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RESEARCH NOTE

Comparative Study of Russian and Slovenian Managers Using Subjective Criteria to Control Their Professional Performance[1]

Eva Boštjančič
Lubljana University, Slovenia

Fayruza S. Ismagilova
Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

Galina Mirolyubova
Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

Nina Janza
Lubljana University, Slovenia

ABSTRACT
In this article, the first stage results of a Russian-Slovenian cross-cultural study are presented. The main purpose of the study is to describe key structural factors in the subjective criteria of performance monitoring used by Russian and Slovenian managers. The study, which comprises three steps, is of a comparative nature. In the first stage, differences between the monitoring systems of Russian and Slovenian managers are investigated. In terms of the theoretical background of the study, the Model of subjective criteria used by managers to control their performance efficiency (G. Myroliubova & F. Ismagilova) was applied. In order to collect empirical data, a Questionnaire was developed and implemented on

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eva.bostjancic@ff.uni-lj.si
f.s.ismagilova@urfu.ru
gmirolyubova@gmail.com
nina.janza@gmail.com

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the basis of that Model. The study discovered that the measurable and weakly measurable monitoring criteria used by Russians and Slovenians are similar. Significant differences were identified: (a) between the mean values of measurable criteria for Russian (56.11) and Slovenian (60.39) samples; (b) within the structure of measurable criteria for the performance monitoring of Russian and Slovenian managers; (c) between the mean values of all measurable criteria (natural, binary, relational and conformity criteria) in the Russian and Slovenian samples.

KEYWORDS
control of performance, measurable and weakly measurable monitoring criteria, efficiency

Introduction

In the field of contemporary socio-economic studies, interest in performance issues has never been higher. This relevance is connected not only and not so much with the need to expand the production of goods and services, but rather to an attempt to locate internal resources within the activity itself. Today, it is not only the important result of the activity itself, but of the optimisation of the cost-effectiveness ratio. In this cotext, considerable attention is paid to solving issues of organisational effectiveness. However, despite the fact that this issue has long been on the agenda, there is still no consensus among researchers on either the key efficiency metrics, the methods for measuring them or the determinants of their efficiency (Matthews, 2007).

Of course, the same kind of problematic is encountered at the level of research into the effectiveness of individual activities. To the existing unresolved problems one more is added: the powerful influence of the human factor, which hampers the diffeentiation of activity-based and personal components of efficiency.

Staying within the framework of psychological research, we precisely concentrate attention on the activity component of individual effectiveness in the belief that the individual's ability to monitor the effectiveness of his or her own professional activity is one of best the ways of improving it. The monitoring of activities (job monitoring) is defined by us in terms of an employee's ability to influence the process and end result of his or her own work. From our point of view, this is an extremely important aspect of the professional competency of key specialists and managers.

In this study, we focused on the cross-cultural aspects of the monitoring of management effectiveness. We sought to clarify similarities and differences in those aspects of the activities that Russian and Slovenian decision makers view as key – i.e. as zones of special attention or zones of influence – into which business leaders are prepared to invest the resources at their disposal.

Research problem. A key aspect of increasing the effectiveness of management activities concerns whether the head of the subjective system possesses criteria for

monitoring his or her own activities, which are congruent to the criterial system of organisational effectiveness. In this respect, it seems relevant to note P. Drucker's point that an effective manager needs to employ criteria that will allow him or her to focus on what is most important, in terms of his or her contribution to the success of his organisation, for determining the final results (Drucker, 2011).

Conditions determining the specifics of the formation of a subjective system for monitoring the effectiveness of management activities can be considered in both external and internal terms. It is assumed that the management model forming the basis for organisational practice predetermines key efficiency orientations both at the organisational and individual levels. However, psychological studies were not carried out in order to examine this assumption. At the same time, in the scientific field of investigation of psychological efficiency, there are approaches to this problem in the context of activity, but none referring to personality. We observe that the vast majority of studies are aimed at considering the influence of personal characteristics on the effectiveness of the activity. Thus, the salient need to research means for increasing individual effectiveness is not supported by research in this field. This necessitates a search for a means by which the problem can be approached and potentially solved.

By identifying the factors determining the formation of such a subjective system, the optimal ratio of subjective criteria is modelled in terms of key monitoring points of the effectiveness of management activity based on the strategic objectives of the organisation. In the long term, this involves solving the issue of managing individual performance and integrating individual effectiveness into overall corporate performance.

