

MOTIVATION AND JOB SATISFACTION OF HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICIANS

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Abstract

Humanitarian workers operate in complex environments with various challenges and demanding working conditions. These challenges put aid workers in a range of risks and under the pressure. However, human resources are crucial for success of humanitarian operations in general. At the same time, each humanitarian operation is reliant on logistics and logistics activities are always connected with logistic staff. Understanding what motivates logisticians to join the humanitarian sector is essential information for humanitarian organizations and for recruiters within. Also, knowing which factors influence motivation and job satisfaction of humanitarian logisticians could help the organizations to struggle with the extremely turnover they have to face. Up to this moment, needed skills and the performance of humanitarian logisticians were examined. Also, the motivators of humanitarian workers are covered in previous research. Therefore, the additional aim of this research is to extend the knowledge about the human resources in humanitarian sector as well.

Key words: Humanitarian Logisticians, Motivation, Job Satisfaction

JEL Code: J24, J28, R41

Introduction

Humanitarian workers operate in complex environments with various challenges and demanding working conditions. These aspects put them in a range of risks. The first potential hazard is represented by physical harm and the possibility that aid workers may become victims of disaster as affected population they serve (Ali *et al.*, 2015). The humanitarian workers are targeted for harassment, kidnaping, and killing (Peytremann *et al.*, 2001). The second category of potential hazards for aid workers includes various stressors that affect their mental health. The humanitarian work is characterized by exposure to primary and secondary trauma (Connorton *et al.*, 2011) and humanitarian personnel are “at risk of developing significant mental health problem” (Ali *et al.*, 2015, p. 156) and suffer more posttraumatic

stress disorder, depression, and anxiety compared with the general population (Connorton *et al.*, 2011). Peytremann *et al.* (2001) examined medical evacuations and fatalities of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees field employees between 1994 and 1995. In total, 162 workers had to be evacuated. The psychiatric disease was the cause in three cases. Among 37 deaths, suicide was the cause in one case.

Each humanitarian operation is reliant on logistics and logistics activities are always connected with logistic staff. Up to now, the performance of humanitarian logisticians (Chaikin, 2003) and needed skills were examined (Kovács & Tatham, 2010; Kovács *et al.*, 2012). Previous research has revealed importance of functional logistics skills, as well as additional skill set related to the context of humanitarian operations (Kovács *et al.*, 2012). The specific set of skills required for humanitarian logisticians depends on the individual organization's view of what logistics covers and on the job description (Kovács & Tatham, 2010).

One reason why identifying the required logistics skills, together with motivation and job satisfaction, is important is the low level of permanent staff in the humanitarian sector. Indeed, staff turnover in humanitarian logistics is extremely high; workforce rotation of field logisticians can reach 80% (Thomas, 2003).

On the other hand, motivation of humanitarian workers (mostly medical workers or volunteers) has been examined before. Previous research reveal motivators as 'solidarity', 'feeling compelled to address the rights of others', 'charity and philanthropy' (Asgary & Lawrence, 2014), 'a desire to make contribution', 'a desire to make a difference' (Bjernerud *et al.*, 2006), 'altruism' (Bjernerud *et al.*, 2006, Oberholster *et al.*, 2013), 'career development', 'international experience', 'escapism', and 'outsider support' (Oberholster *et al.*, 2013). Imai *et al.* (2010) published the research which covers factors connected motivation and hesitation to work among health workers during a public crisis. Authors surveyed the hospital workers in Japan after the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. Their results show that strong feeling of being supported by the governments and feeling being protected by the hospital led to higher motivation and lower hesitation. Albuquerque *et al.* (2018) also track the changes of motivators of nurses over time. At the beginning, the participants of authors' study wanted to discover new things and feel the worthiness. On the other hand, nurses with more experience wanted to continue to challenge themselves and they enjoyed stimuli from the fieldwork.

Identifying the differences motivation of humanitarian workers can support the effective recruitment, training and career management (Oberholster *et al.*, 2013). These

aspects are crucial especially because one of the main challenges for humanitarian organizations is a high workforce rotation (Albuquerque *et al.*, 2018).

