



Original research article

Placing people first – human resources management in social services organizations

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Abstract

This article covers a complex topic of human resources management, with a focus on social service organizations in six randomly selected regions of the Czech Republic (Central Bohemian region; Moravian-Silesian region; South Moravian region; Prague; Olomouc region; South Bohemian region). The research was intended to determine how social service providers implement human resource management – from the point of view of the directors/managers of these organizations. Another aim was to determine how these organizations implement personnel policies. The final aim was to determine how the selection process is implemented when hiring new employees. Although human resources management in social services organizations is an essential part of the manager's job, there is little peer-reviewed literature on this topic. Our research was carried out using a mixed strategy and the QUAN-qual model. The qualitative research was used for completion of the data collected by the quantitative research. The results show that organizations that provide social services (and social work) are very specific with regard to human resources management, and expert knowledge in the field of organization management may not be a high priority.

Keywords: Evaluation of workers; Human resources management; Organizations providing social services; Recruitment; Training of employees

Introduction

Human resources management in organizations which provide social services is a complex topic that has not been sufficiently addressed in the Czech Republic. Social services organizations are key locations for social work activities. They are an important environment designed to reflect the biopsychosocial and spiritual needs of citizens and reduce social tensions caused by unequal and often unfair social conditions.

Human resources management consists of several aspects. The first is “recruitment and selection of employees” – all that is needed is to submit the required documents (Neščáková and Marelová, 2013). Hiring quality employees at minimal cost is also a consideration (Pechová and Šišová, 2016). Marková et al. (2020) state the importance of value analysis of job applicants as a tool for preventing employee turnover. A new approach is, for example, “green recruitment”, which together with other factors should ensure sustainable development (Huo et al., 2020).

The second area is the “performance evaluation”. Performance evaluations should be carried out properly and regularly (Naeem et al., 2017); according to Kocianová (2010) and Armstrong (2011), the goal is to influence work performance and

the behavior of individual employees. Cocolova and Tomickova (2021) claim that performance evaluation is an important motivation tool. Arthur (2010) describes different types of worker evaluations, e.g., in the form of recognition, improvement guidelines, etc. Regular employee evaluations are also mandated by Annex 2 to Decree No. 505/2006 Coll. (Standard No. 10).

The third area is “in the training and development of workers”. According to Dvořáková et al. (2007), we can divide worker training into two types: (1) on-the-job training aimed at acquiring the necessary skills for the performance of a given job, (2) off-the-job training designed to provide specific and professional knowledge which is useful for a given job. In connection with crisis situations, according to Zegzulková and Špiláčková (2018), there is little training for social workers with Integrated Rescue System staff in critical incident situations. Zainon et al. (2020) confirmed the influence of training on organizational performance. Professional development of employees is also set out in Labor Code No. 262/2006 Coll., as amended.

Malík Holasová (2014) talks about the regulation of professional qualifications by the government, government-appointed authorities, and particular institutions. The Association of Social Work Educators (ASVSP) (Elichová, 2017) has made a significant contribution to the professional level of education at universities and colleges.

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Submitted: 2022-11-09 • Accepted: 2023-01-09 • Prepublished online: 2023-01-12

KONTAKT 25/1: 57–67 • EISSN 1804-7122 • ISSN 1212-4117

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The fourth area is “motivation and remuneration of employees”. The link between employee motivation and remuneration is clear. Vašítková (2014) states that retaining quality employees is directly linked to their motivation and remuneration. Forms of remuneration include monetary rewards (wages and salaries), which according to Armstrong and Taylor (2015), include: cash based on work and the value of the work done, and rewards that relate to people and their contribution to the organization, for example, employee benefits and pensions. According to Vašítková (2014), non-monetary remuneration covers a wide range of employee benefits such as paid meals. According to Tichá (2013), motivation for workers can be divided into three basic categories:

1. The employee's internal need to help and external needs such as providing for their family.
2. Employee altruism.
3. Influence of the social environment, family, and upbringing.

De Almeida and Orgambídez (2019) mention employee access to opportunities as a precedent of their satisfaction. Dorta-Afonso et al. (2023) perceive employee motivation as prevention of burnout syndrome.

Social workers are at risk of developing stress related to working with traumatized clients (Quinn and Nackerud, 2019). For this reason, support from employers is necessary. Maroon (2012) defines support networks as family and society, colleagues, supervisors, atmosphere, and a supportive work environment. Supervision, as described by (Matoušek et al., 2013) and defined by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (2008), is a specific form of external support that significantly contributes to social workers' motivation. In addition, Ahammad et al. (2020) mention the importance of the perception of human resources management in the context of strategic planning (Janakiram and Narayanamma, 2019; Nastase et al., 2019).

