



## EFFECTS OF THE PRESENCE OF DOGS IN THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT ON SLOVENIAN CIVIL SERVANTS

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### Abstract

*Dogs in the work environment influence various aspects of work, including lower stress levels, greater motivation, higher job satisfaction and general well-being. This study examined the presence and potential positive effects of dogs in public sector organisations in Slovenia and recommendations for the integration of dogs in such environments. The research was based on a survey and questionnaire based on previous studies. It examined the effects of dogs in the work environment on employees, demographic and organisational differences and barriers to integration. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk test, the Mann-Whitney U test, the Kruskal-Wallis H test, Spearman correlation and ordinal linear regression to assess how the integration of dogs into the work environment influences the perception of their positive impact. The results showed that in organisations where dogs are already present, the demographic factors of those who bring dogs were not significantly different. However, bringing a dog into the work environment was a statistically significant predictor of perceived positive effects, particularly for reducing stress, improving social interactions and increasing job satisfaction. Women were generally more in favour of a dog-friendly policy as they felt it contributed to a more relaxed atmosphere and greater motivation. Younger respondents were also more in favour, while older workers were more against. Although Slovenian legislation does not explicitly regulate dogs in the work environment, the results emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach that also takes into account the practical aspects of integration. Successful implementation requires the adaptation of existing practises and regulations as well as strategies to address the challenges associated with the daily presence of dogs. The paper concludes with recommendations to support organisational change and policy measures that would enable the effective introduction of dogs into the public sector work environment.*

**Keywords:** Civil Servants, Dog, Integration, Positive Impact, Work Environment

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, more and more organizations are trying to increase the well-being of their employees and create a friendly working environment, which has a positive effect on employees who have dogs in their working environment, among other things. According to Wells and Perrine, (2001), Barker (2005), Boštjančič & Smolkovič (2012), Fore-

man et al. (2017), Hall and Mills (2019) and Wagner & Pina e Cunha (2021), the presence of dogs in the work environment can have a positive impact on reducing stress and absenteeism, improving employee health, improving communication and social interaction between employees, increasing morale and energy, work engagement, motivation, enthusiasm and productivity, and greater overall job satisfaction.

Despite the many positive effects of dogs in the work environment, there are also negative aspects, as noted by Wells & Perrine (2001): Some employees find the pet annoying or distracting, employees complain about hair on furniture and uncleanness, problems with allergies to dog hair, phobias, aversions and personal dislike of the presence of dogs in the work environment.

There are few studies on the presence of dogs in public sector organisations in Slovenia. Boštjančič & Smolkovič (2012) conducted an exploratory study in which they collected data through a survey completed by 24 respondents. The participants were selected based on whether they brought their dogs to work. Respondents came from a variety of professions, including veterinary clinics, animal-related businesses (e.g. pet stores, animal-related media), IT, marketing, education, leisure, and administration. The study revealed several key findings about the impact of dogs in the workplace: impact on employee wellbeing and productivity, employee satisfaction and stress reduction. However, some respondents expressed concerns about potential distractions caused by dogs in the workplace. While most respondents reported positive experiences, some emphasised the need for clear policies and regulations to ensure a balanced and productive environment.

This study analysed the presence of dogs in the working environment and their impact on civil servants in Slovenia. The number of dogs in Slovenia is increasing from year to year. In August 2023, according to the Central Pet Register, 251,608 dogs were already registered, compared to 125,719 in 2005 (Černoga, 2024). This means that around one in three households has a dog. However, Slovenian legislation does not contain specific requirements for the presence of dogs in the working environment, which means that it is at the discretion of organisations to issue rules and guidelines on this issue.

As there are hardly any studies on the presence of dogs in public sector organisations and no policy measures have been taken, the aim of this paper is to determine the impact of the presence of dogs in the working environment in selected public sector organisations based on the results of the situation analysis regarding the presence of dogs in the working environment and to formulate recommenda-

tions for the introduction of changes that would contribute to the integration of dogs in the working environment in the public sector.

Based on previous research findings (e.g. Barker, 2005; Foreman et al., 2017; Hall and Mills, 2019; Wagner & Pina e Cunha, 2021) that dogs have a positive influence on employees in the work environment, the study aimed to find out:

- What impact does the presence of dogs in the workplace have on the well-being, job satisfaction and stress levels of respondents?
- Do demographic factors influence the perception of the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the workplace?
- Are there differences in perceptions of the positive impact of dogs between organisations with different levels of client interaction?
- What is the relationship between the frequency with which dogs are brought to work and the perceived positive impact?
- What are the potential barriers and challenges to integrating dogs into the public sector work environment?

The public sector in Slovenia includes state authorities, local governments, public agencies, public funds, public institutions, public economic institutions and other institutions under public law if they are indirect users of the state or local budget (Republic of Slovenia, n.d.).

The article is divided into a literature review, which is presented below, followed by the measurement instrument and the research method, the results of the study, discussion and the conclusion.

## 2 LITERATURE BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Regulation the presence of dogs in the working environment

Studies have shown that many organisations do not have clear guidelines regulating the presence of dogs. For example, Hall et al (2017) found that only 36.2% of organisations with dogs in the workplace have clear policies. According to Bremhost (2018), the current legislative landscape in the European Union focuses only on assistance dogs. These in-

clude guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs, mobility assistance dogs and medical guard dogs, which provide important support for people with disabilities. Their legal recognition and access rights vary around the world, which has an impact on their integration into public life.

