

Employee motivation systems in pharmacies in Japan and China

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the key components of the labor motivation system for pharmacy chain personnel in China and Japan. The relevance of the topic of the study is determined by the lack of research into this area in both theoretical and empirical academic works. The pharmaceutical area in each country is a priority for the high-quality level of the healthcare system. The social function of the state in the field of healthcare and the provision of necessary medications depend directly on the work performed by pharmacy chain personnel. Therefore, the labor motivation of pharmacy personnel is essential for the high-quality operations of pharmacy chains in any country of the world. Most studies in the modern academic literature are focused on the Western model of labor motivation. Because of this, the analysis of incentives in China and Japan allows one to identify several differences in the motivation systems of the Western and Eastern civilizations. The methodology of the study includes general scientific and some specialized methods. Within the study, the authors identify nine main components of motivation systems for pharmacy chain personnel in China and Japan and the similarities and differences in these systems. It is concluded that the main difference between the Eastern model of motivating pharmacy chain personnel in China and Japan for labor and the Western model is the priority of socially significant motivation components over financial incentives. The authors also identify not only similarities but also differences in the motivation systems for pharmacy chain personnel.

Keywords: Personnel motivation system, Pharmacy, Financial labor incentives, Non-financial labor incentives, Eastern model of personnel motivation

Introduction

The relevance of the topic of this study consists in the fact that the problem of motivation in the Russian [1-14] and foreign literature [15-18], as a rule, is considered from the point of view of Western concepts, which form the basis of management

training programs in all areas of activity. The most famous theories are the following concepts: A. Maslow's theory focused on the "pyramid of needs" from physiological to socially significant [15]; F. Herzberg's concept in which the emphasis is on the two-factor theory of needs (working conditions and social significance of work) [12]; D. McClelland's theory which suggests that the need for achievement is key in economic development [8].

As a result, when developing incentive schemes in Western companies, the focus is on meeting the needs identified by A. Maslow, F. Herzberg, and D. McClelland: through work planning, participation in decision-making, career opportunities, working conditions and pay. However, Western theories of motivation do not always prove efficient for countries of a non-Western civilizational paradigm. Moreover,

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in Eastern civilization, there are differences in the mentality of workers in different countries which must be considered when choosing labor motivation systems.

In particular, in China and Japan, the mentality of collectivism is traditional compared to Western countries, and there are also significantly different cultural aspects. In the Japanese system of labor motivation, preference is given to the development of conflict management styles to create the most comfortable working conditions, regardless of the financial incentive factor. In China, the emphasis is on collective solidarity, service to the state, that is, labor is perceived as a socially significant mission, regardless of the field of work and remuneration [19].

At the same time, the labor motivation systems in Japan and China have similar characteristics, such as the creation of more efficient ways of doing business and solving problems, the priority of the tasks that will be completed as well as the acceptance of personal responsibility for the implementation of the set labor tasks. At the same time, one must consider that even within the same cultural paradigm, people differ in terms of motivation. It is always important to understand the incentives that work for each employee. It is also necessary to realize the culturally related aspects of motivation. In this article, we will look at the key factors of labor motivation in Japan and China using the example of employee motivation in three large pharmacy chains [20, 21].

The academic novelty of the study consists in the fact that until now, the study of aspects of employee motivation in the pharmaceutical industry in Japan and China has not been carried out within the framework of comparative analysis.

The purpose of the article is to examine the main components of labor motivation systems in Japan and China using the example of the pharmaceutical industry using an online survey of pharmacy chain workers.

The goals of the article:

1. Examine the key aspects of labor motivation systems in China and Japan.
2. Conduct comparative analysis of motivation systems in pharmacies of China and Japan on the example of three major pharmacy chains.
3. Present the results of the empirical study of key elements in motivation systems for pharmacy chain personnel in China and Japan.

The study hypothesizes that labor motivation systems in pharmacy chains in Japan and China are focused mainly on non-financial incentives for employees, which does not diminish the importance of financial incentives as a secondary factor in comparison with non-financial methods.

