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## ***RESEARCH BY SATISFACTION WITH KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN REAL BUSINESS SYSTEMS***

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### ***ABSTRACT***

*The application of modern business and new technological developments require educated people who constantly learn, who are innovative and creative, and improving own competence in accordance with technological developments and global developments. In today's information society, duration of knowledge is shorter than ever and it is necessary to continuously adjust educational curricula to the needs of a modern economy and society. The aim of the research presented in this paper is to analyze the problems faced by employees in the workplace, concerning the lack of specific skills and knowledge in order to find the mechanisms to overcome that problem.*

***Key words:*** Knowledge, Education, Satisfaction

***JEL Classification:*** M12

***UDK:*** 331.101.32(083.41)

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

Knowledge is the most significant human resource. The process of acquiring knowledge contributes to individual improvement and the development of certain abilities essential for inclusion into social processes. Developed societies aspire to create "a society of knowledge". The fact that "a knowledge based society" is simultaneously "a permanent learning society" implies that education on the whole must be considered in a broader context (Spasić, 2007).

Considering the process of globalisation and technology advancement, "life-long" learning (permanent learning) has ceased to be just an empty phrase.

Knowledge must, above all, serve the function of economic development and the development of society in general, that is, it must be practical and usable. This requires engagement of a higher number of researchers, transfer of knowledge and combination holistic approach to knowledge and narrow specialization. The Republic of Serbia has not developed such a system in which education would serve the function of economic development. Therefore, there is often a deficit or surfeit of certain occupations in its labour market.

## ***THE PLACE AND CONDITIONS OF RESEARCH***

The research programme covered a sample of 35 economic entities both from private and public sector (small and medium enterprises, large economic systems, domestic and foreign companies), with different ownership structures, different number of employees and different economic sectors (health service, agriculture, tourism and catering, public administration, civil engineering, industry and services).

The research was conducted through a survey of employees, based on a sample of a total 138 respondents, during the period from March to July 2013 on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The results of examining the entire sample are enclosed, and they are classified according to the organization, gender, educational structure, length of service, age, position in the organization.

## ***THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY***

The research strategy was based on a combination between qualitative and quantitative methods. We endeavoured to shed light on the complexity of impact and effect of different factors on employee satisfaction, with the aid of a survey specially constructed for the research needs.

The aim of this paper is to explore the following dimensions of employee satisfaction:

- Employee satisfaction with proficient and practical knowledge
- Employee satisfaction with skills
- Employee satisfaction with initiative.

These parameters were considered from the aspect of the current and desired state.

Information on the respondents and their personal traits implied acquiring the data we considered to be the most relevant ones to the research issue, and they refer to the following eight independent variables:

- Gender
- Educational structure
- Age
- Length of service
- Activity of the work organization
- Position in the organization
- Size of the organization
- Ownership structure of the organization

The general hypothesis we established is:

HG: Employee satisfaction with proficient and practical knowledge, skills and initiative depends on the employees' traits, the size of the organization and its ownership structure.

The data were processed using suitable mathematical statistics methods. The basic methodological plan was based on correlation between general variables concerning qualification levels, length of service, activity of the work organization, position in the organization, gender (independent variables) and satisfaction with the level of knowledge possessed related to the field of work, satisfaction with possessing computer technical knowledge, satisfaction with skills, the knowledge of foreign languages, taking the initiative, career advancement (dependent variables).

## ***VARIABLES***

Independent variables

The size of the organization was observed through six categories:

- up to 10 employees
- from 10 to 50 employees
- from 50 to 100 employees
- from 100 to 500 employees
- from 500 to 1000 employees
- over 1000 employees

The ownership structure was observed through four categories: private, national/public, joint-stock company and LLC (\* Limited Liability Company).

The activity of the work organization was observed through seven categories: medical, legal, technical, philological, organizational (administrative) and other.

It was explored within the sample whether the gender of the respondents affected the considered hypotheses (male respondent and female respondent)

There were five differentiated age categories: up to 25; 25-34; 35-44; 44-55 and over 55 years.

