satisfactory, that I cannot really complain about benefits or rewards. It is not something that bothers me – not at the moment, at least. I am also understanding towards the fact*

*that nowadays the economic circumstances are different and more difficult than before.”*

As demonstrated, perceptions regarding benefits and rewards differ, both among different sector but among same sector employees, too. This seems to stem, not only from the different ways in which human resources are managed in the two sectors, but from the persons themselves – what they consider as important, what they set as a priority, and what they have used to be offered by their organization.

#### **4.2.5. Promotion and salary increase**

This theme was again not predefined but rather emerged, not when discussing about benefits and rewards but it was mentioned instead by some employees throughout the whole interview, indicating therefore the importance of promotion and salary increase as motivating forces. For example, interviewee 5 (public sector) mentioned:

*“A promotion is the ultimate goal – not in terms of vanity... that I work with the goal of reaching the highest position in the hierarchy or earning the largest amount of money. But it’s something that comes by itself. You work hard, you offer to the organization, so you expect it.”*

Similarly, interviewee 6, who desires to leave the organization due to the salary, says: *“If I was offered a promotion or a salary increase, I would seriously consider staying in the organization.”*

Likewise, interviewee 9 from the private sector emphasized throughout the interview that:

*“Employees who have been working for years at the company cannot get promoted, whereas younger employees enjoy all the promotions and salary increases. [...] [A]n older employee who has another 10 years to go at the company and they know they cannot get a salary increase, increment, or promotion, they do not have any motivation to work hard because they don’t have a goal they need to achieve.”*

It seems therefore that promotion or salary increase is something desirable for the employees, constituting a goal which would boost their motivation in being a high performer.

## 5. Discussion

The current research adopts a qualitative research design, namely, interviews, with the aim of investigating the various perceptions regarding different motivating forces in the working environment. Findings, therefore, of this study provide a deeper understanding concerning the factors that contribute to employees' motivation, both in the public and private sector, with a comparison among the two, so as to reach a conclusion of whether public sector employees are more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated than those in the private sector. As will be analyzed below, most, if not all of the themes discussed, were perceived as almost equally important for both public and private sector employees.

To begin with, findings of the study suggest a positive relationship between the job itself, that is, the level of meaningfulness and to what extent it is interesting, and employees' motivation. All of the employees, irrespectively of the sector of employment, agreed that the job itself constitutes one of the most important motivating forces in being engaged with their tasks and performing well, since, when doing something they enjoy, they feel much more satisfied and thus they are more willing to do their job. This is in accordance with studies by Peters et al. (2010), Van den Broeck (2007), and Kontodimopoulos et al. (2009) which found that employees from both sectors considered meaningful, interesting, or challenging work equally important, ranking it higher than other extrinsic incentives. These findings confirm the importance attached to the job itself, showing that both private and public sector employees value such an intrinsic incentive.

Good working conditions/environment and good working relationships constituted another theme that was valued by the interviewees, regardless of the sector of employment. Specifically, the vast majority of the employees considered it as one of the most important motivating factors, if not the most important. This finding is therefore in accordance with Miao et al.'s (2013) results, regarding public sector employees. This finding contradicts, however, the results by Gkorezis and Petridou (2012) which suggested that relations with supervisors and peers are more appreciated by public sector employees than private ones, with the latter appreciating financial incentives more than intrinsic ones. Even though both public and private employees were shown to consider good working environment and working relationships as a

particularly important motivating force, most of the private sector employees were the ones who were more passionately speaking about this matter, with constant reference to it throughout the whole interview. However, it cannot be inferred that public sector employees value it less as a motivating force, just because they did not refer to it in the way private sector employees did.

