

Attitudes of Latvian external border custom officers towards work

Vladislavs Sardiko
Faculty of Education and
Management
Daugavpils University
Daugavpils, Latvia
vl.sardiko@gmail.com

Abstract. Topicality of the study: It is essential to understand what is important to employees, what their main motivation factors are, and the attitudes towards work. An employee's orientation towards processes, work, money, and results can significantly influence their performance and attitude towards work. The elements of this motivation shape employee's vision of their role in the organization and how they prioritize their responsibilities and goals.

The aim the study: To investigate the personal attitudes of Latvia's external border customs employees towards work.

Methodology: The main methodology employed in this research was an adopted version of O.Potemkina's questionnaire "Diagnosis of socio-psychological attitudes of a person in the motivational-need sphere". Out of the original 80 questions, 40 questions were selected and used according to the criteria (process, result, work, income).

Additionally, a comprehensive questionnaire was applied to categorize respondents based on various indicators, including marital status, educational level, and gender. This approach facilitated a thorough analysis of the correlations between the primary research questions and different aspects of the respondents' profiles.

Main findings: Women are more process-oriented, therefore more work with documents could be delegated to them, but on the other hand, men, being more result-oriented, and they are better positioned for roles in combating smuggling from a management perspective. Education is also of great importance, as it significantly changes the difference in results depending on the level of education.

This approach could be highly beneficial before a job interview as it would reveal the motivation of the potential employee. If financial considerations are the primary motivation for the applicant, it might indicate that such an employee may not work with the customs for an extended period.

Keywords: attitudes, custom employees, external border

I. INTRODUCTION

The aim the study: To investigate the personal attitudes of Latvia's external border customs employees towards work.

The attitude of Latvian external border customs officers towards work is essential in ensuring national security and customs control. These customs officers assume a responsible role in controlling the movement of goods across the border to ensure legal and safe customs operations[1].

One of the main factors influencing the attitude of customs officers is the need to be careful and precise in their daily work. They work with a variety of different situations and groups of people, so it is important to maintain a professional attitude and neutrality. Customs officers are regularly trained on new customs rules and procedures to ensure their knowledge is current and relevant [2]. Therefore, the functions and tasks of customs are variable and depend on both external (political, economic, social and technological) and internal (resources, processes and culture) factors [3].

On the other hand, the attitude of employees also directly affects customer experience and relationships. Although customs officials may experience challenges and tensions, it is important that they maintain a professional attitude and help citizens understand customs procedures.

To demand high efficiency at work from employees, it is necessary to understand the orientation of the employees towards their tasks. It is important to know which aspects of the job bring more pleasure to the employee. The research has novelty, as such research has never been

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conducted before for Latvia's external border customs employees.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main methodology employed in this research was an adopted version of O.Potemkina's questionnaire "Diagnosis of socio-psychological attitudes of a person in the motivational-need sphere". Out of the original 80 questions, 40 questions were selected and used according to the criteria (process, result, work, income).

Additionally, a comprehensive questionnaire was employed to categorize respondents based on various indicators, including marital status, educational level, additional income, level of competence, dependents and gender. This approach facilitated a thorough analysis of the correlations between the primary research questions and different aspects of the respondents' profiles.

Respondents - 113 senior customs supervisors working at Latvia's external border (The total number of senior customs supervisors in the State Revenue Service Customs Board is 520, the survey's maximum after selection was 320 senior customs supervisors). The study was conducted from 01.05.2022 to 30.06.2022. Anonymous questionnaires were offered in electronic or paper form.

The obtained results allowed to trace the orientation of employees towards work.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Further the author discusses the results by selecting some variables: gender, marital status, additional income, level of competence.

Research allows to conclude that women play important role in customs, although there is a male predominance [5], not as big as in 2021 according to WCO data, 37 percent of the world's customs employees are women, and 16 percent of senior customs positions are held by women [6]. When working on the external border of Latvia, the work of senior customs supervisors is not divided according to gender, all the necessary tasks that senior customs supervisors must be able to perform, except for work with X-ray equipment, where an employee with a special permit can only work, but such permits are available for both women and men.