Five categories of educational level were observed:

- primary school
- secondary school
- higher education
- master degree
- PhD (Doctor of Science )

The position in the organization was observed through five categories:

- worker
- expert
- lower-level managers ( first-line managers )
- middle-level managers
- top-level managers

The length of service was observed through five categories: up to 5 years; from 5-10; 10-20; 20-30 and over 30 years.

There was a questionnaire made up for the research needs, with 15 variables observed in two states, the current one and the desired one. For each question there were five offered answers which represent attitudes categorized according to Likert scale (A type of attitude scaling that consists of a series of claims devoted to different aspects of a certain attitude. It is given to a respondent with the task of expressing the level of their agreement or disagreement for each and every claim, in a five-level scale, as a rule, in a following way: „ I strongly disagree ”, „ I do not agree ”, „ I do not have an opinion ( undecided ) ”, „ I agree ”, „ I strongly agree ”.):

- „I strongly disagree”,
- „I do not agree”,
- „I do not have an opinion”, („undecided” )
- „I agree”,
- „I strongly agree”.

Dependent variables were observed from two aspects, current state and desired state:

- I am satisfied with the level of knowledge I possess related to my field of work
- I am satisfied with the skills I possess in my field of work
- I am satisfied with my knowledge of foreign languages

- I am satisfied with my computer technical knowledge
- I am satisfied with my communication skills
- I am satisfied with my initiative
- I must prove myself in my enterprise
- I would advance in my career better if I had managerial knowledge and skills
- I can apply all my knowledge at work
- I can decide how to do my job
- Taking initiative is important in my enterprise
- I could have a better position with more knowledge
- I could have a better job position with a higher education degree
- There is a career advancement opportunity in my enterprise
- I think I could advance better if I had additional knowledge/ skills

## ***DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE***

The number of employees in the organization - The highest number of respondents is from organizations with more than 1000 employees (26%), whereas the lowest number of respondents (5%) is from organizations with 500 -1000 employees, 23% of all respondents come from organizations that have 100-500 employees, 17% of them come from organizations with 50-100 employees, 16% are from organizations with up to 10 employees, and 13% from organizations with 10-50 employees.

Ownership structure - According to the sample data, the highest incidence of respondents is that of LLC -30%, 27% of them are from public utility companies, that is, public agencies and organizations, 21% are from joint-stock companies, and 22% of the respondents are from private enterprises.

Educational structure - 43% of the respondents have higher education, 2% of them finished primary school, 41% have high-school education, and 14% have a master degree.

Age - The highest percentage of the respondents ( 38% ) is between the age of 35 and 44, 33% are between the age of 25 and 34, whereas only 4% of the respondents are up to 25 years of age, 17% are between 44 and 55 years old, and 8% of them are over 55 years old.

Position in the organization - 50% of the respondents are in the position of a top-level manager, whereas only 5% are workers, 20% are in the position of a middle-level manager, 13% are in the position of a lower-level manager, and 12% of all the respondents are experts.

Length of service - 30% of the respondents have 10-20 years of service, 27% have less than 10 years of service, that is, 5-10 years of service, whereas only 8% have more than 30 years of service, 19% have 5 years of service, and 16% have 20-30 years of service.

Activity - Economic activity is present with 46% of all the respondents, philological activity with 1% of them, legal with 12%, technical with 14%, medical with 1%, organizational(administrative) with 5%, and other with 20%.

Gender - The incidence of female respondents in the sample is somewhat higher than that of the male respondents and it is 67%, whereas 33% of the respondents are of the male gender.

Reliability of a measurement scale can be observed from a number of aspects. The most frequently shown indicator is the internal consistency of the scale, that is, the level of inter correlation among its components, shown through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It is considered optimal when this coefficient is higher than 0.7 which was realized in this case because Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.842, table 1.