Materials and methods

The research used a mixed strategy that incorporated the QUAN-qual model. Quantitative research was used to prepare the qualitative research (deductive nature) and to supplement the process. The quantitative research was carried out using an in-house questionnaire, the qualitative component involved an assessment using interviews.

Quantitative data collection (DATASET 1) was carried out using a questionnaire that was administered from 6 January 2020 to mid-March 2020 (it was not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic). As part of the quantitative process, six regions in the Czech Republic were randomly selected (these regions and the number of organizations in each region are shown in Table 1).

In the above mentioned regions, all organizations providing social services were selected for review. As of 5 October 2019, there were 1245 organizations in the Register of Social Service Providers (available from: <http://iregistr.mpsv.cz>) listed for the six selected regions (after removing duplicate organizations between the Central Bohemian Region and Prague, see Table 1). From these organizations, a total of 396 social services directors/managers responded to our study request.

Table 1. Total number of organizations in six randomly selected regions used in DATA SET 1

Region	Total number of organizations in six randomly selected regions
Central Bohemian	326
Moravian-Silesian	241
South Moravian	205
Prague	183
Olomouc	159
South Bohemian	131
Total	1 245
<i>Note:</i> Due to the duplication of organizations within the Central Bohemian Region and the capital city of Prague region, 29 organizations were excluded from the overall list.	

Table 2 shows the basic characteristics of the research set. The table shows that out of the 1245 organizations contacted, 396 responded to the questionnaire.

Qualitative research participants – directors (24 directors, DATA SET 2) chosen for interviews (qualitative part of the research) were selected based on the following criteria (Table 3):

- The size of the organization according to the number of registered services (according to the Register of Social Service Providers).
- The type of funding.
- The selection of organizations to maximize the number of types of social services (again according to the Register of Social Service Providers) represented.

Table 2. Selected characteristics of DATA SET 1 (directors – quantitative research, DATA SET 1)

	Sex		Age			Practice length					
Directors	men	women	≤35 years	36–50 years	≥51 years	≤1 year	2–3 years	4–5 years	6–9 years	10–13 years	≥14 years
Frequency	273	123	27	201	168	15	27	36	56	93	169
Percent	68.9	31.1	6.8	50.8	42.4	3.8	6.8	9.1	14.1	23.5	42.7
Total	396 (100%)		396 (100%)			396 (100%)					

Table 3. Research set 2 (DATA SET 2) for qualitative data analysis – directors of organizations

	Sex		Age			Practice length					
Directors	men	women	≤35 years	36–50 years	≥51 years	≤1 year	2–3 years	4–5 years	6–9 years	10–13 years	≥14 years
Frequency	7	17	0	13	11	1	2	2	4	4	11
Percent	29.2	70.8	0	54.2	45.8	4.2	8.3	8.3	16.7	16.7	45.8
Total	24 (100%)		24 (100%)			24 (100%)					

Research schedule

Data collection for the quantitative part of the research was carried out between 6 January 2020 to mid-March 2020; the data collection was not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Fig. 1).

Qualitative data collection started in August 2019. The first interview with organization directors took place on 30 August 2019; the last talks were held in mid-March 2020.

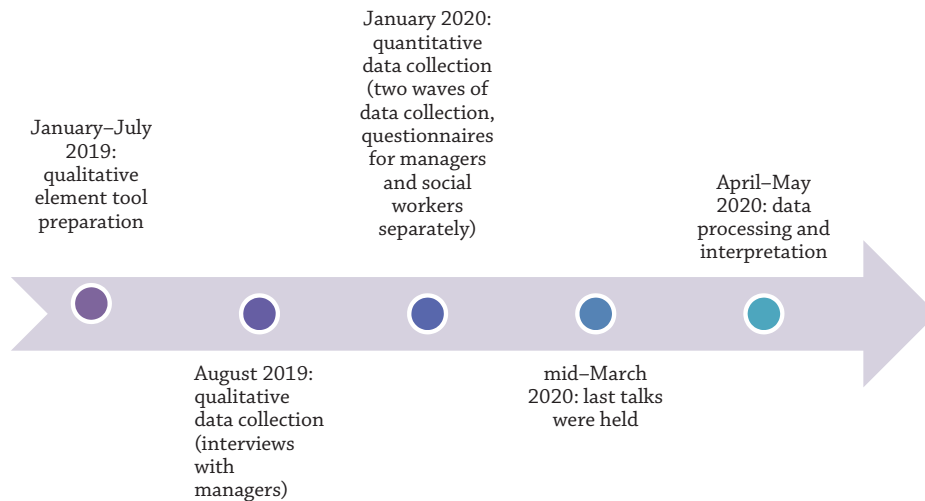


Fig. 1. Research schedule for the qualitative and quantitative elements of the study