The **aim** of the present Russian-Slovenian cross-cultural study is to identify key factors influencing the structure of subjective criteria for monitoring the activities of Russian and Slovenian managers. The study, in which a comparative approach is taken, is comprised of three stages:

Stage 1. Study of structural differences in the subjective criteria used for monitoring the activities of Russian and Slovenian managers.

Stage 2. Investigation of the dependence of the structure of subjective criteria on organisational factors, in particular, organisational strategy and management policy in Russian and Slovenian companies.

Stage 3. Investigation of the dependence of the structure of subjective criteria on the personal qualities of managers belonging to different cultures, i.e. Russian and Slovenian. The dependence of the criterial structure on individuals' need for structuring and tolerance towards uncertainty was investigated (Benjamin, Riggio & Mayes, 1996), (Herman, Stevens, Bird, Mendenhall & Oddou, 2010).

In the present article, the results of the first stage are presented and discussed.

Theoretical analysis of the problem

In both psychology and management fields, the concepts of performance monitoring are based on the assertion that monitoring comprises a standard (benchmark) against which the employee processes and performance results are compared. These standards are also used to monitor methods for regulating activities and the

effectiveness thereof. Criteria are advanced either in terms of subjectively chosen or independently created standards, which are used by employees for self-orientation and monitoring his or her activities.

What determines the features of the formation of such a criterial system? In the broadest sense, the answer to this question lies in the features of the specific national culture. There is little doubt that national culture determines differences in management and that a given scientific model will be effective in different national management systems to the extent that it is congruent with the specificities of the national character (Hofstede, 1980). The practice of organisational management, in turn, sets standards for administrative work. The studies confirm the differences in the value systems of managers from different national cultures and their influence on the style of decision-making, interpersonal behaviour, priorities and career paths, attitudes toward risk, correlation of personal and organisational goals, etc. (Negandhi & Prasad, 1971), (Farmer & Richman, 1965), (Ronen, 1986), (England, Dhingra & Agarwal, 1974).

We assume that the structure of subjective criteria used by managers and specialists for monitoring the effectiveness of their work (activities) varies according to the national cultures of which they are the bearers.

The monitoring of work (or monitoring of activities) is an integral part of any management system; however, in different national cultures both the place of monitoring differs as well as the special emphasis on how the monitoring is applied. G. Hofstede, in particular, describes in detail the impact of the "avoiding uncertainty" index on the organisational behaviour of employees and managers, while paying great attention to aspects related to the level of work monitoring and the extent of the need to have work structured according to established standards (Hofstede, 1980). However, there are no studies in which attention would be paid to the way in which managers monitor the effectiveness of their own activities, on what guidelines they rely when exercising such monitoring and how the structure of subjective criteria for supervising managers ensures the monitoring of organisational effectiveness.

Thus, there are also differences between national cultures in terms of the extent and detailed modality of the monitoring of employees and managers. In the studies of D. Gallie, in particular, it was noted that the highest level of monitoring of work was recorded in the Nordic countries of Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden; it was somewhat lower in France, the Benelux countries and Great Britain. In most southern European countries, as well as in Ireland, the level of monitoring is below the European average. In addition, researchers point out that there are differences in the content of performance monitoring of employees from different national groups (Gallie, 2011), (Boštjančič & Ismagilova, 2017).

Efficiency is understood as the optimal cost-performance ratio for a given situation. In this context, we are referring to management efficiency (or "operational" efficiency), which is determined by the business qualities of managers, as well as by how rationally their potential is used. Psychologically, we share the assertion that effectiveness is an attitude that reflects individual values and preferences (Cameron & Whetten, 1983). This gives us grounds for assuming that individual subjects possess a set of subjective criteria on the basis of which the effectiveness of their activities is controlled. Subjective monitoring of activities determines the extent of the individual's

personal influence on the main characteristics of work carried out on behalf of the employer and is characterised by subject-object relations (in contrast to the subject-subject nature of self-monitoring activity). The monitoring criteria are considered in terms of an internal means of performing an activity (Klimov, 1998). We assume the sources of their formation to consist of environmental and psychological factors (Fig. 1).

Criteria for monitoring activities can be externally assigned to the subject through a system of cultural imperatives, according to organisational-activity standards, or be personally mediated.