*Table 1. Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,842	30

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 2., shows Pearson coefficient of correlation between independent variables (professional qualification, hierarchical position, age, activity, length of service, ownership structure and the number of employees ) and dependent variables (satisfaction with skills , knowledge of foreign languages, computer technical knowledge, satisfaction with communication skills, satisfaction with the initiative, satisfaction with the necessity of self-proving, satisfaction with managerial skills, decision making opportunity, compliance with the attitude that an education degree increases the chances of a better job position and compliance with the attitude that career advancement is in relation to knowledge).

There is a noticeably weak positive correlation between professional qualifications on the one side and knowledge of foreign languages and computer technical knowledge on the other, which was to be expected. There is also a weak negative correlation between professional qualifications and the need of managerial skills, which means that the higher educated are less satisfied with them, as well as a weak negative correlation between professional qualifications and compliance with the attitude that an education degree contributes to acquiring a better job position (higher level of professional qualifications- lower level of compliance).

There is a mild positive correlation between hierarchical position and satisfaction with the initiative on the one side and career advancement in relation to one's knowledge on the other , which could be explained by the fact that a higher position in an organization provides more opportunities to show one's initiative and knowledge, which ensures career advancement for such respondents.

There is a mild negative correlation between one's age and knowledge of foreign languages, which means that those respondents more advanced in years are less satisfied with their knowledge of foreign languages. There is also a mild positive correlation between one's age and decision making opportunity in business, which is explained by the fact that those respondents more advanced in years are more independent in their work.

It could be said that there is a weak correlation between activity and computer technical knowledge.

There is a mild positive correlation between the length of service and decision making opportunity in business, which is explained by the fact that the respondents with more years of service are more independent in their work. They are also more satisfied with the opportunity to take initiative and their communication skills.

There is a correlation between satisfaction with one's communication skills and ownership structure and a mild correlation between the number of employees and satisfaction with one's communication skills.

*Table 2. – Correlation between independent and dependent variables-the current state*

	Sat. with skills	Sat. with know. of foreign languages	Sat. with computer skills	Communication	Initiative	Must be proven on work	Need more management Knowledge	Decision making	University degree better job	The progress depends on knowledge	
Educational level	0,088	,318(**)	,274(**)	0,055	0,09	-0,026	-,169(*)	0,111	-,219(*)	0,079	
	0,302	0	0,001	0,519	0,294	0,76	0,047	0,194	0,01	0,356	
Position	0,085	0,089	,171(*)	0,109	,200(*)	0,08	0,021	0,141	-0,117	,197(*)	
	0,319	0,298	0,044	0,202	0,018	0,349	0,803	0,098	0,172	0,02	
Year	0,088	-,207(*)	-0,131	0,107	0,13	-0,002	0,032	,201(*)	0,034	0,019	
	0,303	0,015	0,126	0,213	0,128	0,982	0,705	0,018	0,694	0,824	
Type of activity	-0,147	-0,034	,239(**)	-0,15	-0,106	-0,023	0,027	-0,112	0,038	0,052	
	0,085	0,692	0,005	0,079	0,215	0,791	0,755	0,192	0,656	0,547	
Experience	0,148	-0,11	-0,014	,172(*)	,175(*)	0,001	-0,048	,243(**)	0,015	0	
	0,084	0,201	0,867	0,044	0,04	0,995	0,578	0,004	0,864	0,999	
Ownership	,218(*)	-0,012	0,167	,317(**)	0,108	,199(*)	0,032	0,136	-0,095	0,041	
	0,01	0,887	0,05	0	0,206	0,02	0,709	0,113	0,266	0,633	
Number of employees	0,055	0,011	0,112	,179(*)	0,091	0,106	0,063	0,095	-0,012	0,038	
	0,525	0,9	0,191	0,036	0,286	0,215	0,463	0,269	0,89	0,662	
N	138	138	138	138	138	138	138	138	138	138	
**				Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-							



## ***COMPARISON OF THE CURRENT AND DESIRED STATE OF SATISFACTION WITH ONE'S KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS***