Data processing

Data from the quantitative part was processed in SASD and then by Microsoft Excel (for descriptive statistics). The following statistical tests were selected for hypotheses testing:

- Pearson Chi-square test (the minimum selected significance level for each test was $\alpha \leq 0.05$). Furthermore, calculations of the Pearson contingency coefficient, the Normalized Person contingency coefficients, the Čuprov coefficient, the Cramer coefficient, the Wallis coefficient, the Spearman coefficient, and the Correlation Coefficient were performed.
- The analysis of adjusted residues, shown using a SIGN SCHEME, was used to reveal selected significant relationships in contingency tables and the direction of dependence.

Descriptive statistics were used to identify the essential characteristics of the research set (i.e., in the set of directors providing social services from six randomly selected regions).

Data from the qualitative research were processed in ATLAS.ti software using open selective and axial coding. The results are presented in charts that help explain selected human resources management phenomena. The first interview with directors took place on 30 August 2019, and the last talks were held in mid-March 2020; again, interviews were not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 24 interviews were conducted. The average interview duration was approximately 1 hour.

Ethical aspects

The project and its research focus, including data collection and processing, was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences of the University of South Bohemia. All personal data were processed as part of the research project in accordance with Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament, and of the Council of the EU of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons in connection with

the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC. Anonymity was ensured during data collection.

Results

Research results – quantitative data (DATA SET 1)

The data analysis was performed using SASD 1.4.10 (Statistical Data Analysis) and SPSS 24.0.

The analysis was carried out based on two stages of sorting. In the first stage, frequency tables were constructed for each indicator, and absolute and relative frequencies and mean values were calculated (modus, median, mean, variance, standard deviation, range, variance estimate and standard deviations, and interval estimation of mean and variance at 0.05).

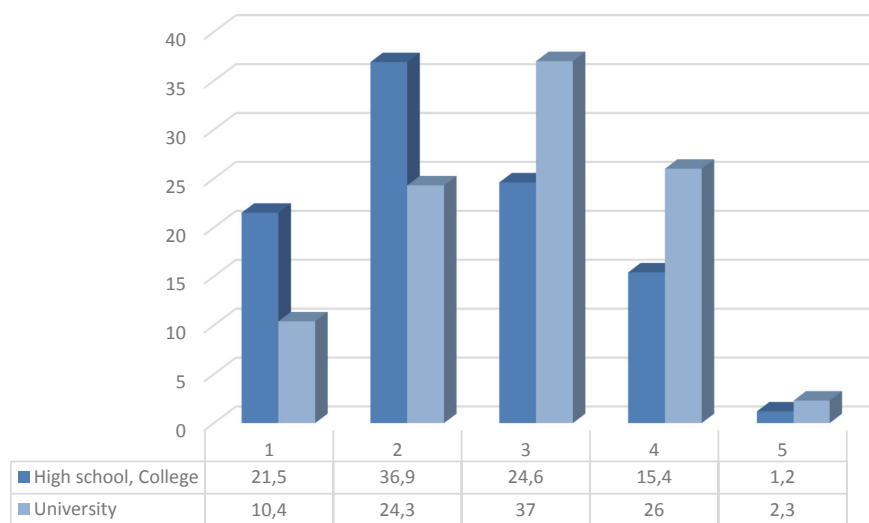
In the second sorting stage, contingency tables were constructed using absolute and relative frequencies (column, row, total, and expected) and a sign scheme. As part of the analysis, the Chi-square test – χ^2 (Pearson Chi-Square) and Independence Test – were used as appropriate. Calculations were made using the Pearson contingency coefficient, the Normalized Person contingency coefficient, the Čuprov coefficient, the Cramer coefficient, the Kruskal–Wallis coefficient, the Spearman coefficient, and the Correlation Coefficient. The strength of the correlations was measured at three levels of significance, i.e., $\alpha = 0.05$, 0.01, and 0.001.

As part of the description of the analyzed statistically significant correlations, the values of the Chi-square test and the Independence Test were used by default. To determine the direction of a statistically significant relationship between two items, the level of possible deviation was calculated for each contingency table. In cases with insufficient numbers of observations, the Yates correction was applied.

