



# Examining Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives for Public Servants in Kazakhstan: Empirical Evidence

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the satisfaction of public servants in Kazakhstan with their current monetary and non-monetary incentives. A block of questions on these aspects of public service motivation is part of a significant study on Kazakhstani civil service transformation. Furthermore, the research paper determines public officials' commitment to financially tangible or intangible motivation tools. The theoretical part examines various aspects of motivation and its types and provides an overview of the state-of-the-art public service motivation theory. At the same time, the practical part reveals both general patterns at the country and organization level and individual characteristics of the civil servant's motivation. The survey was conducted within a month, from April 19 to May 20, 2023. About 10,942 representatives of central and local public authorities participated in the survey. The more significant share of respondents (41%) pointed to the "desire to be useful to the state" as one of the main goals of entering the public system and serving the people. At the same time, according to practitioners, the Top-3 issues resist the attraction and retention of public sector professionals. There are low wages (75%), motivation (55%), and lack of competency (45%) of civil servants. Based on the regression analysis results, the group of non-financial incentives received the most outstanding commitment compared to monetary motivation tools. Particularly, the social status and agency activities serve as a basis for further research and policy recommendations.

**KEYWORDS:** Motivation, Monetary Incentives, Non-Monetary Incentives, Public Service, Survey

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the pivotal aspects of the existing model of public service is its focus on citizens and their needs, as well as the cultivation and retention of professional personnel. Governments, as we know, play a critical role in providing public goods needed to support economic growth, such as health, education, infrastructure, and property rights – and the effectiveness of these services crucially depends on the performance of the people who deliver them (Bandiera et al., 2017). Public servants, therefore, are not just mere functionaries, but the very backbone of government operations. They play crucial roles in delivering public goods and services such as health, education, infrastructure, and property rights. The effectiveness of these services hinges on the performance and motivation of civil servants, making the topic of our study all the more significant.

The transformation of public service systems is a key priority for modern governments, aiming to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of civil servants. This focus on optimizing public sector performance is particularly critical in developing nations like Kazakhstan, where the state apparatus plays a pivotal role in addressing economic and social challenges. The development of Kazakhstan is carried out in the context of several global and regional challenges that require restructuring and increasing the efficiency of the state apparatus. A necessary component of success is strengthening the human resources potential of the civil service (Agency for Civil Service Affairs, 2024). According to the Strategy Kazakhstan – 2050 and the Concept for the Development of Public Administration System until 2030, the main aim of further country development is the creation of a professional state apparatus for which serving the people and government is paramount. The legislation changes over the past two years contributed to the creation of a new model of the Kazakhstani civil service based on abilities and competencies, combining elements of career and position models (Agency for Civil Service

Affairs, 2024). From January 1, 2024, government agencies completely switched to a new remuneration system based on grading and distribution of positions among functional blocks. Thus, the salary gap between employees of central and local authorities has been reduced. The flexible schedule mode continues, which was previously introduced due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Public service motivation matters when individuals choose to work in the civil service system. Besides the economic situation, cultural issues, and prestige of the public sector as an employer, the intrinsic reasons are highly significant. Although a series of contemporary research studies supports the effectiveness of different approaches to motivation in the public sector, the current literature does not fully disclose the study of similar issues in the public sector.

In general, there is currently a great need to study additional incentive tools for civil servants. Since financial measures are almost exhausted. Non-financial motivation measures are becoming increasingly crucial for further developing the civil service system.

Therefore, this research paper aims to analyze Kazakhstani civil servants' current monetary and non-monetary incentives based on empirical evidence from the survey conducted and to propose policy recommendations for further development of the public service motivation system. To address this aim, the solutions to the following research questions will be studied: "What motivation tools are public servants in Kazakhstan fully satisfied with? Moreover, what motivational factors do not significantly increase the efficiency and interest of public sector employees?" The in-depth analysis of existing theoretical research on public service motivation will be conducted based on the research questions. Moreover, the paper will examine the opinions of current civil servants regarding their satisfaction with the existing incentive package. The solution of these tasks and research problems will fully realize the public service's potential in attracting,

retaining, and increasing the efficiency of talented personnel.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In both the public and private sectors of developed countries, increasing emphasis is being placed on employee well-being. This encompasses physical and mental health, as well as financial well-being, all of which have direct impacts on employee engagement, performance, team spirit, and the organization's customer focus (Agency for Civil Service Affairs, 2023). There is a distinct difference in the motivation of employees in the private and public sectors concerning their desire to serve.