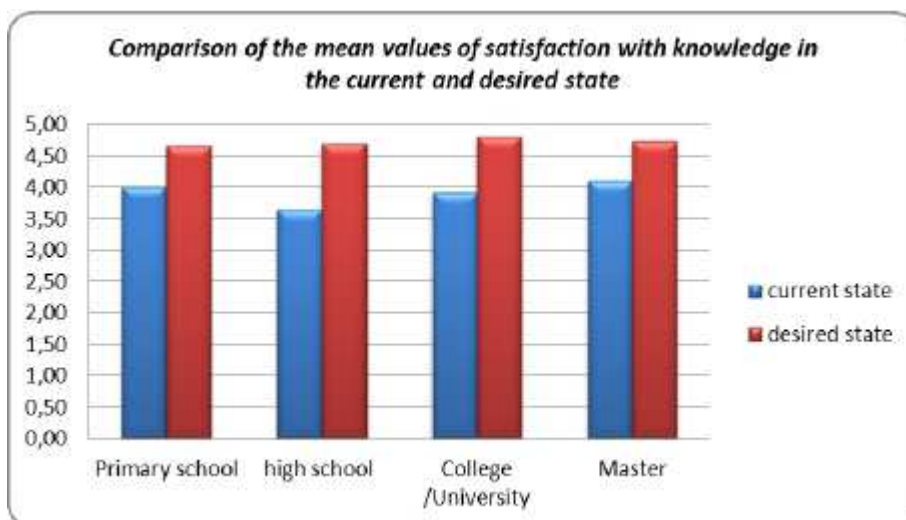
Since it was confirmed that there is a significant difference between the current and desired state for all the respondents, it was analyzed which group contains a higher mean value: 1-I strongly disagree, 2- I do not agree. 3- I do not have an opinion (undecided), 4- I agree, 5- I strongly agree.

By a summary of the mean values of satisfaction it can be seen that the mean value of satisfaction with the actuality of one's knowledge, contemporary computer technical knowledge, one's business initiative, ability to make decisions at work, communication skills, working skills, knowledge of foreign languages, one's self-improving at work, managerial skills, applying one's knowledge, the importance of taking initiative at work, the significance that is given to knowledge at work, the importance that formal knowledge through certificates has for career advancement, opportunity to advance and the correlation between career advancement and possession of knowledge, is lower in one's current than in one's desired state, which can be interpreted as a wish of an average respondent to improve their knowledge and skills.

Table 3.shows the mean values of satisfaction with one's knowledge in the current and desired state, where the factor of satisfaction in the current state is marked as no 1, whereas the desired state is marked as no 2.

*Table 3. Comparison of the mean values of satisfaction in the current and desired state on a sample of 138 respondents*

	Factors of satisfaction	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Satisfaction with knowledge1	3,833	0,925	0,079
Pair 1	Satisfaction with knowledge2	4,746	0,499	0,042
Pair 2	Satisfaction with computer knowledge1	3,877	0,970	0,083
Pair 2	Satisfaction with computer knowledge2	4,659	0,547	0,047
Pair 3	Satisfaction with the initiative1	3,877	0,962	0,082
Pair 3	Satisfaction with the initiative2	4,681	0,540	0,046
Pair 4	Ability to make decisions1	3,558	1,074	0,091
Pair 4	Ability to make decisions2	4,587	0,601	0,051
Pair 5	Satisfaction with communication skills1	4,225	0,837	0,071
Pair 5	Satisfaction with communication skills2	4,732	0,548	0,047
Pair 6	Satisfaction with skills1	3,978	0,908	0,077
Pair 6	Satisfaction with skills2	4,688	0,551	0,047
Pair 7	Satisfaction with language skills1	3,138	1,280	0,109
Pair 7	Satisfaction with language skills2	4,348	0,917	0,078
Pair 8	Self-proving1	3,746	1,101	0,094
Pair 8	Self-proving2	4,413	0,869	0,074
Pair 9	Satisfaction with managerial skills1	3,754	1,093	0,093
Pair 9	Satisfaction with managerial skills2	4,442	0,912	0,078
Pair 10	Applying knowledge1	3,645	1,126	0,096
Pair 10	Applying knowledge2	4,645	0,626	0,053
Pair 11	Importance of one's initiative1	3,580	1,213	0,103
Pair 11	Importance of one's initiative2	4,522	0,664	0,057
Pair 12	More knowledge a better job position1	3,580	1,132	0,096
Pair 12	More knowledge a better job position2	4,297	1,007	0,086
Pair 13	A degree a better job position1	3,420	1,272	0,108
Pair 13	A degree a better job position2	4,297	1,117	0,095
Pair 14	Advancement opportunity1	3,638	1,244	0,106
Pair 14	Advancement opportunity2	4,630	0,793	0,068
Pair 15	Advancement correlated to knowledge1	3,768	1,135	0,097
Pair 15	Advancement correlated to knowledge2	4,601	0,824	0,070