Table 4 shows a statistically significant link between director/manager education and the methods used to evaluate workers. For greater strength of tests, the educational scale

was reduced to 2 primary groups (a) secondary education and (b) university education. Managers with less education (secondary education, higher education) statistically significantly more often use written evaluations and evaluation interviews when evaluating employees; managers with university education significantly more often use evaluation interviews combined with written assessments and self-assessment questionnaires when evaluating employees (Chart 1). Since there were few extreme values of the scale (1 and 5), the Yates correction had to be used with some Chi-square calculations.

In the following table, we note that a statistically significant association between the size of the organization and the methods of evaluating workers was demonstrated; however,



Legend: Column 1 – written assessment; Column 2 – evaluation interview; Column 3 – evaluation interview in combination with a written assessment; Column 4 – self-assessment questionnaire; Column 5 – other. Note: The sum of relative frequencies is greater than 100% because respondents could indicate multiple options.

Chart 1. Correlations between director/manager education and assessment methods (in %) $N = 584$

the p -value was 0.051 (Table 5). There are clear trends in the contingency tables, where the number of use of evaluation interview in combination with written assessments increased with the size of the organization, and number of use of evaluation interviews decreased (Chart 2). Since there were few extreme responses for some issues, the Yates correction had to be applied to the Chi-square calculations.

Table 6 shows no statistically significant correlation between the manager's experience and the use of human resources management tools (Table 4). For statistical analysis, recategorization into three groups of experience was necessary: (a) up to 5 years, (b) 6–13 years, and (c) 14 or more years. Since there were few extreme responses for some issues, the Yates correction had to be applied to the Chi-square calculations.

As Table 7 shows, the use of human resources management tools in relation to staffing showed a statistically significant link between having a dedicated HR manager and the use of career structures in the organization (Chart 3). Other statistically significant links between the characteristics listed in Table 7 were not identified. Since there were few extreme responses for some issues, the Yates correction was applied to the Chi-square calculations.

In the context of staffing, recruitment, the choice of recruitment resources, and the most important recruitment

Table 4. Links between director/manager education and the frequency of staff evaluations and methods of evaluation

Manager education and the frequency of staff evaluations and methods of evaluation	p	Significance
Executing staff evaluations	0.304	n.s.
Staff evaluation methods	<0.01	**

Note (applies for Tables 4–8): p – independence test; n.s. – Statistically insignificant difference. * Statistically significant difference at significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. ** Statistically significant difference at significance level $\alpha = 0.01$.

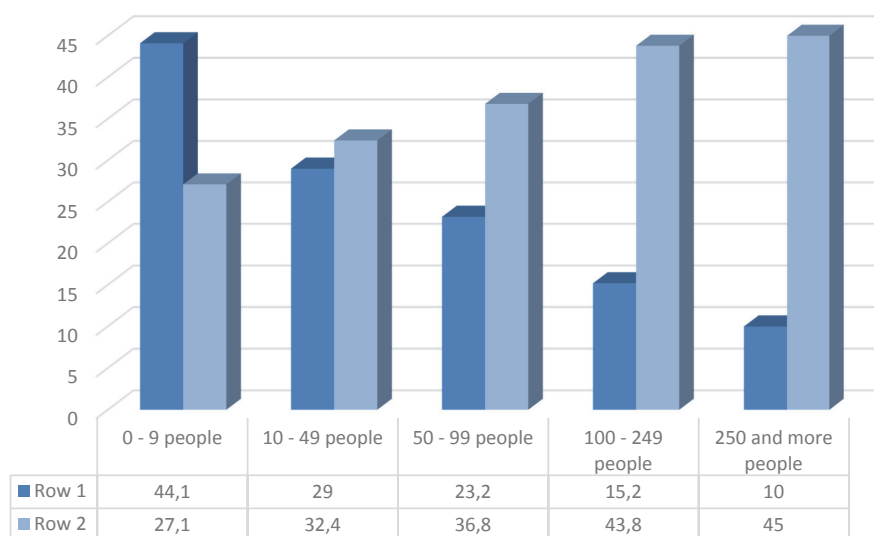
criteria, no statistically significant relationships were found between the body that recruits new staff for the organization and the features listed in Table 8.

Table 5. Correlations between organization size vs. employee evaluation methods

Organization size vs. employee evaluation methods	p	Significance
Employee evaluation methods	0.051	n.s.

Table 6. Correlations between the director's years of experience and the use of human resources management tools

Director's years of experience and the use of human resources management tools	p	Significance
Employee evaluation methods	0.051	n.s.
Employee evaluation	0.584	n.s.
Securing staff education	0.961	n.s.
Work with career rules	0.818	n.s.
Work with career maps	0.319	n.s.



Legend: Series 1 – evaluation interview; Series 2 – a combination of evaluation interview and written assessments. *Note:* The sum of relative frequencies is greater than 100% because respondents could indicate multiple options.