Motivation is defined as “the ability of people, institutions, and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve

objectives” (UNDP, 2006). In the context of the public sector, Public Service Motivation (PSM) is described as an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions or organizations (Perry & Wise, 1990).

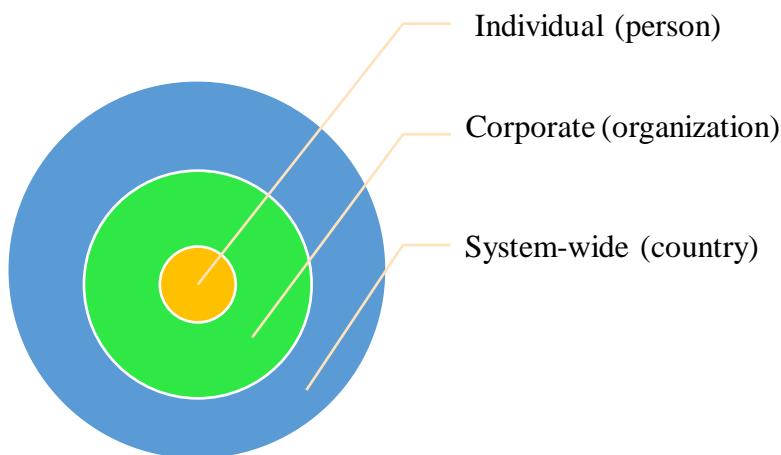
As a theoretical construct, motivation encompasses several key characteristics:

(1) Level of Perception: This includes system-wide, organizational, and individual levels.

(2) Financial Component: This is divided into monetary and non-monetary elements.

(3) Focus: This considers both intrinsic and extrinsic factors (UNDP, 2006).

These types of motivation are further delineated and illustrated in Figure 1, which categorizes various motivational drivers within these frameworks.



**FIGURE 1.** Types of motivation

*Note:* compiled by authors based on UNDP (2006)

For example, the incentives for individual motivation are pay, pension, allowances, accommodation, work environment, professional development, stability, job security, etc. Incentives for organizational motivations are organizational climate, rewards practices, degree of autonomy, etc. The system-wide incentives include security, investment climate, societal values, culture and rule of law (Steers & Porter, 1987; UNDP,

2006). These diverse levels of incentives illustrate the multifaceted nature of motivation within different contexts. Understanding and addressing these varied incentives can lead to more effective strategies for enhancing both individual performance and overall organizational productivity.

Besides this, the following categories represent the motivational tools (Table 1).

**TABLE 1.** Types of Incentives

Monetary	Non-Monetary	Internal	External
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pay;</li> <li>- Pensions;</li> <li>- Insurance;</li> <li>- Clothing, accommodation allowance;</li> <li>- Travel allowance;</li> <li>- Child care allowance;</li> <li>- Subsidised meals/clothing/ accommodation;</li> <li>- Subsidised transport;</li> <li>- Child care subsidy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Holiday/vacation;</li> <li>- Flexible working hours;</li> <li>- Access to/support for training and education;</li> <li>- Sabbatical, study leave;</li> <li>- Planned career breaks;</li> <li>- Occupational health/counseling;</li> <li>- Recreational facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decision rights (autonomy);</li> <li>- Accountability;</li> <li>- Market exposure (risk);</li> <li>- Financial responsibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governance (responsibility for decisions and control over residual income);</li> <li>- Financing directed toward public policy objectives;</li> <li>- Control mechanisms (the degree to which regulations or financial incentives are necessary to obtain desired policy objectives).</li> </ul>

*Note:* compiled by authors based on Adams & Hicks (2000), UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (2013)

The issue of motivation in the public sector is an insufficiently studied topic, as extensively discussed by Cacioppe and Mock (1984), and Homberg and Vogel (2016). Effective public service delivery in developing countries ultimately depends on the performance of public sector workers. Notably, it has been found that civil servants in developing countries are often paid better than their counterparts in the private sector. However, evidence suggests that poor government performance in these countries is not solely due to underpayment of government workers (UNDP, 2006).