*Figure 1. Satisfaction with one's knowledge depending on educational structure*

Figure 1. represents a diagram of satisfaction with one's knowledge depending on educational structure from an aspect of the current and desired state. It is noticed in the diagram that the respondents with a master degree of education show the highest level of satisfaction with knowledge. It is interesting to observe that the respondents with the lowest level of professional qualifications, primary school education, also showed a high level of satisfaction with knowledge, which indicates that they have a suitable job position that does not require them to have a higher level of knowledge. The highest and the lowest level of education show less difference in satisfaction with knowledge in the current state compared to the desired state than the respondents with high-school education and higher levels of education.

Analysis of dependent variables depending on the category of independent variables by comparison of category means through ANOVA METHOD.

To answer the question: Do results of measuring satisfaction with knowledge, skills, knowledge of foreign languages, computer technical knowledge,... vary depending on independent variables, we performed a one-factor statistical analysis ANOVA. One of the hypotheses of this one-factor analysis, ANOVA, is that the variances of groups that are compared are similar. For that to be established, Levene's test of homogeneity of variance is used, and it comes down to the testing of the null hypothesis:

H0: variances are equal (there is no hard evidence that there are significant differences between variances for different levels of professional qualifications).

H1: differences between variances are significant.

Table 4. presents Levene's test of homogeneity of variance, with the aid of which one can assess the equality of variances in results in each of the categories of professional qualifications.

Table 4.-Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Satisfaction with knowledge1	8,069	3	134	0
Satisfaction with skills1	3,988	3	134	0,009
Satisfaction with communication1	2,739	3	134	0,046
A degree a better JP1	2,819	3	134	0,041
Advancement opportunity 1	3,718	3	134	0,013
Knowledge improvement1	4,933	3	134	0,003
Satisfaction with language skills2	4,946	3	134	0,003
More knowledge a better JP2	8,479	3	134	0
A degree a better JP2	9,108	3	134	0
Advancement opportunity2	8,581	3	134	0

Columns represent Leven's F statistics (Levene Statistic), freedom degrees (df1 and df2) for pairs of independent and dependent variables and statistical significance (Sig. is p-value). When „Sig.“ is higher than 0,05 , it denotes the validity of the null hypothesis, according to which there is no hard evidence that there are significant differences between variances for different levels of education. In other words, in such a case, the hypothesis on homogeneity of variance is not refuted. In our case the value is  $\text{Sig} > 0,05$ , which means that there are no significant differences between variances for the variables which assess satisfaction with the knowledge of foreign languages, computer technical knowledge, taking initiative, attitude that one must prove oneself, attitude on the need of improved management knowledge...language skills, coputer skills, communication skills, initiative... and for the variables that assess satisfaction with knowledge and skills , the value is  $\text{Sig} < 0,05$ .

In such cases, since we do not have equal variances for all four groups of independent variables of "education level" (there are no Doctors of Science), we will apply robustness testing (in which median is used in place of the mean value) instead of ANOVA statistics.