A brief overview of the development of the study topic

A significant amount of research has been carried out on the topic of labor motivation systems but, most often, the research data are of a general theoretical and methodological nature. For example, in Russian literature, these studies are presented by

modern works of such authors as L.N. Deputatova, Zh.A. Mingaleva, Yu.V. Starkov [3], P.V. Khudyakova, O.V. Arshanskaya [12] as well as E.M. Klimova, V.M. Litvishkov [6]. Concerning the system of labor motivation in Russian science, a priori, one has adopted a concept related to the Western model of understanding the essence of motivation and stimulation of labor of workers in various fields [8].

At the same time, most literature on Western models of the personnel motivation system, the key factors in which are personal development, career growth, and income, is focused mainly on the study of psychological factors of labor motivation. These are, for example, the studies by Yu.B. Lamikhov, O.G. Antonova [8], L.G. Milyaeva [9] as well as E.M. Ustinova, R.A. Tedeeva, and N.V. Zhuravleva [10].

However, there is very little empirical research and its results on the Asian model of labor motivation in the developed southeastern countries – Japan and China – even in Western academic sources. The few studies on the problem under consideration are the works by such authors as Z. Quader [22] and S. Nakagawa, K. Noriaki [23].

Meanwhile, to date, there are hardly any works devoted to a comparative analysis of labor motivation systems in Japan and China in the field of pharmaceuticals, and especially among pharmacy chain personnel. At the same time, an interesting theoretical work by Yu. Taguchi [24] is devoted to the work of a pharmacist as an important element of the healthcare system in Japan and China.

According to available data, the non-financial aspects of the motivation system in Japan and China have their features. This, in Japan, the method of providing opportunities for advanced training and further education in the form of practice for employees of pharmacy chains are widely implemented [25].

Unlike the motivation system in the United States or Canada, such residency training programs are not officially approved by the state and are implemented by individual medical institutions in Japan. However, the number of hospitals offering residency education programs increased from less than 10 in 2016 to 23 in 2017 and 35 in 2018 [23].

Most hospitals with residency education programs are located in major cities such as Tokyo and Osaka. Residency pharmaceutical training programs typically last one or two years and are similar in structure and scope to residential training programs in the United States and Canada.

Some medical institutions offer step-by-step programs (similar to freshman and sophomore years of study in the United States) with the acquisition of general knowledge and necessary practical skills in the 1st year of curriculum and advanced pharmacy practice in the 2nd year [23].

In a significant number of hospitals offering residency programs, the budget for part-time pharmacists is used for resident pharmacists, and most new pharmacy chain employees receive salaries and benefits similar to those provided for part-time pharmacists [23].

In Japan, pharmacy workers are responsible for providing various services such as dispensing medicines and preparing medicines according to prescriptions.

In China, pharmacy practice has become specialized in line with the development and innovation of medicine and pharmaceuticals. Today, Chinese pharmacists must have specialized knowledge, advanced skills, and experience [19]. To verify compliance with these requirements, various certification systems have been established, approved by universities, health organizations, and associations related to pharmaceutical

activities [22]. This allows one, among other things, to implement various types of non-financial incentives in the pharmacy chain.

In general, the efficiency of labor motivation systems for personnel of pharmacy chains in Japan and China is evidenced by the annual increase in the number of specialists in this field (**Figure 1**).