In addition, Von Bergen & Bressler (2017) found that organisations should allow dogs unless their presence poses an undue hardship. They should also make reasonable accommodations for employees with allergies and must not discriminate against applicants who use service dogs. Some states offer additional protections, such as leave for training service dogs. Organisations may refuse dogs if they pose a significant hardship, pose health and safety risks or disrupt business operations, such as in sterile environments or high-security workplaces. Allowing dogs poses liability risks, including workplace injuries, allergy claims and workers' compensation issues. To minimise the risks, employers should establish clear policies, require vaccinations, designate dog-free zones and consult legal experts to ensure compliance. State laws can provide further protection by preventing discrimination against employees with service dogs or granting leave for service dog training. Organisations should educate their employees about the specific regulations.

Foreman et al (2017) suggest that when developing a pet-friendly policy, consideration should be given to ensuring that dogs are well behaved, house-trained and fully vaccinated. In addition, organisations often set up designated dog-free zones to accommodate employees with allergies or employees who are uncomfortable around animals. Organisations should consider their office facilities, employee preferences and potential health concerns. Clear guidelines on acceptable dog behaviour and vaccination requirements are essential for successful policy implementation. Wilkin et al (2015) recommend a structured policy that includes: designated dog-free zones for employees with allergies or phobias, vaccination and training requirements for all dogs in the work environment, conflict resolution strategies to address concerns of dog owners and non-dog owners. Wagner & Pina e Cunha (2021) emphasise the importance of flexible working hours and autonomy so that employees can properly care for their dogs while at work.

In Slovenia, there are no specific regulations for the presence of dogs in the working environment. Article 11 of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) lays down only general requirements and controls for dogs to ensure that they do not pose a danger. Owners must ensure through appropriate education, training or other measures that the dog does not pose a danger to the environment, and they must ensure the physical protection of the dog by keeping it on a leash in a public place. Although the AWA defines a public place as a public place (Art. 5 AWA) where the protection of public order is guaranteed, there are exceptions for areas where large numbers of people are not expected. This means that it is permissible to let dogs run free even in such public places, but every dog owner or handler must critically assess the situation before letting their dog run free. It is important to assess under what circumstances the dog can be let off the lead without endangering other dogs, animals or people. It is also important to consider the law and legal liability in the event of a dog bite (e.g. the Code of Obligations).

Animal welfare is also guaranteed. According to Article 4 of the Regulation on the Protection of Pet Animals, the keeper of a pet animal must take all necessary measures to ensure the welfare of the animals entrusted to him and to prevent causes that may lead to pain, injury, illness or behavioural disorders of the animals. Animal welfare must be at the forefront of every human action involving animals, which means above all that all aspects of animal welfare must be taken into account. It is important to recognize that owning a pet brings many benefits, but there is also a responsibility for the welfare of the animal. Every owner must take care of the health and control of their pet and fulfil their obligations to society to keep the animal in good condition (Slovenian Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Authority, 2023).

The amendment to the Animal Welfare Act (no. 109/23) partially equates the status of therapy dogs with that of guide dogs for the blind and assistance dogs for people with disabilities, as they are allowed to enter public places (with a visible sign on the dog's harness) and use public transport without a muzzle. According to the amendment, these dogs may be used off-leash in educational, social and health facilities when providing assistance and sup-

port, provided that they are properly trained for various forms of assistance and support in accordance with the Slovenian standard SIST 1192.

Organisations should therefore carefully weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of integrating and keeping dogs in the work environment and draw up suitable guidelines and rules on this basis. Poglej & Boštjančič (2022) also believe that organisations should introduce policies to ensure a harmonious working environment, as the presence of dogs in the work environment has many positive effects. The positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment are discussed below.

## **2.2 Positive effects of the presence of dogs in the working environment**

The working environment is increasingly recognised as a key factor in employee wellbeing and productivity. Organisations around the world are exploring strategies to increase motivation and job satisfaction, reduce stress and improve workplace relationships. One method is to allow employees to bring their dogs to work. Various studies have examined the impact of dogs in the work environment, analysing both the benefits and the challenges. A consistent finding of all studies is that dogs in the workplace significantly reduce employee stress. Boštjančič & Smolkovič (2012) in Slovenia and Barker et al. (2012) and Hall et al. (2017) internationally confirmed that employees experience less stress when their dogs are present. This effect was particularly clear in a working environment where employees were able to interact freely with their dogs. The presence of dogs not only reduces stress, but also promotes social interaction, which further improves employee well-being and reduces absenteeism. Barker et al (2012) conducted a quantitative physiological study to measure cortisol (stress hormone) levels and found that employees who brought their dogs to work had lower stress levels.

Wagner & Pina e Cunha (2021) found that dogs in the work environment improve communication between employees, promote a cooperative atmosphere and strengthen social bonds. Similarly, Wells & Perrine (2001), Hall et al. (2017), Hall & Mills (2019) found that those who frequently brought their dogs

to work showed higher levels of engagement, enthusiasm, concentration, improved social interactions and overall job satisfaction. Foreman et al (2017) reported that dog-friendly workplaces improve morale and reduce absenteeism. Hall et al (2017) found that dogs facilitate cross-departmental interactions, creating a more connected workforce. Boštjančič & Smolkovič (2012) also found that organisations without direct client contact are more likely to allow dogs.