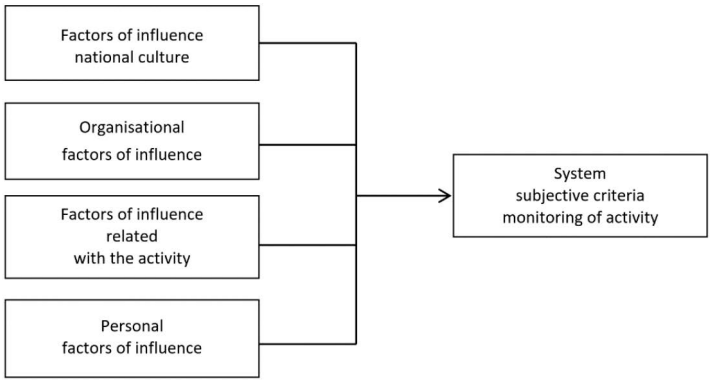

Figure 1. Factors influencing the formation of a system of subjective criteria for monitoring of management activities.

Surveillance "Subjective criteria for the monitoring of activity efficiency" (Survey "SCC")

This Questionnaire was developed on the basis of the *Model of Subjective Criteria for Monitoring Performance Efficiency*, by G. Mirolyubova and F. Ismagilova (Ismagilova & Mirolyubova, 2012a, 2012b, 2013), (Ismagilova, Mirolyubova, Malysheva & Mugatabarova, 2014). The Questionnaire (Fig. 2) is aimed at revealing the correlation of groups of criteria (i.e. the structure of subjective criteria) in the individual sets of criteria that managers use to monitoring the effectiveness of their activities. With the help of the Questionnaire, an individual criterial profile of each manager, including professional-activity preferences, is determined. The comparison of such an individual profile with the organisational-activity standard allows the advantages and limitations of the manager's administrative competences to be identified on behalf of the organisation.

The Questionnaire included criteria that were distinguished on the following grounds (Ismagilova & Mirolyubova, 2015):

1) Measurability of the criterion (measurable – weakly measurable). The measurable criteria used were those that are easily reproducible with reference scales obvious to all participants (in the first place, quantitative). The monitoring criteria whose possibility of measurement is often not obvious even for the bearer (the subject finds it hard to name the measuring scale) were classified as weakly measurable. Weakly measurable subjective monitoring criteria contain not quantitative, but qualitative characteristics of the work.
2) Place of the criterion in the general process of activity (criteria for preliminary, concurrent and final monitoring).
3) Primary source of formation of the criterion (based on a standard – based on experience).
4) Scale of measurement used (absolute – relative). In turn, the absolute and relative criteria were divided into groups (classes) depending on the type of scale used: binary, natural, relationships, comparisons.

The criteria based on professional experience were divided into explicit and implicit criteria. Explicit subjective criteria are those presented in the subjective experience of the manager in terms of a construct differentiated by the degree of manifestation on an individual scale of measurement. Implicit subjective criteria comprise an indivisible construct subjectively interpreted by its carrier.

The Questionnaire comprises 40 statements. Below are examples of statements from the corresponding groups (classes) of criteria (Table 1 and Table 2).

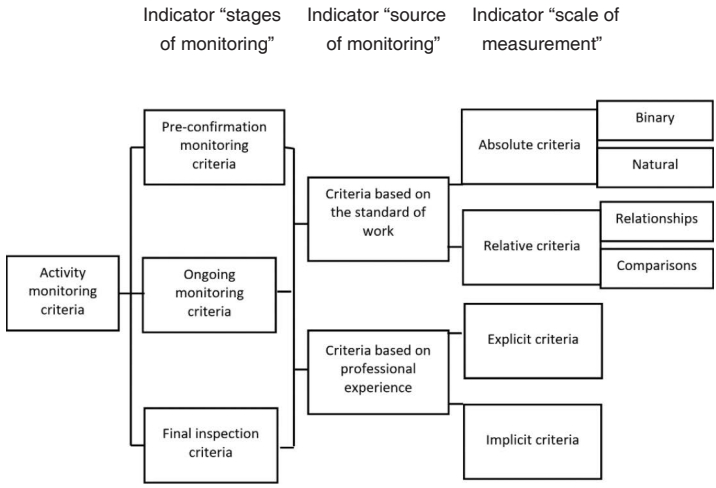

Figure 2. Model of subjective criteria for monitoring the effectiveness of activities.