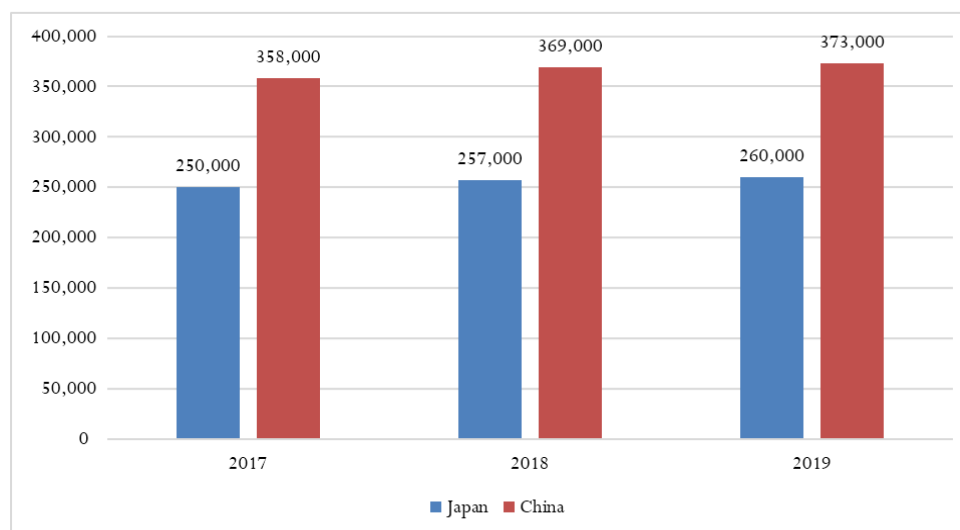


Figure 1. The trend of the increase in pharmacy personnel in Japan and China in 2017–2019, people [19]

The data in **Figure 1** shows that the profession of a pharmacy worker is in high demand in Japan and China. At the same time, pharmacists working in the pharmacy chains in Japan and China mainly provide services for dispensing medicines and preparing medicines according to individual prescriptions. The pharmacists also keep a history of medicine use by patients including recording information about the side effects that have occurred [23].

As for financial incentives for the labor of pharmacy personnel in Japan, the previously existing point system was revised in 2016 and now the system includes the established individual specialist fees [26].

Speaking about the financial component of the labor motivation system for employees of pharmacy chains in China, it can be noted that the salaries of specialists are adjusted and increased under the general tariffing – the centralized calculation of the cost of labor in China [23].

Since the question of the salary level in a pharmacy chain of a particular country cannot be included in the online survey for ethical reasons, in this study we consider only the general significance of the financial factor to compare its significance in the system of employee motivation.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted using the method of the sociological survey through online technologies on the social network Twitter from 10 Feb. to 10 Mar. 2020. Chinese and Japanese respondents took part in the survey. The general sample

consisted of 150 people: 40 employees of the Japanese pharmacy chain Otsuka Pharmaceutical [27], 35 employees of the Japanese pharmacy chain Takeda Pharmaceutical Company [28], as well as 75 employees of the Chinese pharmacy chain Sinopharm Group [29].

In an online survey, respondents were asked to rate the "components of motivation" on a 10-point scale according to the degree to which the components, according to the respondents, increase the motivation of employees in the workplace. As a result, during the study, individual components of the motivation system were identified which can be recommended as "high priority" incentive factors for pharmacy chain employees.

The main material for conducting an online survey was a specially designed questionnaire consisting of nine questions for each of the nine main components of labor motivation:

1. assessment of the employee's work by the manager and other employees;
2. employee succession in the corporate culture of the organization;
3. income (salary and additional payments);
4. career and personal growth;
5. relationships within the team;
6. working conditions;
7. job functions performed (work in this field);
8. the convenience of workplace equipment and ergonomics;
9. work-life balance.

The questionnaire used in the study with questions on each of the nine components of the labor motivation system presented in the **Table 1**.

Table 1. Questionnaire	
To participate in the survey, please rate the following characteristic traits out of 10:	
1.	How important is it for you to get an assessment of your work from colleagues, management, and society?
2.	How important is it for you to realize the clarity of your own role in the work of the pharmacy, the implementation of corporate goals, and your contribution to the company's success?
3.	How important is the criterion of income (salary and bonuses) work motivation?
4.	How important is the opportunity for career and personal growth for you in your work (including the ability to develop, a system of career advancement, and a system of advanced training)?
5.	Evaluate the quality of relationships in your team.
6.	How do you assess the ratio of workload and working time?
7.	Assess how interesting and socially significant your work is.
8.	Assess the convenience and ergonomics of your workplace.
9.	Assess the quality of the work-life balance between your work and personal life (including the existence of parental leave, short-term work system, paid leave).

The methodology of the empirical study was based on a systematic approach and included general scientific methods (analysis and synthesis, deduction and induction), as well as specialized methods: a theoretical review of research literature on the research topic, a sociological survey method

(questionnaire) using online technologies, statistical analysis methods.

The empirical study consisted of the following stages:

1. preliminary (familiarization with academic literature on sociological research, development of a questionnaire, formation of a sample for an experimental study based on a preliminary survey of respondents in the Twitter system);
2. main (holding an online survey and collecting experimental data);
3. final (processing the data, systematization, and analysis of the results).