Another theme that was considered important for both public and private sector employees was support, recognition, and appreciation on the part of employees' supervisors. With only one exception, and one unclear case, a connection was shown between all participants' motivation and the matter of support, recognition, and appreciation by their supervisors. However, even in those two cases that were also discussed above, it is not that these values were not considered by the employees as motivating forces. Rather, it seems to be that support, recognition, and appreciation are linked to somewhat more tangible means, stemming from the fact that after a lot of years of experience in an organization, you have some expectations in the way that recognition on the part of your employers will be expressed. This is therefore in accordance with the expectancy theory, in the sense that employees' work and high performance is expected to result in some desirable outcomes that will make employees more satisfied and thus more motivated to execute their tasks. Taking into consideration the more general picture that both sectors represent, contrary to Rashid and Rashid's (2012) results demonstrating that a supportive working environment was appreciated more by private sector employees than public sector ones, findings of this study reveal that Cypriot public and private sector employees appreciate this. Additionally, findings concerning the private employees confirm Uzonna's (2013) as well as Ghosh et al.'s (2016) studies, in terms of the fact that recognition was considered as one of the most effective motivating factors for employees in this study, with some of them reporting also that this kind of 'reward' is much more important than any other tangible or monetary rewards.

An interesting finding that was not expected concerns the issue of work ethic. Many employees stated throughout the interview, which emerged mostly when discussing about job security, that performing well is, among others, a matter of work ethic and of the employees themselves. It seems therefore that the existence of benefits provided by the organization, such as salary, benefits and rewards, as well as specific conditions such as good working environment and relationships are important for employees in

feeling more motivated to perform their tasks. Yet, it appears from the interpretation of interviewees' reports that there is also an inner force that motivates many employees, which has to do with their work ethic and the conscientiousness they themselves need to feel about performing well and contributing to the organization. Consequently, since the majority of the interviewees who referred to work ethic belong to the public sector, this finding is in line with Bullock and Stritch's (2015) results that greater emphasis by public employees is placed on issues such as helping others and serving the public. However, it cannot be inferred that, since private employees did not make specific reference to work ethic, they are not motivated by it. Rather, it seems that public employees felt the need to mention it, due to the fact that they are often perceived to take advantage of the job security offered by the public sector and do not adequately perform.

Job security was yet another predefined theme discussed, findings of which revealed again a similarity in the importance attached to it between public and private sector employees. However, job security was considered important under different terms for each employee, due also to the different conditions under which each sector functions. That is, private sector employees considered it as important in terms of reducing their anxiety, being therefore more willing to perform well. Public employees, on the other hand, explained that it is indeed important, being also the reason for entering the public sector, but not in the sense that makes them feel less motivated to execute their tasks. It might be that public employees are aware of the reputation that public sector has regarding employees' performance and were therefore hesitant to report something which would diminish the good picture of public sector employees. Also, as it was mentioned by many public employees, the advantage, after all, of the public sector is the stability it offers. Assuming therefore that job security is indeed considered as more important by public sector employees and less important by private sector ones, findings agree with those of Houston (2000) and Jurkiewicz et al. (1998). If we assume, however, that public sector employees consider job security as important, but not in the sense of providing them with a safety cushion in not performing adequately well, the abovementioned studies' results are contradictory to the current study's findings. This is because, if we assume that job security is equally important for both public and private employees in terms of not feeling stressed for losing their job overnight, had the participants been in the position of ranking particular motivating factors, job security



would be ranked the same, or similarly, between public and private employees. Consequently, this would contradict Houston's (2000) and Jurkiewicz et al.'s (1998) studies.