Employees who bring their dogs to work consistently report higher job satisfaction and greater work engagement. Job satisfaction refers to an employee's positive perception and emotional response to their work and work environment (Mihalič, 2008). Research confirms that bringing dogs into the workplace has a positive impact on job satisfaction (Wells & Perrine, 2001; Barker, 2005; Hall et al, 2017; Barker et al, 2012; Boštjančič & Smolkovič, 2012; Hall & Mills, 2019; Edmans et al, 2023). Importantly, the benefits extend beyond the dog owners – Wagner & Pina e Cunha (2021) found that the presence of dogs has a positive impact on the entire organisation by promoting a friendlier organisational culture.

As job satisfaction and motivation are closely linked, it is important to analyse how dogs in the working environment influence employee motivation. Motivation is the inner drive that directs a person's efforts towards goals (Ganta, 2014; Parijat & Bagga, 2014). It influences engagement, dedication and perseverance in overcoming challenges. Organisations are actively looking for ways to increase employee motivation through a positive work environment and incentives. The presence of dogs in the work environment reduces stress-related distractions and allows employees to focus better on their tasks. Employees no longer have to worry about leaving their pets alone, which leads to greater serenity and motivation. Studies suggest that interacting with dogs during micro-breaks – whether through petting, emotional bonding or simple observation – provides similar stress relief as socialising with work colleagues (Wilkin et al., 2015; Hall & Mills, 2019).

According to Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation, motivation consists of hygiene factors – external conditions that prevent dissatisfaction (e.g. salary, workplace policies). Motivators – factors that



increase job satisfaction and motivation (e.g. recognition, meaningful work) (Gorenak, 2011; Čivre et al., 2013). In this context, the presence of dogs acts as both a hygiene factor and a motivator: it reduces dissatisfaction in the workplace by creating a more pleasant and relaxed environment; it increases motivation by promoting social interaction and stress reduction, leading to higher engagement. Foreman et al. (2017) and Wagner & Pina e Cunha (2021) confirm that the presence of dogs improves communication, teamwork and overall work performance.

These aspects were further investigated in a study in Slovenian public sector organisations, which is discussed in the following sections.

### 3 MEASURES AND METHODS

Ethical approval is not required for this study as no personal data that could identify the respondents was used. The questionnaire used in the study was created on the basis of the literature review. In the first part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked for demographic information such as gender (women or men), age (18-30 or 31-50 or 51 and above), job position (managerial or non-managerial) and the organisation in which they work (agencies, directorates, supervisory authorities, educational institutions (primary, secondary and higher education), public funds, ministries, municipalities, courts, sui generis organisations, administrative units, state authorities, government and others). This was followed by questions on dog ownership (whether or not they owned a dog) and the presence of dogs in working environments in public sector organisations (whether or not they are allowed to bring a dog into their workplace). If respondents were dog owners and could bring their dogs to work, they were asked how often they brought their dogs to work (daily, several times a week, several times a month, several times a year and never).

The following 8 statements were rated on a 5-point scale, where 1 stood for "strongly disagree", 2 for "strongly disagree", 3 for "neither", 4 for "agree" and 5 for "strongly agree". The presence of the dog has a positive impact on social interaction and communication between coworkers, The presence of the dog makes me feel more satisfied at work, The

presence of the dog has a positive impact on my relationships with coworkers, The presence of the dog at work reduces my stress level, The presence of the dog improves my well-being at work, The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my motivation at work, The presence of dog makes me feel less stressed by the working day, The possibility of having a dog in the organization makes it less likely that I will consider changing jobs. These statements are based on the questionnaires by Barker et al. (2012), Foreman et al. (2017), Hall and Mills (2019) and Wagner and Pina e Cunha (2021).

The opinions on the possible presence of dogs in their working environment were explored further. They were asked what it would mean to them to be able to bring a dog into the organization. There were a number of possible responses to this question, including: increased motivation to work, less stress at work, improved well-being at work, increased job satisfaction, increased engagement at work, dog at work as an additional source of social support, less worry about the dog being left home alone, closer collaboration with other employees, and others. These statements are based on the questionnaire by Foreman et al. (2017).

Respondents were also asked for their opinion on the presence of dogs in the public sector work environment. There were 11 statements, which were rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 being 'strongly disagree', 2 being 'strongly disagree', 3 being 'neither agree nor disagree', 4 being 'agree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'. The statements were as follows: Dogs do not belong in the work environment, Dogs are a distraction from work, I support the integration of dogs into my work environment, It would be useful to organize training for dog owners before integrating dogs into the work environment, I am currently satisfied at work, If I could bring a dog into my work environment, it would motivate me to work, If I had the opportunity to bring my dog into my work environment, I would do so, The rules against dogs in the work environment would make me think about changing jobs, If the rules for dogs in the work environment were changed so that they were no longer allowed, I would change jobs, The policies and rules for dogs in the work environment need to be well defined before dogs are integrated into the work environment, and The presence of

dogs in the work environment would make the atmosphere in the office more relaxed. These statements are based on the questionnaires by Barker et al. (2012), Foreman et al. (2017), Hall and Mills (2019) and Wagner and Pina e Cunha (2021).

An anonymous questionnaire was created using an online tool and a link to the questionnaire was sent to publicly accessible email addresses of selected public sector organisations with the request to forward the questionnaire to all employees. As the researchers were not informed whether the recipients of the email actually forwarded the link to all employees, and due to the anonymity of the survey, it was not possible to determine an exact response rate. Another problem could be that employees with particularly strong views – either in favour of or against the presence of dogs in the workplace – were more willing to participate. The data collection took place between 22 April 2024 and 31 May 2024.