The processing of the data obtained in the empirical study was carried out using the Neural Designer which is a software tool for advanced descriptive, diagnostic, predictive, and prescriptive analytics. With the help of this statistical analysis software, the average score was obtained for the answers by each respondent group to the questions in the compiled questionnaire. The generation of the average score made it possible to conduct a generalizing analysis of the results obtained during the survey.

Results and Discussion

The first group of respondents consisted of employees of the Japanese pharmacy chain Takeda Pharmaceutical Company [28]. The average score by this group of employees for all nine components of labor motivation is shown in **Figure 2**.

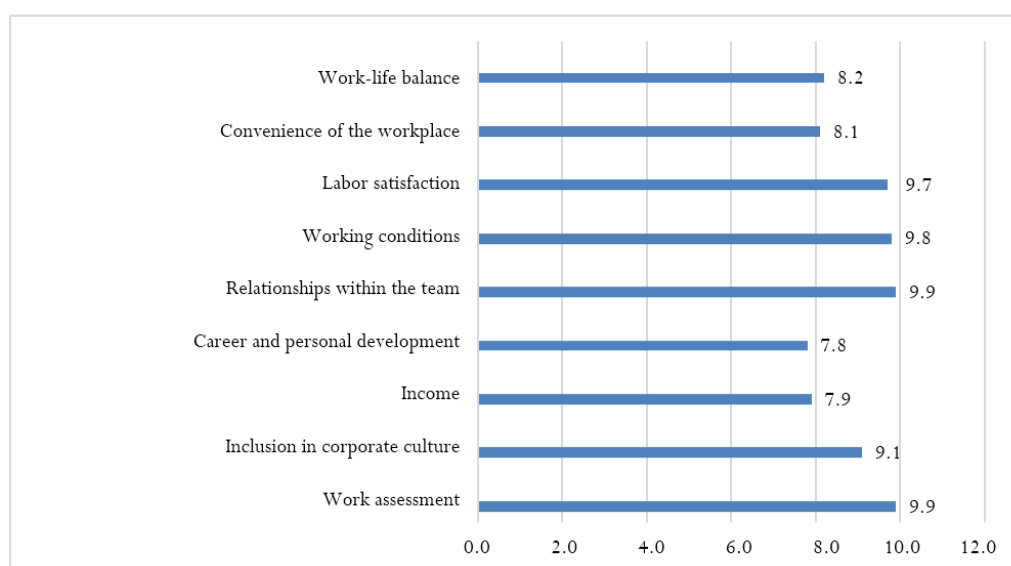


Figure 2. The assessment of the nine components of the labor motivation system in the pharmacy network Takeda Pharmaceutical Company (Japan), points

Analysis of the data shown in **Figure 2** suggests that the following components received the highest rating in the motivation system for employees of the Japanese pharmacy chain Takeda Pharmaceutical Company:

1. assessment of the employee's work by the management and other employees;

2. relationships within the team;
3. working conditions and the functions performed.

These components of labor motivation were rated the highest by almost 100% of the respondents.

At the same time, such components as income, workplace convenience, career growth, and work-life balance were assessed relatively insignificantly (7.8–8.2 points).

The average value between these groups of indicators is the assessment of the respondent's acceptance of the corporate culture (9.1 points). The level of assessment of this indicator shows the need to further strengthen the corporate culture as a

factor of motivation to work among the employees of this pharmacy chain.

A similar assessment of the factors of labor motivation was observed among employees of another Japanese pharmacy chain Otsuka Pharmaceutical [27]. The generalized results obtained during the survey of this group of respondents are presented in **Figure 3**.