Salary, and, more specifically, the level of salary received, is another topic discussed throughout the interviewees. In contrast to Houston's (2000) and Jurkiewicz et al.'s (1998) studies which supported that high salary was more appreciated by private than public employees, findings demonstrated that both public and private sector employees consider salary as an important motivator. Nevertheless, the majority of them reported that it is important up to the point it suffices to financially support and satisfy theirs and their family's needs, agreeing therefore with the results of Suttikun et al.'s (2018) study. In contrast, salary constituted a reason for a public sector employee to leave their organization, demonstrating therefore its importance as a motivating force, disagreeing thus with Bullock and Stritch's (2015) results. On the other hand, most of the private sector employees reported that as long as good working environment and working relationships occur at their workplace, they would not mind if the salary was a little lower than desired. This finding disagrees therefore with findings by Islam and Ismail (2008), since the current study's private sector employees consider intrinsic incentives like good working environment and relationships as much more important than extrinsic incentives like salary. Moreover, it could be said that findings confirm the results by Ristic et al. (2017), Bosco and Sreedhara (2017), as well as Peters et al.'s (2010), as to what the extrinsic incentives are. This study's findings suggest that the importance attached to salary does not depend on the sector but rather on the individuals and one's priorities.

Performance-related pay was another issue discussed throughout the salary topic. In agreement with the results by Ogbonnaya et al. (2017), Chang (2011), Fang and Gerhart (2012), and Bryson et al. (2017), findings revealed a positive influence of performance-related pay on motivation for private sector employees. As mentioned by almost all participants, salaries are linked to their performance rather than solely the level of seniority, as in the public sector, and this is something that contributes to their satisfaction and motivates them to perform their tasks. Findings obtained from public sector employees, most of whom strongly believed that if their pay was linked to their performance, this would be very motivating, contradict Bryson et al.'s (2017) results concerning the public employees. However, findings of the present study confirm Miao

et al.'s (2013) results, in the sense that extrinsic incentives such as pay, and performance-related pay had influenced public employees' motivation.

Findings regarding the effect of benefits and monetary rewards on employees' motivation produced somewhat mixed results. Even though for some private sector employees the absence nowadays of benefits and rewards is something that leaves them with a somewhat bitter taste, they nevertheless consider that it is much more important to receive recognition and appreciation from their superiors than receiving rewards or benefits of any kind. Consequently, it seems that intangible and nonmonetary rewards are more appreciated and desired than monetary and tangible ones. On the other hand, public sector employees, who said that they do not enjoy any benefits or rewards, reported that it would indeed be very motivating to be provided with those. Therefore, both public and private sector employees seem to consider benefits and monetary rewards as important, up to a point, but under different circumstances, due to the fact that private sector employees are, or were used to be provided with those, whereas public employees are not – at least, not to the same degree. These findings hence disagree with Manolopoulos' (2008) and Rashid and Rashid's (2012) studies, while agreeing with Peter et al.'s (2010) study, in the sense that public sector employees did not value extrinsic benefits less than intrinsic ones, as previous literature seems to suggest. As mentioned, however, by a particular employee, providing rewards or benefits according to individual performance, would possibly lead to reactions from the rest of the employees. This relates to the notion of transparency that was mentioned in the literature review section. Due to the transparency existing in the public sector, providing benefits or rewards according to individual performance would lead to perceptions of unfairness, as proposed by the Equity Theory (Islam & Ismail, 2008; Lussier & Hendon, 2017, p. 1109), agreeing thus with the study by Bellé (2015).

The last theme discussed which emerged throughout the interviewees' responses rather than being predefined, concerns promotion and salary increase, which constitute a form of monetary reward. This was mentioned mostly by public sector employees. This finding is therefore in accordance with the study by Snyder et al. (1996), revealing again that promotion and monetary incentives are important motivators for public sector employees, contradicting studies such as those by Bullock et al. (2015) and Manolopoulos (2008) which support that public sector employees are more likely to be motivated by intrinsic or public service-oriented motives rather than extrinsic ones.