Various methods were used to answer the research questions, namely descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk test to test for normality, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test to compare differences between groups, Spearman correlation to analyse correlations and ordinal linear regression analysis to analyse how the frequency of bringing dogs to work influences the perception of the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment.

## 4 RESULTS

The survey was fully completed by 1326 (from 1482) respondents working in various public sector organizations. Of these, 78.70% were women and 21.30% were men. The majority of respondents were between 41 and 50 years old, which accounted for 38.3% of the sample, followed by those who were 51 years or older (34.8%), followed by those who were between 31 and 40 years old, which accounted for 19.6%, and the smallest number of respondents were between 18 and 30 years old. 7.2%. 14.3% of respondents are employed in a managerial position, while the majority (85.7%) of respondents do not hold a managerial position. Employees from various public sector organizations

participated in the survey, namely: agencies (9.5%), directorates (0.3%), supervisory authorities (6.3%), educational institutions (primary, secondary and higher education) (3.1%), public funds (3.5%), ministries (24.9%), municipalities (19%), courts (18%), sui generis organizations (1.1%), administrative units (7.3%), state authorities (5.1%), government (0.2%) and others (2%). More than half of the respondents (59.45%) were not dog owners and 40.55% were dog owners.

An analysis of the current situation regarding the presence of dogs in the working environment in public sector organizations shows that they are present to a lesser extent. In 3.47% (46 participants) dogs are allowed in the work environment, while in 96.53% (1280 participants) they are not allowed. Only 28.26% of respondents who are allowed to bring a dog into the work environment do so, while 71.74% of respondents do not. Of the respondents who answered that they bring a dog to work, 23.08% do so daily, 15.38% several times a week, 15.38% several times a month and most (46.15%) only a few times a year.

The results (Table 1) on the positive effects of dogs in the work environment show that respondents who allow dogs in the work environment agree with all statements (all average scores were above 3.3).

In addition, this study analysed the differences in the perception of the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment depending on gender, different age groups, job position and type of organisation – the organisations were divided into two groups:

- organisations with frequent client contact (e.g. inspectorates, educational institutions, municipalities, courts, administrative units, offices).
- organisations with little client contact (e.g. agencies, directorates, ministries, government, public funds, sui generis organisations).

The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to test normality as 46 respondents were able to bring dogs to work. This showed that the distributions were not normal ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare differences between genders and differences between

*Table 1: Respondents' agreement with the statements about the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment*

Statement	AV	SD
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on social interaction and communication between coworkers.	3,90	1,41
The presence of the dog makes me feel more satisfied at work.	3,70	1,41
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my relationships with coworkers.	3,70	1,40
The presence of the dog at work reduces my stress level.	3,70	1,40
The presence of the dog improves my well-being at work.	3,70	1,37
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my motivation at work.	3,50	1,38
The presence of dog makes me feel less stressed by the working day.	3,40	1,32
The possibility of having a dog in the organization makes it less likely that I will consider changing jobs.	3,30	1,34

Source: own

job position, and the Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used to compare differences between age groups and two types of organisations.

The results showed no statistically significant differences between men and women, managerial and non-managerial position, different age groups and organisations with frequent client contact and those with little client contact for any of the tested statements ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that demographic factors do not have a significant role in the perception of the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment.

This study also examined whether the perception of the positive effects of the presence of dogs differs depending on the categorisation of dog owners. The results (Table 2) of the Mann-Whitney U-test showed statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) for several indicators, including stress reduction, improved relationships with coworkers, job satisfaction, motivation for work and general well-being at work, suggesting that being a dog owner has a significant impact on the perception of the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment.

*Table 2: Respondents' agreement with the statements about the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment*

Statement	Mann-Whitney U	p-value
The presence of the dog at work reduces my stress level.	356.0	<0.001
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my relationships with coworkers.	336.0	0.002
The presence of the dog makes me feel more satisfied at work.	332.0	0.003
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my motivation at work.	333.0	0.004
The presence of the dog improves my well-being at work.	337.0	0.002
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on social interaction and communication between coworkers.	332.5	0.005
The possibility of having a dog in the organization makes it less likely that I will consider changing job.	272.0	0.151
The presence of dog makes me feel less stressed by the working day.	299.0	0.032

Source: own

*Table 3: Respondents' agreement with the statements about the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment*

Statement	Mann-Whitney U	p-value
The presence of the dog at work reduces my stress level.	293.5	0.022
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my relationships with coworkers.	300.0	0.014
The presence of the dog makes me feel more satisfied at work.	312.0	< 0.005
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my motivation at work.	314.5	< 0.005
The presence of the dog improves my well-being at work.	304.0	0.011
The presence of the dog has a positive impact on social interaction and communication between coworkers.	301.5	0.011
The possibility of having a dog in the organization makes it less likely that I will consider changing job.	283.5	0.049
The presence of dog makes me feel less stressed by the working day.	297.5	0.018

Source: own

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine whether respondents who bring their dogs to work perceive a significantly different positive effect of the presence of dogs in the work environment than those who do not (Table 3). Respondents who bring their dogs to work reported significantly lower levels of stress, the way respondents perceive workplace relationships, higher job satisfaction, higher motivation, the well-being scores of respondents

who do not bring dogs to work were significantly higher, with all p-values < 0.05.

As the data were not normally distributed, we used Spearman correlation to analyse the correlations and ordinal linear regression analysis to analyse how the frequency of bringing dogs to work influences the perception of the positive effects of the presence of dogs in the work environment (Table 4).