However, the author concludes that gender could make a difference in regards to an attitude towards work.

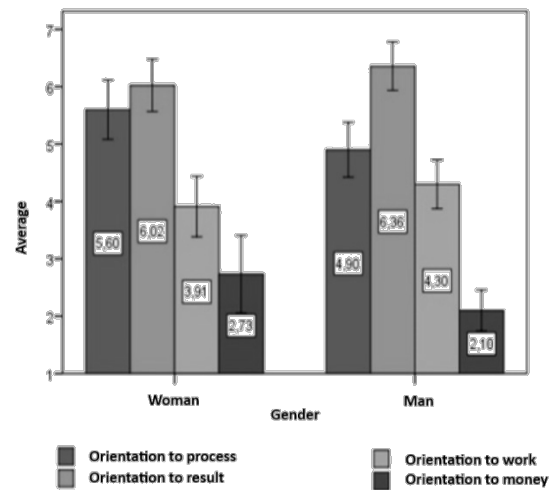


Fig.1. Job orientation breakdown by gender

Fig. 1 shows the distribution of the results obtained according to gender. We see how the common picture is the same and the greater emphases is placed on the result, rather than on the process, on the work and the last towards money. There are also visible differences of attitudes in gender variable. Female representatives are more inclined to process and money unlike men, while men are more inclined to work and result.

The results obtained as a result of an independent sample T-test indicate (Table I) that between men and women, there is a significant difference in orientation towards the process among the senior custom supervisors. For women, this aspect is more important.

TABLE I JOB ORIENTATION ACCORDING TO GENDER VARIABLE (INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST)

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Orientation towards process	1,930	113	,049
Orientation towards result	-1,043	113	,299
Orientation towards work	-1,149	113	,253
Orientation towards money	1,814	113	,072

As for the next question, the author can conclude that marital status can also be important. Employees' orientation towards money could increase for married respondents.

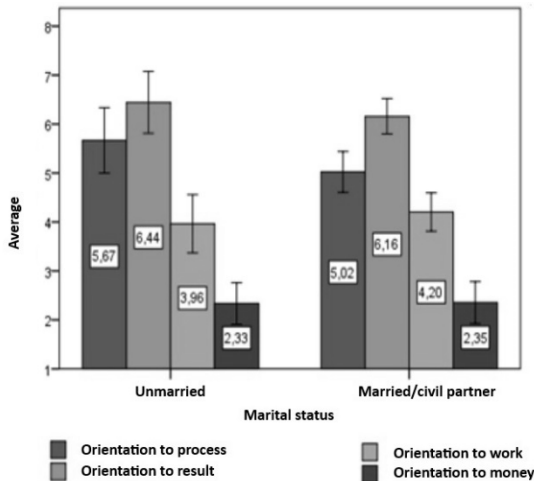


Fig.2. Job orientation (marital status variable)

The results seen in Fig. 2 indicate that the author was wrong in his assumption that marital status is a significant factor in regards to work orientation. There is a slight difference seen in Table II, that differences are not significant.

TABLE II JOB ORIENTATION (MARITAL STATUS VARIABLE) (INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST)

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Orientation to process	1,533	113	,128
Orientation to result	,770	113	,443
Orientation to work	-,618	113	,538
Orientation to money	-,046	113	,963

The next criterion by which the answers were grouped is education. According to the author, the criterion is very relevant, because perception, motivation, and desires change. What is interesting, Higher Education was among the explored variables in the questionnaire. Education gained in Soviet Union and today is equal to Master's degree.