Table 1. Examples of subjective criteria based on the standard of work

Criteria in the monitoring stages	**Groups (classes) of criteria**		
Criteria at the pre-confirmation monitoring stage	Absolute	Binary	*Availability / lack of resources*
		Natural	*Completion deadlines tasks / jobs*
	Relative	Relationships	*Tolerance level to deviations from norms and standards (degree of regulation of work)*
		Compliance	*Extent to which task corresponds to organisational goals*
Criteria at the stage of ongoing monitoring	Absolute	Binary	*Uniformity / unevenness of workload assigned between executives*
		Natural	*Time taken to perform task main part of the work*
	Relative	Relationships	*Dynamics of the number of errors in the process of work*
		Compliance	*Degree of conformity to established performance standards*
Criteria at the final (concluding) inspection stage	Absolute	Binary	*Availability / absence of proposals for changing instruction / regulation of work schedule*
		Natural	*Quantity / volume obtained result, overall number of solved tasks*
	Relative	Relationships	*Relationship of expenditures to results*
		Compliance	*Correspondence of result to established quality standard*

Table 2. Examples of subjective criteria based on professional experience

Criteria in the monitoring stages	**Groups (classes) of criteria**	
Criteria at the pre-confirmation monitoring stage	Explicit	*Degree of novelty of the problem*
	Implicit	*Understanding of criteria, according to which they are evaluated fulfilment of task*
Criteria at the stage of ongoing monitoring	Explicit	*The ability of workers to make their own decisions within the framework of their competence*
	Implicit	*Overall level of satisfaction as to work progress*
Criteria at the final (concluding) inspection stage	Explicit	*Personal contribution to results of company activity*
	Implicit	*Expert appraisal of goals achieved by the management*

For unambiguous interpretation of the statements included in the Questionnaire, native speakers of Russian and Slovenian languages used English as an intermediate language.

Based on the theoretical principles on cultural differences in management practices outlined above and the differences in the subjective monitoring criteria recorded in the Model and Questionnaire, we formulated the main and two additional hypotheses that were tested at the first stage of the Russian-Slovenian study.

*Main hypothesis (**MH**):* Structural differences exist in terms of the subjective criteria used for monitoring the activities of Russian and Slovenian managers.

*Additional hypothesis 1 (**AH 1**):* Slovenian managers use measurable criteria to monitor their performance more often than Russian leaders.

*Additional hypothesis 2 (**AH 2**):* There are structural differences in the measurable criteria for Russian and for Slovenian leaders.

The main and both additional hypotheses are represented graphically in Fig. 3.

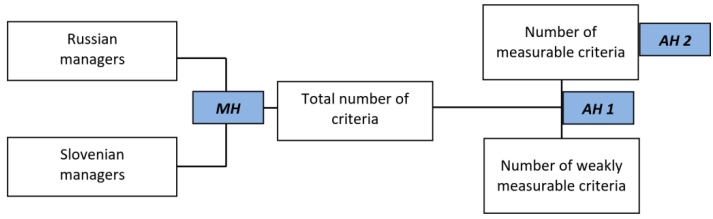

Figure 3. First stage hypotheses for the cross-cultural Russian-Slovenian study.

To test the proposed hypotheses, a comparative study programme was developed and implemented.

Research base

The survey involved 268 respondents, of which 171 were Russians and 97 – Slovenians. The main characteristics of both samples are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

The study involved business leaders with experience of working in the relevant organisation for at least one year. Data collection was carried out simultaneously in both countries in 2015.

Table 3. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Samples	Total quantity (pers.)	M/F (%)	Average age (%)	Business education (%)		
				primary higher education	additional education in management	degree in management
Russian	171	56.1/43.9	34.86	100	100	0
Slovenian	97	59.8/40.2	38.03	99	65	10.3

Participants and graduates of the Presidential Programme for Management's Personnel Training were invited to participate in the Russian part of the study, which was carried out under the auspices of the Business School of the Ural State Federal University named after B. N. Yeltsin (Yekaterinburg). The students were given a paper version of the Questionnaire; graduates participated in an online version of the survey (the electronic version of the Questionnaire was prepared using the https://www.1ka.si website).

Postgraduates of UrFU, E. K. Mugatabarova and P. Lobanova took part in the collection and processing of experimental data.