*Table 4: Spearman's correlation matrix*

Frequency	1.0								
PE1	0.1036	1.0							
PE2	-0.0709	0.8216**	1.0						
PE3	-0.0709	0.8216**	0.9254**	1.0					
PE4	0.1543	0.5052	0.7431*	0.7431*	1.0				
PE5	0.1570	0.6928	0.8433**	0.8433**	0.9732**	1.0			
PE6	0.3367	0.5667	0.4261	0.4261	0.6456	0.6928	1.0		
PE7	-0.2263	0.3972	0.4835	0.4835	0.2007	0.2752	0.0530	1.0	
PE8	0.0856	0.4509	0.4358	0.4358	0.5657	0.5972	0.4509	0.5916	1.0

Legend: PE1...The presence of the dog at work reduces my stress level. PE2...The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my relationships with coworkers. PE3...The presence of the dog makes me feel more satisfied at work. PE4...The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my motivation at work. PE5...The presence of the dog improves my well-being at work. PE6...The presence of the dog has a positive impact on social interaction and communication between coworkers. PE7...The possibility of having a dog in the organization makes it less likely that I will consider changing job. PE8...The presence of dog makes me feel less stressed by the working day. \* $p < 0.005$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$

Source: own



Strong positive correlations ( $p > 0.7$ ) indicate that bringing a dog to work was significantly correlated with less stress, better relationships and higher job satisfaction. There were moderate correlations ( $p$  between 0.4 and 0.7) for the respondents' motivation, well-being and loyalty. Weaker correlations ( $p < 0.3$ ) on social interactions may vary between individuals, and in some cases – the statistical significance of the findings varies, with some correlations being highly significant ( $p \approx 0.000$ ) and others not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

The results of the ordinal logistic regression analysis (Table 5) show that bringing a dog to work is a statistically significant predictor of the perceived positive effects of having a dog at work, particularly in terms of reducing stress, improving social inter-

actions and increasing job satisfaction. The coefficients for bringing a dog to work were between 2.50 and 3.19, with  $p$ -values below 0.05, confirming a strong positive effect. The frequency of bringing a dog to work did not necessarily increase general well-being at work ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Respondents were also asked what it would mean to them if they could bring their dog to work – their opinion on the impact of having a dog in the work environment. Respondents were given the opportunity to make more than one statement. The majority of 1.481 respondents (84.6%) chose the statement Better well-being at work, followed by Greater job satisfaction (76.9%). Three statements were selected by 61.5% of respondents, namely: Less stress at work, The dog at work is an additional

*Table 5: Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis*

		Coefficient	St. Error	95% CI Lower Bound	95% CI Upper Bound
PE1	Permission	2.5026	0.9464	0.6477	4.3575
	Frequency	0.1235	0.5119	-0.8799	1.1268
PE2	Permission	3.1596	0.7855	1.6200	4.6992
	Frequency	-0.1106	0.4764	-1.0443	0.8230
PE3	Permission	3.1852	0.7868	1.6432	4.7273
	Frequency	-0.1128	0.4771	-1.0479	0.8222
PE4	Permission	3.0434	0.7982	1.4796	4.6083
	Frequency	0.1932	0.4209	-0.6317	1.0181
PE5	Permission	3.0320	0.7917	1.4804	4.5837
	Frequency	0.1712	0.4147	-0.6416	0.9839
PE6	Permission	1.9831	1.2039	-0.3765	4.3427
	Frequency	0.5593	0.5305	-0.4804	1.5990
PE7	Permission	-3.7620	0.9146	-5.5546	-1.9694
	Frequency	-0.5308	0.4882	-1.4876	0.4261
PE8	Permission	-5.3761	0.7867	-6.9180	-3.8343
	Frequency	0.1151	0.4103	-0.6891	0.9192

*Legend: PE1...The presence of the dog at work reduces my stress level. PE2...The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my relationships with coworkers. PE3...The presence of the dog makes me feel more satisfied at work. PE4...The presence of the dog has a positive impact on my motivation at work. PE5...The presence of the dog improves my well-being at work. PE6...The presence of the dog has a positive impact on social interaction and communication between coworkers. PE7...The possibility of having a dog in the organization makes it less likely that I will consider changing job. PE8...The presence of dog makes me feel less stressed by the working day.*

Source: own

source of social support and Less worries because the dog is not alone at home. 38.5% of respondents selected the statement Increased motivation to work, followed by the statement Closer cooperation with other employees (30.8%). The lowest number of respondents (23.1%) chose the statement Increased engagement at work.

In addition (the Shapiro-Wilk test ( $p < 0.001$ ) shows that the data were not normally distributed), non-parametric tests were applied: Mann-Whitney U test to test for differences between gender and job position, Kruskal-Wallis test to test for differences between three age groups (18-30, 31-50 and 51+ years) and organisations (with little and frequent client contact). The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in any of the tested differences.

The results regarding the general opinion and impact of the presence of dogs in the work environment (Table 6) show that the policy and rules for dogs in the work environment need to be well defined before dogs are integrated into the work environment and that clear guidelines are needed that take into account both the benefits and the challenges of keeping dogs in the working environment.

In addition, non-parametric tests were used: Mann-Whitney U test to test for differences be-

tween gender and job position, Kruskal-Wallis test to test for differences between three age groups (18-30, 31-50 and 51+ years) and organisations (with little and frequent client contact). If significant differences were found, Bonferroni post-hoc tests were also conducted.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U-test (Table 7) on general opinion show that women are significantly more in favour of a pet-friendly working environment and believe that the presence of dogs brings greater benefits in the form of a more relaxed working atmosphere and higher motivation than men.