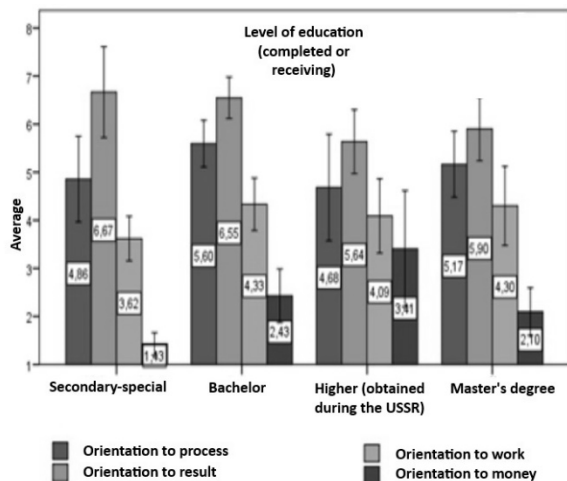


Fig.3. Job orientation (level of education variable)

Fig. 3 allows to conclude that the structure remains the same: there is a stronger focus on the result rather than on the process; followed by work and money. Employees with a vocational education have been identified as a group, they have the highest orientation towards result, and the lowest for work, practically no orientation to money.

As for the lower education- secondary-special and Bachelor's degree respondents, they have significantly different results in their orientation as compared with the respondents with higher education and Master's degrees.

Employees with higher education are the mostly money-oriented, in comparison with others.

Taking into account all levels of education of all the employees, there are significant differences in the orientation towards money (Table 3).

TABLE III JOB ORIENTATION ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS LEVEL OF EDUCATION (ANOVA)

	F	Sig.
Orientation to process	1,358	,259
Orientation to result	2,353	,076
Orientation to work	,854	,468
Orientation to money	4,809	,003

Additional income could be considered as an important factor as well, because if the employee is more relaxed, he/she will not have concerns about money, because it is not his/her only source of income, at the same time, the orientation towards money shows why they are employed in several jobs.

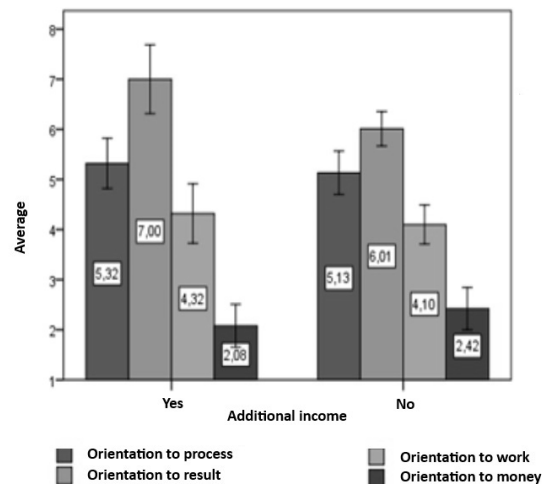


Fig.4. Job orientation breakdown by additional income

In Fig. 4, one sees how the employees layout that is similar to the previous figures: most employees are focused on the result, rather than on the process, work and then followed by money. The orientation to the process and work are practically the same and the orientation to money

higher for those who do not have additional income. Table IV indicates how the orientation towards the result is essential. As well as such large indicator as orientation on the result in no other distribution.

TABLE IV JOB ORIENTATION (ADDITIONAL INCOME VARIABLE) (INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST)

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Orientation to process	,428	113	,669
Orientation to result	2,671	113	,009
Orientation to work	,547	113	,585
Orientation to money	-,819	113	,414

The level of competence of employees changes its behavior and the way they make decisions, collaborate with colleagues and solve problems in the workplace. It also affects their performance, motivation and attitude to work. Therefore, it was important for the author to include a question about the level of competence.