A substantial body of research in public administration emphasizes that incentives must be pilot-tested and tailored to specific contexts (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008; UNDP, 2013; Yung, 2014; Harari et al., 2016). Both monetary and non-monetary incentives can be applied, considering budget constraints, the historical development of the country, and the nature of the organization and individuals involved. Civil servants are more likely to be productive if they receive intrinsic rewards (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). At the same time, the state has a vested interest in employing cost-effective non-financial motivational

instruments (Adams & Hicks, 2000; Bandiera et al., 2017).

Public Service Motivation (PSM) is defined as a type of motivation unique to the public sector, though it does not encompass all motives within this sector (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). This concept emerged in the 1980s as a way to explain the different reward preferences among public and private sector managers (Rainey, 1982). Over the past two decades, the body of academic research on public service motivation has grown significantly. Perry and Wise (1990) later defined PSM as an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions. Empirical evidence on public service motivation has been provided by various scholars, including Perry and Wise (1990), Bozeman (2015), Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann (2016), and Asseburg (2020).

These studies identify specific motivational factors, which are broadly categorized as financial and non-financial, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivational effects. The combination of various incentive tools is designed to attract competitive talent and motivate them to achieve high performance in

the public sector. Recognizing human capital as one of the most important assets of civil service organizations, researchers like Yung (2014) and Belle & Cantarelli (2015) have linked effectiveness to motivation. Motivation exhibits flexibility, which manifests in two dimensions: altering the set of incentive tools and changing the performance of the individuals to whom the incentive package is directed. The long-standing notion that people are motivated to work in public service out of altruism, a desire to serve, or a wish to impact society remains significant.

The concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM) was introduced in the last few decades of the previous century and has since expanded across various academic disciplines. Recent research has increasingly focused on non-monetary incentives in the public sector (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020; Vandenabeele & Schott, 2020; Zubair et al., 2021; Rollnik-Sadowska et al., 2023; Lee & Na, 2024). Particular emphasis has been placed on aspects such as self-realization within the organization and on a system-wide scale. Additionally, there is significant attention to employees' commitment to organizational goals and values. The importance of social support and organizational development has been underscored, especially in light of lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In summary, numerous theories on public service motivation exist, which are both integrated and complementary. The concept is crucial because it relates to the interest in working in the public sector and to performance outcomes. However, comprehensive research integrating different aspects of public service motivation remains limited. Preliminary evidence suggests that both monetary and non-monetary factors should be analyzed in depth, considering the historical and cultural background of the country and involving current public officials as the study population. A notable characteristic of recent research on public service motivation is its focus on identifying the most effective non-monetary policy instruments specific to each country. This focus

is due to the unique cultural, national, ethical, and other aspects of each country. Moreover, economic crises and global challenges in recent years have driven studies to seek non-budgetary and non-monetary motivation tools. Such case studies not only help develop specific solutions for government agencies but also provide insights into foreign policy-making challenges and successes.

In Kazakhstan, this topic has been relatively underexplored in the context of public service. Often, practitioners in the public sector are ahead of domestic theoretical developments because strategic directions are already embedded in the country's program documents. Consequently, civil servants must learn as they make policy decisions. This study aims to support domestic research to unlock the potential of motivational tools for civil servants.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a quantitative method involving a survey conducted among 10,942 civil servants in Kazakhstan, representing approximately 12% of the total population. The study was conducted across all regions of Kazakhstan, encompassing both central and local administration, from April 19 to May 20, 2023. Data collection utilized Google Forms, enabling participants to respond to the survey questions via computers and mobile devices. Upon reaching the desired sample size, the survey was closed, and the data from Google Forms was imported into Excel for coding and preparation for analysis and interpretation. Stata software was subsequently used for data analysis.

The research design comprises three core aspects:

(1) Descriptive Statistics: Based on the survey respondents' profiles.

(2) Primary Results of Data Analysis: Examining three motivation levels—country, organization, and individual levels.

(3) Regression Analysis Outcomes: Describing civil servants' satisfaction level with current incentives.

By operationalizing three aspects, the study described the profile of participating civil servants at the first stage. Secondly, respondents were asked to think about reasons for entering the civil service (the country level) and to assess the Top-3 issues during their performance (organization level). Moreover, by applying regression analysis, the study examines the commitment of civil servants to monetary or non-monetary incentives.

The following conditions were assumed to be true:

(1) population was of adequate size to provide valid and comprehensive questionnaire responses;

(2) respondents completed the questionnaire accurately and honestly;

(3) the 10-point Likert scale questions in the survey measure the degree of utilization of monetary and non-monetary incentives in the public authority.