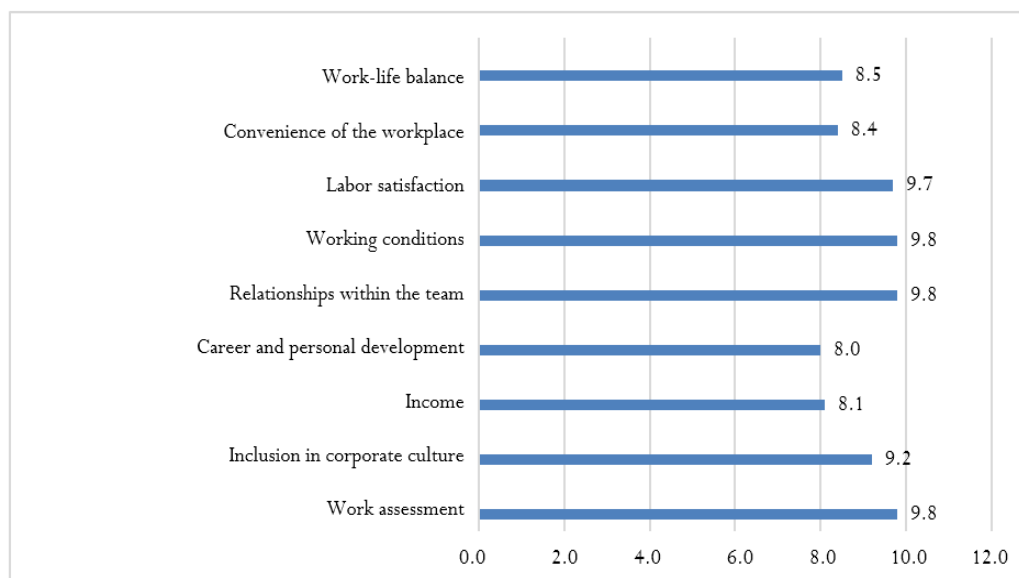


Figure 3. The assessment of the nine components of the labor motivation system in the pharmacy network Otsuka Pharmaceutical (Japan), points

The data indicate that the most powerful components of motivation for employees of the Japanese pharmacy chain Otsuka Pharmaceutical are such parameters as relationships in the team, assessment of the employee's work by the manager and other employees, working conditions, and employee interest in the functions and work performed (9.8 points).

Such factors of work motivation as involvement in corporate culture, work-life balance, ergonomics, and workplace equipment were rated lower (8.4–9.2 points).

The lowest score (8.0–8.1 points) was given to such components of motivation as income, career growth in the company, and personal development.

Interestingly, half of the respondents rated career growth as the most important element of motivation, while the other half considered this component non-essential. This is probably because pharmacists in Japan, as employees of pharmacy chains, are highly valued in society, which compensates for the need and desire for career growth.

The data obtained as a result of the employee survey of these large Japanese pharmacy chains allow us to identify a number of the most highly rated factors of labor motivation for workers in this category.

1. relationships in the team;
2. work satisfaction – working conditions, performed functions, employees' interest in them, and respect for the profession;
3. the assessment of the employee's work by the management and colleagues.

At a lower level of assessment are material factors: income, the convenience of the workplace. The third place is held by career and personal development, as well as work-life balance. This allows one to say that for the employees of Japanese pharmacy chains surveyed in the study, non-financial components in the system of labor motivation are the most significant.

A different situation was revealed during an online survey of employees of a large Chinese pharmacy chain owned by the state corporation Sinopharm Group [29]. The generalized results of the study are presented in **Figure 4**.