1 Methodology

In this research, combination of qualitative and quantitative research has been used. The data are obtained through the semi- structured questionnaire which is completely anonymous and consists of 40 questions. The questionnaire was piloted, and the minor changes were done.

The questionnaire can be split into six different parts:

- general information (e.g. sex, age, education),
- work-related information including information about training (e.g. current position, job placement, previous work experience),
- motivation and job satisfaction (e.g. which factors affect their motivation and job satisfaction),
- statements (14 statements in total),
- perception of their job,
- mental health and trauma events.

Some of these questions address the previous question or they are relevant only for respondents with work experience from the field. Therefore, the number of answers to different parts of the questionnaire or to various questions can vary. In some questions, respondents have to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statements. For capturing the answers, 7-point scale according to Diener *et al.* (1985) is used. The questionnaire reflects the previous research about motivation, job satisfaction, and psychological conditions of humanitarian workers and volunteers (Bjerneld *et al.*, 2006, Imai *et al.*, 2010, Oberholster *et al.*, 2013, Jones & Williamson, 2014, Akintola & Chikoko, 2016). Therefore, it is possible to compare the results of logisticians with other workers in humanitarian sector.

To ensure the completely anonymity of the respondents, their statements will not be linked up with any personal information from the first section of the questionnaire or with their affiliation. The data collection has begun in November 2018. The questionnaire was distributed to international, national non-governmental organizations, agencies of the United Nations, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Logistics Cluster, and Humanitarian Logistics Association with request to ask logisticians to get involved in this study. Only logisticians with at least one year of work experience can participate in this research.

The results of parts number four, five and six of this questionnaire will not be presented in this paper. These information are not focused directly on motivation and job satisfaction of humanitarian logisticians, and therefore they are not in the scope of this paper.

2 Results

In total, 79 participants completed the questionnaire. Two of these responses, P1 and P70, were excluded from the analysis due to unclear answers of the respondents. As a result, 77 respondents participated in this research. Most of the participants are men (51 overall; 66.2% compare to 26 women, 33.8%). The average age is 42. Table 1 includes general information about respondents.

Tab. 1: General information about respondents

Sex	Overall (percentage)
male	51 (66.2%)
female	26 (33.8%)
Marital status	
married	35 (45.4%)
in relationship	13 (16.9%)
single	24 (31.2%)
divorced	5 (6.5%)
Education	
high school	11 (14.3%)
university	42 (54.5%)
postgraduate	24 (31.2%)

Source: personal collection

Participants stated 33 countries of origin. The average amount of years of work experience is 17.3 years. The respondents work in average for 2 organizations and on their current position are in average for 3 years. One respondent did not answer this question.

Most of the participants work for international non-governmental organizations (56 overall, 72.7%) and in the field (60 overall, 77.9%). Other 15 respondents work for UN agency (19.5%), followed by 7 respondents working for national non-governmental organizations (9.1%) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (1 overall, 1.3%). Two respondents responded they work for international non-governmental organizations and for agency of the United Nations at the same time. In total, 7 respondents work on HQ (9.1%) and 10 respondents in the field and on HQ (13%) at the same time. Most

of the respondents with field work experience are expatriates (63 overall; 81.8%), compare to 11 local workers (14.3%). Three respondents do not have work experience from the field (3.9%). In total, 63 respondents stated they have previous work experience from business sector (81.8%) compare to 14 respondents (18.2%) who stated the opposite.

Respondents mentioned 46 various position they currently hold, for example hospital logistician, logistic coordinator, logistic assistant, storekeeper etc.

2.1 Motivation of humanitarian logisticians

Firstly, respondents had to answer on question why they have decided to join humanitarian sector. Participants have 11 defined options. They were able to choose more than one option or mention other motivators because the question was open-ended. Table 2 includes their most important motivators.