The principal statistical methodology used to test the hypotheses is multiple regression analysis. This technique enables us to assess whether there are causal relationships between several independent variables and a single dependent variable (Venter & Maxwell, 2000).

To construct a multiple regression model, the variable 'Assessing the current level of the civil service' was used as the dependent variable. The following variables were employed as independent predictors:

1. *Satisfaction with Wages*: Reflecting the adequacy of financial compensation provided to civil servants.

2. *Satisfaction with Working Conditions*: Encompassing the availability of essential resources such as a workplace, computer, internet access, office supplies, and communication technologies.

3. *Satisfaction with Team Atmosphere*: Capturing the quality of interactions with colleagues and relations with management within the workplace.

4. *Satisfaction with Work Schedule*: Evaluating the flexibility and suitability of the work schedule within government agencies.

5. *Opportunities for Career Growth*: Assessing the existence and accessibility of

pathways for professional advancement within the civil service.

6. *Social Status of Civil Servants in Kazakhstan*: Reflecting civil servants' societal standing and recognition.

7. *Income Level of Civil Servants*: Indicating the financial resources available to civil servants in Kazakhstan.

The main goal of running the regression was to understand how nonmonetary and monetary incentives influence public servants' motivation.

The following hypotheses are formulated to address the research questions:

H0: The group of monetary incentives (salary, income level) will have more influence on public officials' commitment to civil service;

H1: The group of non-monetary incentives (agency activities, condition, environment, schedule, career, social status) will have more influence on public officials' commitment to civil service.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

As of January 1, 2024, the regular number of civil servants was 90 583, the actual number was 83 009 people. The share of women in the civil service remains stable and amounts to 55.7% (in 2022 – 55.5%, in 2021 – 55.7%, in 2020 – 55.5%). The average age of civil servants is 40 years. In general, today the civil service is characterized by stability and a low level of turnover. In 2023, the share of net turnover was 4.9% or 4 385 people (in 2022 - 4.7%, in 2021 - 6.2%, in 2020 - 5%).

The survey was conducted among 10 942 civil servants. The profile of the participants is presented in Table 2.

According to the table above, most respondents were women (63.7%). The average age was 39. About 83.1% of participating civil servants have bachelor's degrees. About 4/5 of the participants work in an executive position (leading specialist, chief specialist) at local public authorities.

**TABLE 2.** Profile of survey respondents

Parameter	Mean	Number	Share, %
Gender	Male	3968	36.3%
	Female	6974	63.7%
Age	20-30	2570	23.5%
	31-40	3800	34.7%
	41-50	2704	24.7%
	More than 51	1868	17.1%
Education	Secondary school graduate	12	0.1%
	College Graduate	865	7.9%
	Bachelor degree	9095	83.1%
	Master's degree	898	8.2%
	PhD	72	0.7%
Occupation	Executive position	8965	81.9%
	Managerial position	1913	17.5%
	Other	64	0.6%

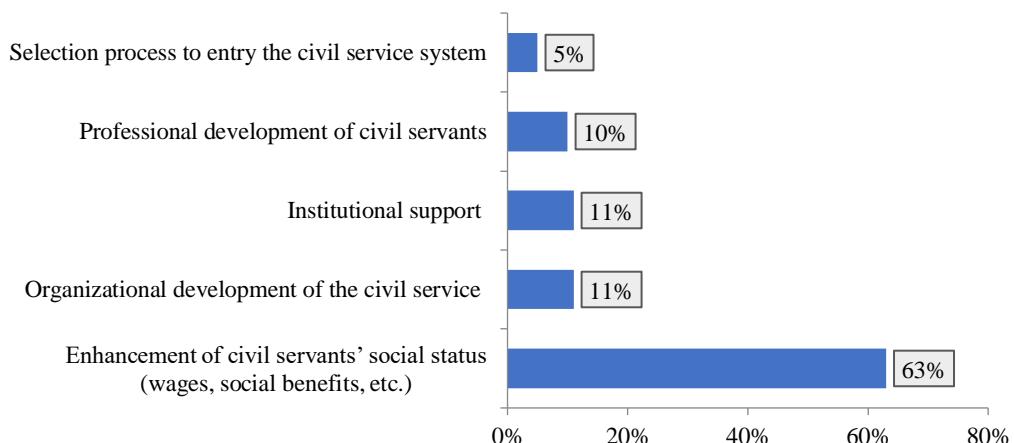
*Note:* compiled by authors based on survey results

## 4.2 Primary results

If we consider the system-wide and organization level, human capital is undoubtedly one of the important foundation elements in building an effective public service. Based on the survey results, the respondents pointed out three key issues of the modern system, such as:

- low level of remuneration (75%);
- low level of motivation (55%);
- lack of competency (45%).