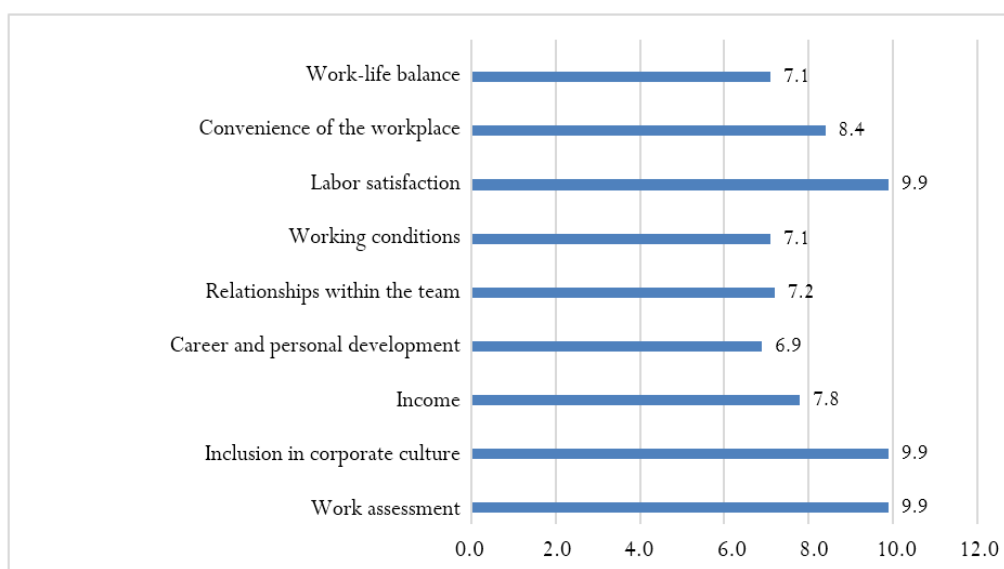


Figure 4. The assessment of the nine components of the labor motivation system in the pharmacy network Sinopharm Group (China), points

In this case, the factors of labor motivation with the highest scores were those that reflected the interest in work and the functions performed, participation in corporate culture, assessment of the employee's work by the management and other employees (9.9 points).

The respondents gave a lower rating in terms of significance in the system of labor motivation to income and working conditions at the workplace. The lowest scores (6.9–7.2 points) were given to such components of work motivation as work-life balance, career growth, and self-development, satisfaction with the performed work functions, which indicates a very high degree of collectivism in the minds of the employees of Chinese pharmacy chains. This is indirectly confirmed by the low score in assessing relationships in the team – corporate culture and common goals are more important in the employees' minds than personal relationships and possible hostility.

Therefore, a common trait for employees of Japanese and Chinese pharmacy chains is the focus to a greater extent on a positive assessment from the management and colleagues and job satisfaction, but there are significant differences in other scores.

In Japanese pharmacy chains, labor motivation systems are aimed at the personal development of a specialist, comfort in the workplace, as well as obtaining a high income as a financial part of incentives, and at the personal development of employees as a component of non-financial incentives. In Chinese pharmacy chains, the emphasis on the motivation system is placed on creating a collective understanding of work, regardless of material amenities, workplace equipment, income, and some other benefits.

The motivation system in China has several differences from the Japanese model. This idea is confirmed in the works by such authors as Z. Quader [22] and Yu. Taguchi [24]. The main theses and conclusions of these works completely coincide with the ideas expressed in the work by S. Pande and S. Basak [17].

At the same time, the results obtained by some researchers show that Western concepts of motivation have nothing to do with socialist China and corporate Japan, where people were motivated, perhaps, only to do what is best for the country or the corporation [1].

The high productivity of Chinese and Japanese workers in pharmacy chains can be explained to a greater extent by the non-financial components of incentive systems. Particularly noteworthy is the experience of Japan, where several training programs for new work technologies have been developed for pharmacists. In China, there are some government programs to improve the skills of pharmacy chain workers. At the same time, social approval and the factor of recognition of labor merits by the management, as well as participating in the corporate culture, are the key elements of motivation for employees of Chinese pharmacy chains. This argument is confirmed in the study by McKinsey Global Institute [30].

Some recent studies note that over the past two decades, Chinese state-owned pharmacy chains have undergone a series of market reforms to develop market institutions that pursue profit and increase productivity, but ideological, political, or social goals remain the most powerful motivational incentive [25]. However, with changes in China's social and economic infrastructure, motivational patterns may change over time. This circumstance is noted in the work by S.S. Kuchits, O.V. Gridnev, E.V. Pesennikova, M.I. Gadaborshev, E.A. Vartanyan [7].

Nevertheless, it cannot be argued that the new components of labor motivation in China or Japan will be adapted to the Western model of labor motivation, based on A. Maslow's "pyramid of needs", since this theory which dominates in Western countries today is based on the needs of the Western man who has the mentality of "consumer society".

This notion is shared in the work by M. Kawaguchi-Suzuki [31] who believes that in Japan one does not like public recognition, instead of one values more private recognition of one's labor

merits. Therefore, HR managers must look for an individual approach to motivate each employee, including the formation of special "incentives of approval" so that employees of Japanese pharmacy chains know that their work is highly valued [31].

Meanwhile, the work by S. Nakagawa and K. Noriaki describes one interesting feature peculiar only to the Japanese system of motivation: in Japanese culture, there is little oral positive feedback, so many Japanese think that the feedback sounds fake when they hear it. What one praises should be sincere and expressed concretely. In the labor motivation system in Japan, training employees in new areas of knowledge within the framework of their professional activities (employees of pharmacy chains, in this case, are no exception) is an indicator of interest in their development and professional growth [23].