The results in Table 8 show that older respondents (51+) were significantly more likely to be against pets in the workplace ( $p = 0.033$ ). Younger respondents (18-30) were more likely to be in favour of pet-friendly policies and saw greater benefits for higher motivation and a more relaxed working atmosphere ( $p < 0.001$ ).

## 5 DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the presence of dogs in the working environment in public sector organisations is relatively rare. Only 3.47% of respondents stated that dogs are allowed in their

*Table 6: General opinion and impact of the presence of dogs in the work environment*

Statement	AV	SD
The policies and rules for dogs in the work environment need to be well defined before dogs are integrated into the work environment.	4,30	1,02
It would be useful to organize training for dog owners before integrating dogs into the work environment.	4,00	1,22
I am currently satisfied at work.	3,90	0,96
The presence of dogs in the work environment would make the atmosphere in the office more relaxed.	3,40	1,42
I support the integration of dogs into my work environment.	3,20	1,50
If I had the opportunity to bring my dog into my work environment, I would do so.	2,90	1,52
Dogs do not belong in the work environment.	2,90	1,44
If I could bring a dog into my work environment, it would motivate me to work.	2,90	1,42
Dogs are distraction from work.	2,90	1,38
If the rules for dogs in the workplace were changed so that they were no longer allowed, I would change jobs.	1,70	1,01
The rules against dogs in the work environment would make me think about changing jobs.	1,50	0,84

Source: own

*Table 7: Mann-Whitney test (gender differences in general opinion and impact of the presence of dogs in the work environment)*

Statement	Mann-Whitney U	p-value
Dogs do not belong in the work environment.	167052.5	0.001
I support the integration of dogs into my work environment.	223568.0	<0.001
If I could bring a dog into my work environment it would motivate me to work.	228200.5	<0.001
If I had the opportunity to bring my dog into my work environment, I would do so.	226132.0	<0.001
The rules against dogs in the work environment would make me think about changing jobs.	208122.5	<0.001
The presence of dogs in the work environment would make the atmosphere in the office more relaxed.	231746.0	<0.001

Source: own

*Table 8: Kruskal-Wallis test (gender differences in general opinion and impact of the presence of dogs in the work environment)*

Statement	Kruskal-Wallis Statistics	p-value
Dogs do not belong in the work environment.	6.812	0.003
I support the integration of dogs into my work environment.	13.485	<0.001
If I could bring a dog into my work environment it would motivate me to work.	15.750	<0.001
If I had the opportunity to bring my dog into my work environment, I would do so.	8.305	0.002
The rules against dogs in the work environment would make me think about changing jobs.	6.522	0.004
The presence of dogs in the work environment would make the atmosphere in the office more relaxed.	13.979	<0.001

Source: own

workplace. Even of those who have permission, the majority (71.74%) do not bring their dogs to work, and those who do, rarely do. Dog owners perceive more benefits of dogs in the workplace than non-dog owners. Further analysis show that respondents who bring their dogs to work reported significant positive effects, such as less stress, better relationships with colleagues, higher job satisfaction and greater general well-being. In addition, those who bring their dogs to work more frequently report significantly higher well-being, greater motivation and lower stress. Previous studies by Barker et al. (2012), Quan et al. (2023), Wilkin et al. (2015), Wells and Perrine (2001), Foltin and Glenk (2023) and Wagner and Pina e Cunha (2021) support these observations and emphasise similar benefits of dogs in the work environment.

The study also looked at demographic and organisational factors that could influence the perception of the benefits of dogs in the work environment. No statistically significant differences were found in relation to gender, job position, age group or type of organisation (with frequent or little client contact). The most important determinant appears to be personal experience with dogs, either as an owner or as someone who brings their dog to work. The result of the organisational context differs from the results of Boštjančič & Smolkovič (2012), who found that organisations without direct client contact are more likely to allow dogs.

Correlation and regression analyses further support the positive effects of bringing a dog to work. Strong positive correlations were found be-

tween the presence of dogs and lower stress levels, better workplace relationships and higher job satisfaction. In addition, bringing a dog to work was a significant predictor of perceived benefits, particularly for reducing stress and improving social interactions and job satisfaction. However, the frequency of bringing a dog to work did not necessarily increase overall well-being.

When all respondents were asked for their opinion on the potential impact of bringing their dog to work, the majority cited better wellbeing (84.6%) and greater job satisfaction (76.9%). Other common responses included less stress, additional social support and less worry about leaving the dog at home alone. However, fewer respondents saw a direct impact on engagement at work or better cooperation with colleagues, suggesting that while dogs can improve the working environment.

The general opinion of female respondents showed that they are much more in favour of a pet-friendly working environment and see a more relaxed working atmosphere and higher motivation than men. Older respondents (51+) were significantly more likely to be against pets in the workplace. In contrast, younger respondents (18-30) were more in favour of pet-friendly measures and saw greater benefits in terms of higher motivation and a more relaxed working atmosphere. As organisations strive to improve the well-being and job satisfaction of their employees, a dog-friendly policy can be seen as part of a larger effort to increase workplace flexibility and create a more engaging work environment (Wilkin et al., 2015).