All things considered, findings of the particular study reveal that Cypriot public and private sector employees attach similar importance to specific motivating forces, in contrast to previous studies demonstrating differences among them. Of course, there are some discrepancies among different sector employees, but these are not definitive enough so as to be able to assign one of the two groups to the 'more intrinsically motivated employees', in relation to the other group. Both public and private employees value intrinsic and extrinsic incentives in similar ways, contradicting therefore the rest of the studies that report significant differences among public and private sector employees. Consequently, if we need to provide a single and explicit answer to our research question, namely "Are Cypriot public sector employees more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated, than private sector employees?", a spontaneous and quick response would be "no". However, this answer, as well as the overall results of the study, concern a particular, very small sample of the public and private sector employees in Cyprus. Hence, interpretations cannot be considered as applicable to the whole public and private sector population of Cyprus, as will also be discussed below.

## **6. Limitations of the study**

This research adds to the literature of what motivates public versus private sector employees, focusing on the Cypriot context, through a detailed representation and interpretation of the findings, as emerged through the interviewees' responses. Nevertheless, it is not without its limitations. First of all, the lack of a wide range of private and public organizations, as well as the small sample recruited, makes it difficult to consider the results as representative of the Cypriot public and private sector employees. A small number of interviews (12) were conducted from 7 different organizations which are based solely in Nicosia, whereas the sample used varied in age, education, and years of experience. Moreover, due to the convenience sampling utilized, the vast majority of the interviewees were females, something which may have affected the overall results obtained, as well. Consequently, all these factors may undermine the ability to generate conclusions that would apply to the whole Cypriot population rather than the sample under investigation (Etikan et al., 2015). Additionally, the use of interviewees has the potential of not interpreting the results in the most appropriate way, since, in cases that something was not considered as important, nobody would say "No, I do not perceive it as important". By contrast, when

asked about different motivating factors, most of the employees answered that it is indeed important, explaining the way or why that factor is important. A questionnaire, on the other hand, aiming at an order of importance of specific factors by the participants, provides a clear image as to what is considered as more or less important. Hence, the study cannot provide explicit data as to what it is that motivates public and private sector employees, but rather it provides data on *how* employees perceive to be affected by specific factors, reaching a conclusion of whether public sector employees are more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated than private sector ones.

## **7. Suggestions for future research**

In order to enhance the present research's findings, some suggestions for future research will follow. Firstly, a larger sample comprising various organizations across the island will help in a more accurate interpretation and representation of the results for the whole Cypriot public and private sector population. Due to the larger sample, thus, questionnaires could be distributed to the participants, as well, testing the level of importance of each motivating factor, which would then be discussed and elaborated through interviews, so as for participants to explain their opinions, and which would help the researcher(s) examine any potential discrepancies occurring among the classifications of each employee and their interview reports. Apart from these, an important variable under investigation would be gender comparison or generation. It would be very interesting to compare Generation X and Generation Z, as different generations have different characteristics, therefore different attitudes towards their work and workplaces, being motivated, by extension, differently (Singh and Dangmei, 2016). Generation Z was raised and still growing in a much more different way than Generation X, with laptops, smart phones, and the internet dominating in their everyday lives. Also, it is a generation characterized by individualism and materialism (Generational White Paper, 2011, as cited in Singh and Dangmei, 2016, p. 3). Consequently, Gen Z has definitely different demands and expectations in their jobs and workplaces than Gen X, being therefore motivated through different means (Singh and Dangmei, 2016).

## 8. Conclusions

Motivating employees to perform well is among the foremost and most important roles that managers within organizations have to undertake (Jurkiewicz et al., 1998). This is because, employees constitute the most important and valuable asset within an organization. Consequently, keeping them motivated through ways which they appreciate, which will keep them, in turn, satisfied, will help in maintaining their productivity and efficiency, contributing to the achievement of the organizational goals in the best degree possible (Ristic et al., 2017). Motivation however constitutes one of the most challenging aspects of psychology in today's management, since the ways in which employees are motivated vary according to a number of factors, making it therefore difficult for managers to answer the question of how to effectively motivate their employees (Hassoo & Akbay, 2020).