The Slovenian side also prepared an electronic version of the Questionnaire via https://www.1ka.si, which was published on the Internet. Participants were involved in the survey by exchanging links to the study on social networks, publishing links to relevant websites, electronic newsletters of institutions, sending emails directly to managers and companies of 500 fastest growing companies in 2014. The overwhelming majority of participants filled in the Questionnaire on the website; however, a number of managers completed it directly in paper form in the context of professional training.

The average duration of completing the Questionnaire was 15 minutes.

The following independent variables were distinguished and approved:

1. Permanent place of work of the subjects (implemented administrative practice) in Russia or in Slovenia as an indicator of the national cultural orientation of the subject and his or her inclusion in a specific (national) management system, conditioned by national culture.

2. The proportion of measurable criteria in the total selected criteria is interpreted in terms of an orientation toward the observance of organisational standards while supervising the effectiveness of the organisation's activities.

3. The proportion of non-measurable criteria in the total selected criteria is interpreted in terms of an orientation towards professional experience while supervising the effectiveness of the organisation's activities.

4. The ratio of the number of absolute or relative criteria to the total measurable criteria is considered in terms of the orientation / lack of orientation towards monitoring performance.

5. The ratio of the number of explicit and implicit criteria in the total weakly measurable criteria is considered in terms of an orientation / lack of orientation towards the monitoring of activities.

Table 4. Professional sampling characteristics: management experience

Samples	Total quantity (pers.)	Average duration of employment as a manager	Number of subordinates (%)				
			up to 5 people	6–10 people	11–50 people	> 50 people	not indicated
Russian	171	6.4	49	30	19	2	0
Slovenian	97	8.6	24	48	24	2	2

Table 5. Professional sampling characteristics: area of activity of managers

Samples	Total quantity (pers.)	Characteristics of the organisation (%)							
		area of activity				with participation of foreign capital		type of ownership	
		production	sales	construction	public administration, insurance	national	international	state	private
Russian	171	29	16	11	2	94.7	5.3	17.5	82.5
Slovenian	97	16	10	5	15	76.3	24.7	29.9	70.1

Results of the study

For data processing correlation analysis using non-parametric criteria (Kendall's tau-b and Spearman's rho), Mann-Whitney U-test, method of descriptive statistics. The statistical analysis of data was carried out using the SPSS Statistics 17.0 software package.

The table presents the results of testing the main hypothesis regarding the differences in the structure of subjective criteria for monitoring the activities of Russian and Slovenian managers (Table 6).

Table 6. General results of sample alignment

Samples	**Mann-Whitney U-test (middle results)**	
	measurable criteria	weakly measurable criteria
Russian	56.11	58.66
Slovenian	60.39	60.19

In the Slovenian sample, measurable and weakly measurable criteria of the effectiveness of professional activity are presented equally in the general structure of subjective monitoring criteria by managers (the distinction is not significant).

In the Russian sample, statistically significant differences were revealed in the representation of measurable and weakly measurable monitoring criteria by managers of the effectiveness of professional activity in the overall monitoring criteria structure.

Conclusion. In the structure of subjective criteria for monitoring the effectiveness of management activities, roughly equal proportions of both groups of criteria, both measurable and weakly measurable, apply to both Russian and Slovenian managers. The obtained data do not allow the main hypothesis to be considered as confirmed.

The results of testing additional hypothesis 1 are also presented in Table 7. From the data, it can be seen that Slovenian leaders use measurable criteria more frequently than Russian leaders when monitoring their performance.

Conclusion. Additional hypothesis 1 was confirmed. A significant difference was found between the mean values of the measurable criteria in the Russian (56.11) and Slovenian (60.39) samples (Table 6).

The results of testing additional hypothesis 2 are presented in Table 7. It is clear from the data that there are differences in the structure of measurable criteria for Russian and Slovenian leaders. A significant difference was found between the mean values of the measurable criteria in the Russian (56.11) and Slovenian (60.39) samples (Table 6).

Significant differences are observed for eight (out of twenty) measurable criteria: four criteria from the “absolute” group and four from the “relative” group. Two criteria are relevant to the monitoring of activities at the stage of preliminary monitoring, according to three criteria for monitoring activities at the stages of preliminary and final monitoring.

Table 7. Comparative data by type of criteria

Measurable criteria		**Mann-Whitney U-test**
absolute	natural	0.006
	binary	0.037
relative	correlation criteria	0
	compliance criteria	0.006

Table 8 below shows the distribution by monitoring stage of criteria that have selection differences in the cultural groups.