Thus, the issue of staff motivation is the second most important unresolved issue for civil servants. At the same time, the key areas for civil service system development, according to respondents, are described in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2.** Main directions for further improvement of the civil service system

*Note:* compiled by authors

At the individual level, the respondents identified Top-5 reasons to enter the civil service, such as: 41% cited the desire to be useful to the state; 27% mentioned financial stability; 15% aimed to gain professional experience; 12% sought a career growth and promotion; 5% were motivated by establishing professional connections, obtaining additional benefits (such as housing, land, money), or due to the desire of parents or relatives.

According to the Agency for Civil Service Affairs (2023), the primary factor influencing employee motivation and satisfaction is the financial component. Specifically, 72.2% of employees assessed their financial situation as average (77% of managers and 71% of executives), 6.8% assessed it as above average (9% of managers and 6% of executives), and 21% assessed it as below average (15% of managers and 23% of performers).

Despite the introduction of a new remuneration system, only 11.8% of respondents believe that their wages are sufficient to provide financial support for their families. Consequently, there is a high level of debt among civil servants (over 90%).

Additionally, providing housing for civil servants remains a significant issue, with approximately 40% of employees lacking their own housing.

#### 4.3 Regression analysis

Motivation, defined as the ability of people, institutions, and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives (UNDP, 2006), serves as a critical determinant of individuals' commitment to their roles within civil service. In this study, we run a regression model to investigate the extent to which satisfaction with both monetary and non-monetary incentives influences civil servants' overall assessment of the state of the civil service in Kazakhstan, encompassing reforms, civil servant status, objective attainment, and policy implementation. This assessment serves as a proxy for civil servants' motivation to engage in public service.

The regression analysis provided compelling insights into the factors driving public service motivation within the studied context (Table 2).

**TABLE 2.** Motivation in Civil Service: Understanding the Impact of Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives

Public_Service_Level	Coefficient	P> t
_cons	1.081328	0.000
Agency_Activities	.2102982	0.000
Salary	.0538663	0.005
Condition	.1151729	0.000
Environment	.0091893	0.686
Schedule	.0622452	0.002
Career	.1227616	0.000
Social_Status	.3200081	0.000
Income_Level	.1986111	0.000
Statistical Significance and Model Fit:		
Number of observations (n) = 10,878		
F-statistic = 1106.12 (p < 0.0001)		
R-squared = 0.4484		

The analysis demonstrates a high degree of statistical significance, with the model achieving an F-statistic of 1106.12 ( $p < 0.0001$ ), indicating that the predictor variables collectively contribute significantly to explaining the variance in public service

motivation. The R-squared value of 0.4484 suggests that the independent variables included in the model explain approximately 44.84% of the variability in public service motivation.

Our findings highlight the multifaceted

nature of motivation among public servants, demonstrating that monetary and non-monetary incentives are critical determinants of their attitudes toward public service. Specifically, agency activities and social status emerged as the most influential factors in enhancing public service motivation, followed by income level, career opportunities, and working conditions. While salary also positively impacted motivation, its effect was comparatively minor. Interestingly, environmental factors did not show a significant influence on motivation within this context.

Overall, these results highlight the importance of considering financial and non-financial incentives to motivate public servants effectively. The strong impact of non-monetary factors such as social status and agency activities suggests that policies focusing on these areas could be particularly effective in fostering motivation and commitment among civil servants. This comprehensive understanding of motivational drivers can inform the development of targeted strategies to enhance public service performance and employee satisfaction.

### *Monetary Incentives*

Our regression analysis revealed that monetary factors significantly influence public service motivation among civil servants. Specifically, salary and income level emerged as statistically significant predictors of public service motivation.

**Salary:** The coefficient for salary (0.0538663,  $p = 0.005$ ) indicates that for every unit increase in salary, there is a corresponding increase of approximately 0.0539 units in public service motivation, holding other variables constant. This suggests that higher salaries are associated with greater motivation among public servants, highlighting the importance of competitive financial remuneration in attracting and retaining talented individuals within civil service.