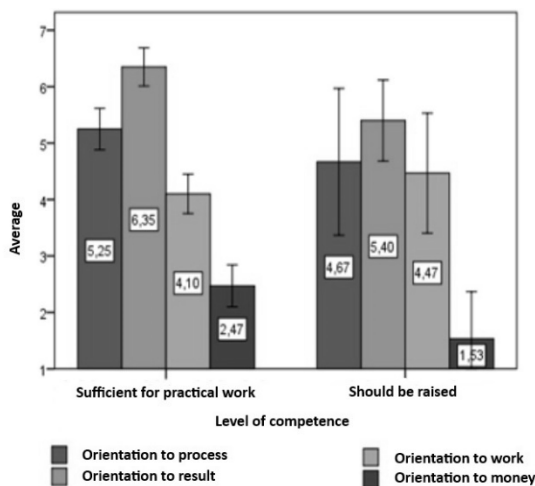


Fig.5. Job orientation breakdown by level of competence

There are very logical results at the level of competence, because those employees who believe that they are not competent enough and need to raise their level of competence – for them the most important thing is work. They tend to work and accumulate experience. They are low creators in other aspects, orientation to money and process, as well as significantly different orientation to the result (Fig. 5). When a person comes to work without experience, he wants to get it and material or other aspects remain on the lowest importance. The opposite situation is with those who believe that the level of competence is sufficient for them, the orientation is less important towards work, but is significantly higher when towards the result and money, and also the orientation towards the process (Table V).

TABLE V JOB ORIENTATION (LEVEL OF COMPETENCE) (INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST)

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Orientation to process	1,098	113	,275
Orientation to result	2,070	113	,041
Orientation to work	-,745	113	,458
Orientation to money	1,853	113	,046

The author set the question of the dependents, because it is a responsibility and could affect the employee e.g. by increasing the orientation towards money.

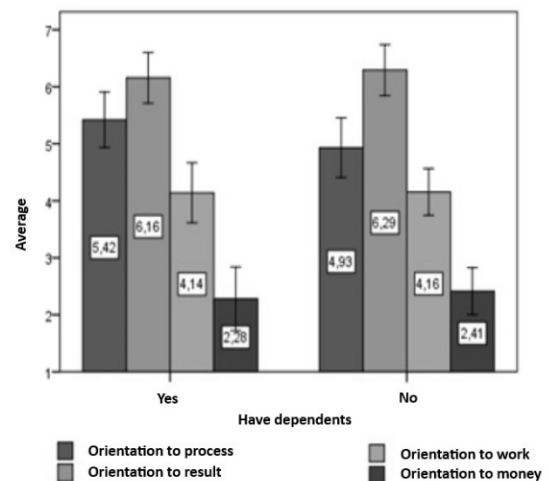


Fig 6. Job orientation

Dependents are not a significant factor, as the indicators are practically the same (Fig. 6). The only difference is the process orientation. However, Table VI allows to conclude that the differences are not significant.

TABLE VI JOB ORIENTATION BREAKDOWN BY HAVE DEPENDENTS (INDEPENDENT SAMPLES TEST)

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Orientation to process	1,373	113	,172
Orientation to result	-,430	113	,668
Orientation to work	-,045	113	,964
Orientation to money	-,385	113	,701

Summarizing the obtained results we can conclude that the employee's orientation towards the work process often cannot be influenced by external factors, such as family status or dependent persons. These are more personal characteristics of a person, competences (acquired knowledge and experience) and attitude towards work, which motivate the employee in the current job and determine which priorities are the most important for him at work.

CONCLUSIONS

The research tool applied for this study is an adopted version of O.Potemkina's questionnaire "Diagnosis of socio-psychological attitudes of a person in the motivational-need sphere" is good tool for exploring the organization of work according to the employee's attitude (currently, a senior customs supervisor needs to know all aspects of work and be able to work in all positions, but in real life there is always not enough time and an employee works more in one position than others), or during the hiring of new employees.

Money-orientation is self-evident, because the work of senior customs officers is a low-paid job, taking into account the negative working environment conditions. Women are more process-oriented, therefore they work more with documents that could be delegated to them, but on the other hand, men are more result-oriented, they are better positioned for roles in combating smuggling from a management perspective. Education is also of great importance, as it drastically changes the difference in results depending on the level of education.

The orientation of senior customs supervisors in the work process often cannot be influenced by external factors, such as marital status or dependents. These are more personal qualities of a person, competencies (acquired knowledge and experience) and attitude to work, which motivate the employee in the current work and determine which priorities are most important for him at work.

This approach could be highly beneficial before a job interview as it would reveal the motivation of the potential employee. If financial considerations are the primary motivation for the applicant, it might indicate that such an employee may not work with the customs for an extended period.

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