Findings of this study provide an understanding as to *how* Cypriot public and private sector employees are motivated, based on the level of importance attached to each of the motivating factors under investigation, as discussed above. The aim was to explore whether public employees in Cyprus are more motivated through intrinsically oriented motives and less motivated through extrinsically oriented ones than private sector employees, as results from various other countries demonstrate. However, interpretations of the data obtained from the interviews conducted contradict, in their majority, this view, showing that both public and private sector employees consider intrinsic and extrinsic motivating forces as similarly important. As discussed, intrinsic incentives such as the interest and meaningfulness of the job itself, support, recognition and appreciation, as well as good working conditions/environment and relationships were valued by both public and private sector employees, with most of the interviewees considering those factors as the most important motivating forces within a workplace, contradicting therefore studies supporting that private sector employees value intrinsic incentives lower than public sector employees do. Extrinsic incentives, on the other hand, such as salary or performance-related pay, job security, and benefits and rewards, were again equally valued, in their majority, by both public and private employees, with this finding disagreeing thus with previous studies' findings indicating that public employees are less motivated through extrinsic incentives than private sector employees.

This research therefore adds to the literature through showing that, even though there are some differences, not only between different sector employees but also among same sector employees, discrepancies in the way in which Cypriot employees are motivated are not a result of the sector of employment per se. Rather, it seems to be a combination of factors, such as the persons themselves, their individual needs, as well as their priorities, which depends on the sector of employment, in the sense that different ways of management exist in each sector. This means that different motivating incentives exist among public and private organizations, and therefore employees value the different motivating factors depending on what is available in their organization.

Findings of the research can help informing public and private sector managers on the motivating forces that employees perceive as important in helping them to perform well. Since this is what every employer desires, findings can be used as a “guide” of how to motivate public and private sector employees in being satisfied within their workplace and therefore more productive. Consequently, it is important to know what motivates employees’ high performance, keeping them satisfied and reducing by extension turnover intentions. Significant though it may be, salary is not the only or the most important motivating force for employees. Rather, creating an environment and implementing practices and procedures that satisfy and enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation would be a better approach (Gupta & Tayal, 2013; Sturman & Ford, 2011), as also confirmed through the current study’s findings.

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## Appendix

### *Interviewee Background / Opening questions*

1. How long have you been working for this company?
2. What is your current job position and how long have you been in it?

### *Intrinsic incentives*

1. What motivates you most in your organization?  
Probe: Are there any particular factors within your workplace that keep you motivated to accomplish your everyday tasks?
2. To what extent is the job itself, that is, its meaningfulness and how interesting it is for you, an important motivator?
3. What role do good working conditions/environment and good working relationships with colleagues and supervisors play in motivating you?  
Probe: Could you please describe for me working conditions/environment or working relationships that would dissatisfy you? How would these affect your motivation?
4. How important is it for you to have supportive supervisors who appreciate your efforts and recognize your performance?  
Probe: Please provide examples of what supportive means to you. What is the effect on your motivation?

### *Extrinsic incentives*

1. How does job security within your workplace affect your motivation?  
Probe: (for private sector employees) – Does the lack of 100% security boost your motivation for better performance or does it reduce it?  
(for public sector employees) – How important is having total job security for you (that you cannot be fired)? Does this boost your motivation or not? Please explain.  
Probe: Is it rather a safety cushion that reassures you?
2. How important is the level of salary for you?
3. Is it motivating for you that your pay is linked to your individual performance?  
Probe (for public sector employees): Does the fact that employees are paid according to their hierarchical level, depending on their level of seniority, affect your motivation?
4. Do you receive any other monetary rewards and benefits (apart from salary)?  
Probe: If yes, what role do they play in enhancing your motivation?  
Probe 2: What is more important for you: to receive financial rewards or to be appreciated and recognized for your performance?

*Closing questions*

1. So, taking into consideration everything discussed so far, if you could change anything within your workplace, what would that be?
2. I have asked everything I needed. Is there anything else you would like us to add or discuss?

***Thank you for participating in my research – your contribution is really important!***

Christina Sofroniou