The ANOVA table, table 5, shows the sum of squared values of the mean value of the results (Sum of Squares), the number of freedom degrees (df), the value of F distribution, standard deviation (Mean Square) and statistical significance or p-value (Sig. ). When the statistical significance is lower than 0.05, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean values of dependent variables in six groups of values of the independent variable. In our case, for satisfaction with the knowledge of foreign languages ( Satisfaction with language skills1), the current state, satisfaction with computer technical knowledge( Satisfaction with computer skills1), the current state and satisfaction with the knowledge of foreign languages (Satisfaction with language skills2) ,the desired

state, we have the value Sig. < 0.05 and for those variables there is a statistically significant difference between the mean values of the given variables in four categories of different levels of professional qualifications. The null hypothesis, according to which the mean values for different categories of levels of professional qualifications are equal, applies to the rest of the dependent variables.

Table 5. ANOVA

	f	Sum of Squares	d	Mean Square	F
Satisfaction with language skills1	Between	23,076	3	7,692	5,12
	Within	201,308	134	1,502	
	Total	224,384	137		
Satisfaction with computer skills1	Between	13,426	3	4,475	5,193
	Within	115,48	134	0,862	
	Total	128,906	137		
Satisfaction with language skills2	Between	8,634	3	2,878	3,615
	Within	106,671	134	0,796	
	Total	115,304	137		

Figures 2, 3 and 4 represents the graphical display of the ANOVA analysis.

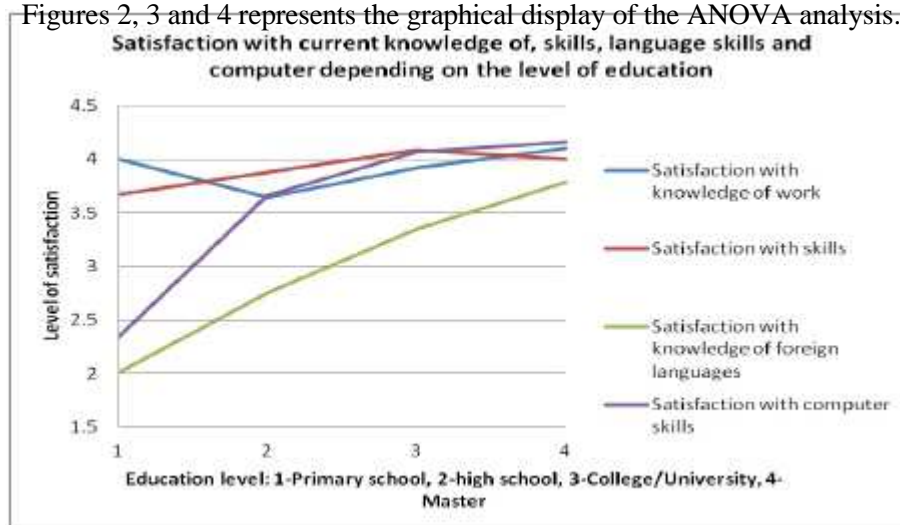


Figure 2. Satisfaction with knowledge, skills and language and computer skills depending on the level of professional qualifications