The results regarding the general opinion and impact of the presence of dogs in the work environment show that policies, rules and clear guidelines for dogs in the work environment need to be well defined before dogs are integrated into the work environment. The importance of adopted policies as a key element in integrating dogs into the work environment was also emphasised by Wilkin et al. (2015). They emphasised the need to define and consolidate a set of rules in an employee handbook or include them in employment contracts where appropriate. For a successful integration of dogs into the public sector work environment with the aim of increasing employee motivation and job satisfac-

tion, it is crucial to develop clear policies and guidelines based on existing research and best practises. Wagner & Pina e Cunha (2021) agree and emphasise the importance of flexible working hours and autonomy so that employees can adequately care for their dogs while at work.

### 5.1 Theoretical contribution

The study provides valuable insights into attitudes towards the presence of dogs in the work environment, particularly in the public sector, as there is a lack of studies in this area. The findings contribute to the wider literature on the dynamics of the work environment and employee wellbeing in public sector organisations. A new questionnaire was developed based on the literature review. The study extends previous research by analysing demographic variables such as gender, age, job position and type of organisation and concludes that these variables do not have a significant impact on the perception of the benefits of dogs in the workplace by respondents who bring a dog to work. In addition, the study extends previous research by showing that bringing a dog to work was a significant predictor of perceived benefits, particularly for reducing stress and improving social interactions. The study extends the study by Boštjančič & Smolkovič (2012) to public sector organisations. The results differ from their study, which found that organisations without direct client contact are more likely to allow dogs.

### 5.2 Practical contribution

Although the presence of dogs is already permitted in certain cases, such as guide dogs, the wider integration of dogs into the public sector working environment remains limited. This underlines the need for a comprehensive and thoughtful approach that takes particular account of the practical aspects of having dogs in the working environment. The introduction of such changes requires not only the adaptation of existing working practices and policies, but also the development of appropriate measures to address potential concerns and challenges associated with the daily presence of dogs in the working environment. From a practical perspective, organisations should establish clear cri-

teria for allowing dogs in the workplace, focusing on behavioural characteristics. These policies should include hygiene and safety requirements, responsibilities of dog owners and measures to ensure a positive working environment.

The first step is to develop clear guidelines and adopt policies that define the conditions for the presence of dogs in the work environment. The guidelines should include clearly defined criteria, such as the behavioural characteristics of dogs that are allowed in the working environment, and specify the safety and hygiene standards that must be met to ensure a safe and healthy working environment. These guidelines should not aim to restrict the presence of certain breeds, but should take into account or relate to the behaviour of the individual dog. For example, disruptive dogs that are not socialized, cannot calm down in public or show signs of aggression should not be allowed in the work environment. Although breed characteristics can influence perception, it is the individual behaviour of the dog and not its breed that determines its suitability for presence in the working environment. It is therefore necessary to determine the specific characteristics that make a dog suitable for the work environment, such as calmness, the ability to cooperate with the owner when disturbed, and the ability to coexist with other employees and their dogs. In addition to behavioural standards, the guidelines should include hygiene requirements such as regular vaccinations and veterinary care for the dog. They should also specify the dog owner's responsibility for any damage caused by the dog and the provision of appropriate care during working hours. Of course, the welfare of the animal must not be forgotten when it is brought into the working environment. It determines the animal's quality of life, how it perceives it and how well it copes with its current situation and environment. It is influenced by the relationship that employees have with the animals. It is therefore the responsibility of the individual to ensure that all animals are treated humanely, respectfully and responsibly. Flexible working hours and autonomy are also important so that employees can take proper care of their dogs while at work. The key to implementing the policy is that all employees are aware of it and formally support it. In this regard, open channels of

communication are important to ensure that employees feel comfortable discussing concerns or suggestions about integrating dogs into the working environment.

Organisations should introduce a temporary phase where the impact of dogs on employees is assessed through surveys or interviews. This approach allows organisations to refine policies before full implementation. During this period, employee feedback would be gathered either through interviews or a survey so that management can evaluate the appropriateness of the measure and adjust the policy and guidelines as necessary before final implementation. The data collected in the survey can serve as a basis for developing improved policies that focus on the positive impacts and potential challenges of the presence of dogs in the work environment. Future research could monitor the long-term effects of the presence of dogs on the work environment or on employees. This would shed light on how employee perceptions change and what long-term benefits or potential problems could arise from the implementation of such a policy.

Employee training is a key element in the successful integration of dogs into the working environment. Employees need to be trained in how to interact with dogs. This includes respecting the needs of both dogs and colleagues and managing potential conflicts. Raising awareness of the benefits and challenges of dogs in the work environment is essential for a successful transition.

Establishing dedicated areas for dogs, regular cleaning and grooming and maintaining hygiene standards are crucial to creating a pet-friendly working environment. This may include designating certain areas where dogs can roam freely. Premises should also be regularly cleaned and maintained to ensure appropriate hygiene standards and the safety of all those present. These measures will help to ensure the safety and comfort of all employees.

Finally, managers should regularly assess the impact of the presence of dogs on employees to maximize the impact on employee satisfaction, motivation and overall well-being. To ensure a smooth transition, the introduction of dogs into the working environment should include continu-



ous evaluation and adjustment of policies based on real-time feedback from employees. Based on these assessments, additional measures or adjustments can be made as needed to further improve working conditions and the working process itself. By implementing these measures, public sector (and private sector) organizations can successfully integrate dogs into the working environment, resolve health and safety issues and ensure a smooth workflow.