Pre-confirmation monitoring stage. A significant difference was found according to two criteria:

a) According to the binary criterion "Measurability of planned results": in 25 % of the selections, Russian managers indicate this criterion to be insignificant for monitoring work effectiveness (selection of "never" and "very rarely"); Slovenian managers define this criterion as insignificant in only 6 % of cases.

b) By the criterion of the ratio "Percentage of the total volume of my work that can be delegated to my subordinates": in 48.1 % of cases, Russian managers do not use, or rarely use this criterion; Slovenian managers choose this criterion as important in 83.5 % of cases (selections are "often" or "always").

Ongoing monitoring stage. A significant difference in the selection of criteria among different cultural groups of managers was found in the following types of criteria:

a) The natural criterion "amount of time devoted to the execution of work". The main difference in the data concerns the selection labelled "rarely": Russian managers – in 30.4 % of cases; Slovenian managers – in 17.5 % of cases.

b) The criterion "cost/benefit ratio when making my decision". In the Slovenian sample, this criterion is more common (83.3 % of cases) than in the Russian sample (54.6% of cases).

c) The criterion "degree of compliance of the management methods (methods) used by me to those used in the organisational culture". There is little difference between the Russian and Slovenian samples concerning the average position of the selection ("rarely" and "often"). The interest in this case is represented by the data of the extreme selections (selections "rarely" and "always"). The ratio of Russian and Slovenian data is as follows: at the selection of "never" 9 % versus 3 %; at the selection of "always" 5.4 versus 17.5 %, respectively.

Table 8. Criteria that have selection differences between the cultural groups (by monitoring stage)

Performance monitoring stage	Criterion group (class)	Formulation of criterion (content)	Selection (%)			
			"never", "rarely"		"often", "always"	
			Russians	Slovenes	Russians	Slovenes
preliminary monitoring	binary	Measurability of the planned results	25	6		
	relationships	Percentage of the total amount of my work that can be delegated to my subordinates	48.1	16.5	59.9	83.5
ongoing monitoring	natural	Amount of time devoted to the execution of work	"rarely" 30.4	"rarely" 17.5		
	ratios	Cost/benefit ratio when making my decision			54.6	83.3
	compliance	Degree of compliance of the management methods used by me with those used in the organisational culture	"never" 9	"never" 3	"always" 5.4	"always" 17.5
final (concluding) monitoring	natural	Number of complaints and comments on the results of my work			54.6	83.5
	binary	Correspondence / mismatch of the achieved results with those planned	"rarely" 18	"rarely" 5.2	"always" 37.5	"always" 51.5
	compliance	Degree to which expenditures are planned	34.5			89.7

Stage of final control. A significant difference in the selection of criteria among different cultural groups of managers was found in the following circumstances:

a) By selection of the natural criterion "Number of complaints and comments on the results of my work". In the Slovenian sample, this criterion is more common (83.5 % of cases) than in the Russian sample (54.6 % of cases).

b) On the selection of the binary criterion "Correspondence/non-correspondence of the actual results with those planned". It should be noted that marker "I never use it" it was not given by any of the respondents either in the Russian or in the Slovenian groups; 43–44 % of respondents in either group use this criterion frequently. However, according to the data of the estimated markers differences are observed "rarely" – 18 % of Russian managers and 5.2 % of Slovenian managers; "always" – 37.5 % and 51.5 % respectively.

c) By selection of the compliance criterion "Degree to which expenditures are planned". In 34.5 % of cases, Russian managers do not use or rarely use this criterion for the control of the effectiveness of their own work; in 89.7 % of cases, Slovenian managers consider this criterion as important and significant.

Conclusion

During this phase of the Russian-Slovenian study, we focused our attention on the influence of national cultural factors on the formation of a system of subjective criteria for monitoring work activities. The hypotheses concerning the existence of structural differences in subjective measurable criteria used by Russian and Slovenian managers was confirmed. There are significant differences in the preferences of Slovenian and Russian managers for subjective criteria at different stages of monitoring (preliminary, current and final).

The proposed Model and Questionnaire developed on its basis can be considered as working tools for diagnosing the content and the set of subjective criteria for systematic monitoring of managers' activities.

In subsequent studies, this method will be tested in companies of various types operating in different markets and under various sociocultural conditions.

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