Invitations to join important meetings or work on well-known projects or setting assignments to perform more interesting or complex work may also indicate that the management is satisfied with the employee's work [23].

According to Z. Quader [22], there is a difference in the understanding of the very essence of the term "corporate culture" in the Chinese system of labor motivation, since Chinese employees do not work for a specific corporation, unlike the Japanese, but primarily for the state and the general social good. Therefore, for employees of Chinese pharmacy chains, belonging to the corporate culture means "being part of a team, with their strong group orientation, the Chinese are highly motivated by a sense of being included in the group, in the work collective" [31]. The empirical study confirms this idea since it is precisely those components of motivation that contribute to group solidarity that are especially important in the system of labor motivation for employees of Chinese pharmacy chains.

Group solidarity and working relationships as part of the labor motivation system differ in the Japanese part of the respondents. In addition to being part of a team, the Japanese want to feel that the workgroup (or profession) they belong to is prestigious. This is also indicated by Yu. Taguchi, who notes that any efforts aimed at increasing the company's public image in Japanese society pay off by increased motivation [24].

According to Yu. Taguchi, inspirational corporate missions are of great importance for both Japanese and Chinese workers in the system of labor motivation [24]. Japanese employees also care about the perceived social value of their work. According to S. Pande and S. Basak, employees feel more motivated if they believe that their company is doing something useful for society, and not just maximizing profit and shareholder value [17].

The empirical research has shown that both Chinese and Japanese pharmacy workers place a high value on stability in their work. This motivating factor is not unique to the pharmaceutical industry. According to S.S. Kuchits, O.V. Gridnev *et al.*, "... unlike many American professionals who are more motivated by the opportunity to receive high compensation, Japanese and Chinese employees should feel the stability of their employment" [7]. This does not mean that income is not a priority for the Japanese and Chinese, however,

Eastern workers tend to pay more attention to the factor of stability of their employment.

In general, the construction of an employee motivation system in the economically developed countries of Southeast Asia depends not only on taking into account financial factors but also on non-financial aspects. Currently, the main emphasis is on the non-financial aspects in stimulating labor, and the social significance of work and belonging to a certain corporate culture are the main factors in the systems of motivating employees of Japanese and Chinese pharmacy chains.

The study is unique in modern scientific literature. This study can be used to start a discussion not only about the labor motivation of employees of pharmacy chains, but also more extensive generalizing studies based on comparative analysis to establish key differences in labor motivation systems in Western and Eastern civilizational paradigms.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, one can conclude the following:

1. In Japan and China, there are several significant differences in labor motivation systems compared to Western models. Therefore, it is necessary to note the features of the mentality of Japanese and Chinese employees, which, in turn, are due to the specifics of economic and social development in these countries. The difference from the Western model of the labor motivation system is that both in Japan and in China the emphasis in the labor motivation system is placed on non-financial factors. At the same time, the central component for the systems of labor motivation in Japan and China is corporate culture and service to public goals. The empirical study using the example of existing personnel motivation systems in Japan and China among employees of pharmacy chains confirms this idea.
2. Despite the common approaches, some differences were revealed in the systems of motivation for pharmacy chain personnel in Japan and China, which, in our opinion, can be extrapolated to the entire model of labor motivation in these countries, regardless of the field of activity. In Japan, workers prefer recognition of personal merit and professional development opportunities, while Chinese workers are teamwork-oriented and place great emphasis on management approval. The rest, including financial factors of labor motivation, are assessed by pharmacy chain employees in Japan and China as secondary.

In general, one can conclude that this study deserves attention as a basis for a scientific and theoretical discussion on the differences at the cultural level between Western and Eastern civilizations, which is reflected in the systems of labor motivation in developed countries.

Therefore, the approaches and results of this empirical study can also be used as a methodological pattern for conducting

similar scientific experiments based on obtaining mean probability samples through the method of sociological survey. The issues considered within the framework of comparative analysis of labor motivation systems among personnel of pharmacy chains can be further expanded for more fundamental research, including marketing, as well as in the field of personnel management in pharmaceutical industries around the world.

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Ethics statement: None

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