### 5.3 Limitations and future research directions

Despite its contribution, the study has several limitations. The main issue is potential self-selection bias, as the researchers were unable to confirm whether the survey link was forwarded to all employees. The anonymous nature of the survey also limits the ability to understand the representativeness of the responses.

Future research should take these limitations into account by conducting structured interviews alongside the surveys to gain a deeper understanding of employees' views. Longitudinal studies would also be beneficial to investigate the long-term effects of dogs in the workplace on job satisfaction, motivation and team dynamics. Research could investigate whether certain workplace conditions influence the perceived benefits of dogs in the office and whether adjustments to policies over time lead to greater acceptance and effectiveness. By exploring these areas, future studies can build on the current findings and provide more comprehensive guidance to organisations looking to effectively implement dog-friendly policies.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This article analyses the presence of dogs in the working environment of the public sector in Slovenia. The study confirms that while dogs are rare in public sector workplaces, those who bring them report notable benefits, including less stress, better workplace relationships, higher job satisfaction and general well-being. Dog owners perceive greater benefits than non-dog owners, emphasising the role of personal experience.

Demographic and organisational factors have no significant influence on attitudes towards dogs in the work environment. Statistical analyses of respondents who actually bring dogs to work show strong correlations between the presence of dogs and lower stress, improved social interactions and higher job satisfaction, although more frequent presence does not increase these benefits.

Most respondents believe that the presence of dogs contributes to a better sense of well-being and greater job satisfaction. Women were more in favour of a pet-friendly working environment and believed that this would lead to a more relaxed working atmosphere and higher motivation. Older respondents were more likely to be against dogs in the workplace, while younger respondents were in favour of a dog-friendly policy and believed it would lead to higher motivation and a more relaxed working atmosphere. The study emphasises the need for clear policies and guidelines to ensure smooth integration, as highlighted in previous research.

To successfully introduce dogs into the public sector workplaces, organisations should establish structured guidelines based on best practise. These include guidelines for responsible pet ownership, behavioural expectations and staff support. Implementing these policies can help to create a positive and satisfying working environment.

## EXTENDED SUMMARY/IZVLEČEK

Pes v delovnem okolju vpliva na različne vidike delovnega procesa, vključno z motiviranostjo in zadovoljstvom zaposlenih ter njihovim splošnim počutjem. Namen prispevka je na podlagi pridobljenih rezultatov analize stanja na področju prisotnosti psov v delovnem okolju v izbranih organizacijah javnega sektorja v Sloveniji proučiti stališča in morebitne pozitivne vplive prisotnosti psov na javne uslužbenke ter oblikovati priporočila za uvedbo sprememb, ki bi pripomogle k vpeljavi psov v delovna okolja v javnem sektorju. Raziskava je bila izvedena z metodo anketiranja, anketni vprašalnik je bil oblikovan na podlagi predhodnih raziskav. V raziskavi se je ugotavljalo, katere bi bile pozitivne posledice prisotnosti psov v delovnih okoljih v proučevanih organizacijah ter kaj je poglobljena ovira pri vpeljavi psov v delovna okolja v izbranih organizacijah v slovenskem javnem sektorju. Za odgovore na raziskovalna vprašanja so bile uporabljene različne metode, in sicer opisna statistika, Shapiro-Wilkov test za preverjanje normalnosti, neparametrični Mann-Whitneyjev U test in Kruskal-Wallisov H test za primerjavo razlik med skupinami, Spearmanova korelacija za analizo korelacij ter ordinalna linearna regresijska analiza za proučitev vpliva pogostosti prisotnosti psov v delovnem okolju na zaznavanje pozitivnih učinkov njihove prisotnosti pri javnih uslužbencih.

Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da med sodelujočimi, ki pripeljejo psa, ni statistično značilnih razlik glede na demografske dejavnike. Tisti, ki so svoje pse pripeljali na delo, so poročali o bistveno nižjih ravneh stresa, pozitivnejšem dojemljanju odnosov na delovnem mestu, višjem zadovoljstvu pri delu, večji motivaciji in izboljšanem splošnem počutju. Pogostejša prisotnost psa v delovnem okolju se je pri teh sodelujočih pokazala kot statistično značilen napovednik zaznanih pozitivnih učinkov, zlasti v smislu zmanjšanja stresa, izboljšanja socialnih interakcij in povečanja zadovoljstva pri delu. Analiza mnenj sodelujočih glede prisotnosti psov v delovnem okolju je pokazala, da so ženske so v splošnem bolj naklonjene hišnim ljubljencem v delovnem okolju ter menijo, da to vpliva na bolj sproščeno vzdušje in večjo motiviranost za delo. Starejši so v primerjavi s mlajšimi manj naklonjeni prisotnosti psov v delovnem okolju, mlajši tudi menijo, da bi prisotnost psov vplivala na večjo motiviranost za delo in bolj sproščeno vzdušje v delovnem okolju. Slovenska zakonodaja tega področja podrobno ne ureja, pokazala pa se je potreba po celovitem in premišljenem pristopu, ki bi upošteval predvsem praktične vidike prisotnosti psov v delovnem okolju. Uvedba tovrstnih sprememb zahteva ne le prilagoditev obstoječih delovnih praks in pravilnikov, temveč tudi oblikovanje ustreznih ukrepov za obvladovanje morebitnih pomislekov in izzivov, povezanih z vsakodnevno prisotnostjo psov v delovnem okolju. V prispevku so oblikovana priporočila za uvajanje sprememb, ki bi omogočile implementacijo politik prisotnosti psov v delovna okolja v javnem sektorju.

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