Tab. 2: Motivators of humanitarian logisticians

Motivator	Overall (percentage)
'the chance to help people'	46 (59.7%)
'the chance to change the world and make some contribution'	29 (37.7%)

Source: personal collection

Another question targeted why logisticians remain on their positions, followed by questions if they went through some struggling periods. The answers of the participants can be splited into several groups, e.g. respondents who want to help other people, and this is the main motivation for them or people who displayed the desire for challenging work environment. In total, 57 respondents (74%) stated they have struggled while doing this job compare to 20 respondents (26%) with opposite experiences. Respondents who have experiences with struggling periods, mentioned the reasons like the disconnection from family, bureaucracy and operational inefficiencies, problems with management etc.

The participants also identified factors which positively and negatively affect the level of their motivation. Table 3 includes these results.

Tab. 3: Factors which influence the level of motivation of humanitarian logisticians

Factors with positive effect	Overall (percentage)
'the chance to help people'	58 (75.3%)

'the possibility to make a difference'	50 (64.5%)
Factors with negative effect	Overall (percentage)
'salary'	27 (35.1%)
'stance of my superior'	26 (33.8%)

Source: personal collection

Respondents also mentioned some other factors which positively or negatively affect the level of their motivation. The positive effect have factors like “*technical aspects of the job*” (P25), “*continuous learning, challenges, and finding solutions which make a difference*” (P54) etc. On the other hand, factors like “*a difficulties to communicate some issues with the correct people above me in the hierarchy*” (P4), “*less support/unfair treatment/unqualified leadership*” (P18) negatively affect the level of their motivation.

2.2 Job satisfaction of humanitarian logisticians

Another part of the questionnaire was focused on job satisfaction of humanitarian workers. The options of questions focused on this area were defined on the basis of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (University of Minnesota, 1977). Table 4 includes the results of factors with the highest positive or negative impact on level of job satisfaction of respondents.

Tab. 4: Factors which influence the level of job satisfaction of humanitarian logisticians

Factors with positive effect	Overall (percentage)
'the chance to do things for other people'	50 (64.9%)
'the chance to make use of my best abilities'	48 (62.3%)
Factors with negative effect	Overall (percentage)
'the way my boss handles his/her employees'	26 (33.8%)
'job insecurity'	23 (29.9%)

Source: personal collection

Participants also stated some other factors which influence the level of their job satisfaction. Factors like “*The ability to make a difference to the lives of others and not for the purposes of making money.*” (P46) or “*inclusion in team settings and decisions*” (P52) have the positive effect. Whereas situations like “*not family friendly*” (P25), “*arrogance of the leadership*” (P48) negatively influence the job satisfaction of respondents.

Results of factor ‘salary’ are quite interesting. 16 respondents (20.8%) stated that this factor positively affects the level of their motivation, compare to 27 respondents (35.1%) who

stated the opposite. This influence is lower when it comes to job satisfaction where 14 respondents (18.2%) stated that salary has the positive impact, compare to 20 (26%) who stated the opposite. Some respondents mentioned financial aspects in connection with their struggle periods, sometimes in the opposite ways.

Conclusion

The presented paper is the part of ongoing research. This research is focused on motivation and job satisfaction of humanitarian logisticians, and on the training aspect of their job together with their mental health and the trauma events they have to face.

The author would like to involve higher number of participants. However, the obtained data evince the degree of consistency. Respondents stated similar reasons why they have decided to start working for international, national non-governmental organizations, agencies of the United Nations or International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, why they struggle or factors which keeps them involved. Their answers are also similar and comparable with answers of other humanitarian workers examined in previous research. However, this paper does not provide enough space for the whole analysis.

The factors which affect the motivation and job satisfaction of humanitarian logisticians can be divided into two groups. The first group includes factors which organizations cannot completely influence, e.g. the unpredictability or the stance of family member or friends of logisticians. On the other hand, organization can influence factors as working conditions, the stance of managers or the pressure and disorganized environment inside the organization etc. According to the presented results, these factors affect well-being of humanitarian logisticians in significant degree.

The results also show that logisticians are driven not only by their will to help people. They also want to gain new work or international experience and they reflect the possibilities for career advancement. This is necessary to reflect. As was mentioned earlier in this paper, human resources are crucial for humanitarian operations and their success.

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