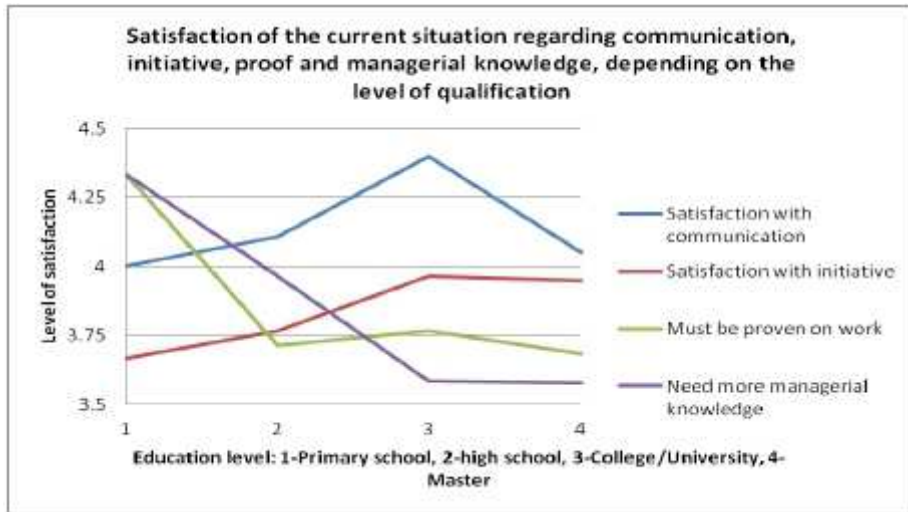


Figure 3. Satisfaction with communication skills, initiative, ability to prove oneself and the level of managerial skills depending on the level of professional qualifications

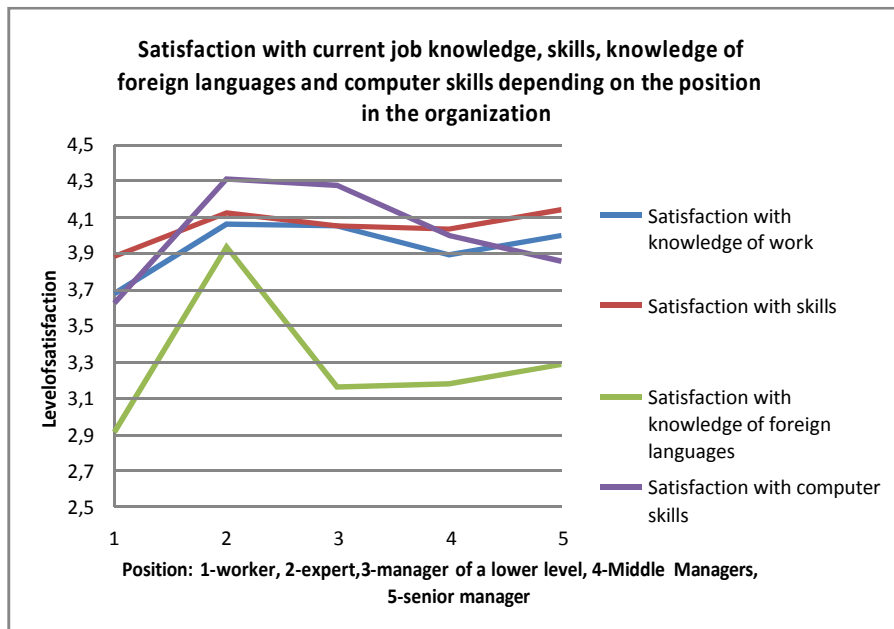


Figure 4. Satisfaction with knowledge, skills and language and computer skills depending on the position in the organization

The results of the research have shown that:

- There is a weak correlation between higher levels of professional qualifications and better knowledge of foreign languages and computer technical knowledge, and a weak correlation between a higher level of professional qualifications and less need for managerial skills. There is also a weak correlation between a higher level of professional qualifications and compliance with the attitude that a degree does not contribute one's acquiring a better job position
- There is a mild correlation between a higher hierarchical position and a higher level of satisfaction with the opportunity to take initiative and career advancement due to one's knowledge
- There is a mild correlation between the respondents more advanced in years and a lower level of satisfaction with the knowledge of foreign languages, a mild correlation between the respondents more advanced in years and satisfaction with the opportunity to make business decisions, which is explained by the fact that the respondents more advanced in years are more independent in their work.

It can be said that there is a mild correlation between activity and computer skills, having in mind that the respondents in technical and organizational activities express a higher level of satisfaction with computer skills.