**Income Level:** Similarly, the coefficient for income level (0.1986111,  $p < 0.0001$ ) suggests that higher income levels are positively

associated with public service motivation. For every unit increase in income level, we observe a corresponding increase of approximately 0.1986 units in public service motivation. This finding underscores the significance of broader socioeconomic factors in shaping individuals' attitudes toward public service.

### *Non-Monetary Incentives*

In addition to monetary factors, our analysis identified several non-monetary incentives that significantly influence public service motivation among civil servants.

**Agency Activities:** The coefficient for agency activities (0.2102982,  $p < 0.0001$ ) indicates that individuals who are more actively engaged in agency activities exhibit higher levels of public service motivation. This highlights the importance of meaningful engagement and involvement in organizational initiatives to foster a sense of purpose and commitment among public servants.

**Working Conditions:** A positive coefficient for working conditions (0.1151729,  $p < 0.0001$ ) suggests that favorable working conditions enhance public service motivation. Factors such as a supportive work environment, adequate resources, and a conducive organizational culture are instrumental in fostering job satisfaction and motivation among civil servants.

**Schedule Flexibility:** The coefficient for schedule flexibility (0.0622452,  $p = 0.002$ ) indicates that individuals with greater schedule flexibility demonstrate higher levels of public service motivation. This underscores the importance of work-life balance and autonomy in promoting job satisfaction and commitment among public servants.

**Career Advancement Opportunities:** A positive coefficient for career advancement opportunities (0.1227616,  $p < 0.0001$ ) suggests that career growth and development prospects are significant drivers of public service motivation. Providing avenues for professional advancement and skill development is crucial for attracting and retaining talented individuals within civil service.

**Social Status:** The coefficient for social

status (0.3200081,  $p < 0.0001$ ) indicates that individuals with higher social status exhibit more significant levels of public service motivation. This highlights the role of social recognition and prestige in shaping individuals' attitudes towards public service roles.

**Environmental Factors:** Interestingly, the predictor variable “environment” did not significantly correlate with public service motivation ( $p = 0.686$ ). While environmental factors such as organizational culture and leadership may influence overall job satisfaction, our results suggest that they may not directly impact individuals' intrinsic motivation to serve the public.

Overall, the H0-hypothesis is rejected and H1-hypothesis is justified. Thus, the group of non-financial incentives is more significant for civil servants' commitment to the public sector compared to monetary motivation tools. Moreover, among the non-monetary incentive tools, social status and agency activities have the most significant influence.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the effectiveness of monetary and non-monetary incentives for public servants in Kazakhstan, highlighting significant findings that have important implications for policymakers and organizational leaders. An analysis of the well-being of civil servants showed the relevance of the motivation issue. At the same time, when implementing specific measures in this area, it is necessary to consider the state's current economic situation. Monetary and non-monetary stimulation should be rational depending on the intended effect and the subject to whom it is directed.

According to survey results and regression analysis outputs, the H1 hypothesis is justified.

Therefore, the social status of civil servants and agency activities (non-monetary incentives) have received the most excellent support among respondents. The non-monetary incentives could provide cost-effective solutions for civil servants. The Agency for Civil Service Affairs achieved significant results (pool of talents, competition for the best civil servant, etc.). Besides this, the study shows that despite implementing a new remuneration system, civil servants also need other financial support (for example, increasing the number of medical benefits).

These findings have important implications for policymakers, organizational leaders, and human resource practitioners tasked with managing and incentivizing public servants. By understanding the diverse factors influencing public service motivation, stakeholders can tailor strategies to attract, retain, and engage talented individuals committed to serving the public good. This may include implementing competitive salary structures, enhancing working conditions, providing opportunities for career advancement and skill development, and fostering a supportive organizational culture that values and recognizes the contributions of public servants.

Possible in-depth analyzes among non-monetary sources of motivation serve as directions for further research on this topic. Namely, tools and policy decisions to improve the social status of civil servants, as well as involvement in government agency activities, will increase civil servants' motivation.

Further research should delve deeper into non-monetary sources of motivation, exploring specific tools and policy decisions to improve the social status of civil servants and their involvement in agency activities. Additionally, understanding the cultural and historical context of motivation in the public sector can provide more tailored and effective solutions.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

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Visualization: Baurzhan Bokayev, Aigerim Amirova.  
Writing review and editing research: Baurzhan Bokayev.

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