There is a mild correlation between the length of service and satisfaction with the opportunity to make business decisions, which can be explained by the fact that the respondents with more years of service are more independent in their work. They are also more satisfied with the opportunity to take initiative and communication skills.

There is a correlation between satisfaction with communication skills and ownership structure and a mild correlation between the number of employees and satisfaction with communication skills.

For dependent variables-satisfaction with language skills (the current state), satisfaction with computer skills (the current state) and satisfaction with language skills (the desired state), there is a statistically significant difference between the mean values of the given variables in four categories of different levels of professional qualifications in such a way that the level of satisfaction with language and computer skills increases with a higher level of formal education.

Satisfaction with current computer technical knowledge and the opportunity to make business decisions greatly vary depending on the position in the organization. The highest level of satisfaction with computer technical knowledge is present with those respondents who are in the position of experts compared to those in the position of workers. The biggest difference in the opportunity to make business decisions is between the position of workers and that of experts. It can be noticed that even the top-level managers didn't express a high level of satisfaction with the opportunity to make business decisions (the level of satisfaction with the opportunity to make business decisions being between " I have no opinion(

undecided) “ and “ I agree”) and the level of their satisfaction is lower than the level of satisfaction with decision making opportunity of the experts, when one would expect for those values to be of the highest level in their position. That could indicate that decision making in the highest positions in the observed enterprises is influenced by some other factors and limitations as well.

One can conclude that satisfaction with the current state of language and computer skills greatly varies depending on age structure. The highest level of satisfaction with the knowledge of foreign languages and computer technical knowledge is present with the respondents of the 25-34 age group, and after that there is a decline in the aforementioned satisfaction , which brings us to conclusion that the respondents more advanced in years are considerably less satisfied with their language and computer skills.

Satisfaction with the opportunity to make business decisions greatly varies depending on the length of service of the respondents. The biggest difference is between the fewest years of service, 1-5 years ( the lowest level of satisfaction) and 20-30 years of work ( the highest level of satisfaction).

Satisfaction with computer technical knowledge, communication skills and the fact that one must prove oneself at work, greatly vary depending on the respondent's activity. The biggest difference in the level of satisfaction with computer skills is between medical and administrative (organizational) activity on the one side ( the lowest level of satisfaction) and legal activity on the other (the highest level of satisfaction). It can be noticed that a higher level of satisfaction with computer skills is present in legal than in technical activity, which could well be a consequence of higher expectations and bigger demands for computer skills in technical activities. The biggest difference in satisfaction with communication skills is between administrative (organizational) activity (the lowest level of satisfaction) and legal activity (the highest level of satisfaction), which was to be expected. As far as for the differences in satisfaction with the fact that one must prove oneself at work, the biggest difference is between legal activity (the lowest level of satisfaction) and medical, economic and technical activity( the highest level of satisfaction). It can be noticed that legal activity shows the highest level of satisfaction with communication skills, and the lowest level of satisfaction with the fact that one must prove oneself at work.

There is no significant difference in satisfaction with knowledge, skills, language and computer skills, communication skills, taking initiative, self-proving opportunity and the level of managerial skills, advancement opportunity, advancement opportunity based on knowledge improvement and opportunity to make business decisions, depending on one's gender.

Thus, the general hypothesis has been proven.



## ***CONCLUSION***

It can be seen by a summary of the mean values of satisfaction that the mean value of satisfaction with the actuality of one's knowledge, contemporary computer technical knowledge, showing initiative at work, opportunity to make business decisions, communication skills, working skills, language skills, self-proving at work, managerial skills, applying knowledge, the significance of the initiative at work, the significance of knowledge in one's job, the significance that formal knowledge through certificates has for career advancement, advancement opportunity and the correlation between advancement opportunity and possessing a lower level of knowledge in the current than in desired state, which can be interpreted as an ambition of an average respondent to improve both their knowledge and their skills. This further addresses to the need of improving the process of advanced training of employees, which would increase the satisfaction of employees, and thus ensure a better working environment which is a prerequisite for stability and growth of one organization.

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