Chart 2. Correlations between organization size and employee evaluation methods (in %) $N = 584$



Note: The sum of relative frequencies is greater than 100% because respondents could indicate multiple options.

Chart 3. Correlations between human resources management staffing and the use of career structures (in %) $N = 608$

Table 7. Correlation between types of human resources management used within organizations (manager, HR manager, HR dept., etc.) and the use of HR tools

Human resources management staffing and the use of its tools	<i>p</i>	Significance
Employee evaluation	0.136	n.s.
Securing staff education	0.947	n.s.
Work with career rules	<0.05	*
Work with career maps	0.132	n.s.

Table 8. Correlations between staffing, recruitment, and selection criteria

Staffing, recruitment, and selection criteria	<i>p</i>	Significance
Staffing sources	0.411	n.s.
Staff recruitment criteria	0.935	n.s.

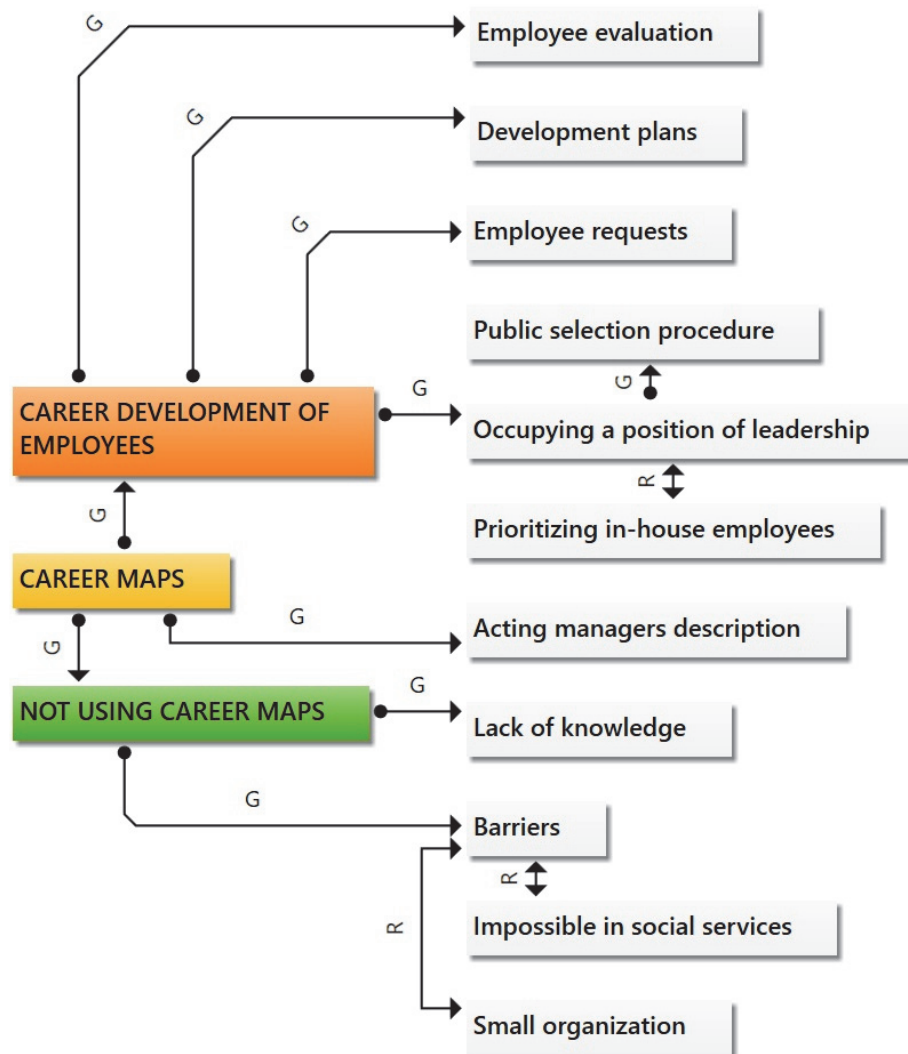
types of training, seminars, and conferences. In this question, the directors of organizations often referred to the obligation to train social workers under act 108/2006 Coll. on Social Services, mentioning, for example, the obligation to complete 24 hours of compulsory training per year. The last category was related to obstacles to education encountered by directors. The most common obstacle was the financial cost of education combined with the limited resources of their organizations.

It was clear from the answers to this question that the training of employees in social service organizations was very precisely designed.

Fig. 3 illustrates the responses to the question: "How do you use career maps in your organization?" None of the directors interviewed stated that they used career maps within their organization. For this reason, a category of non-use of career maps was established. Many directors stated that they had not even heard of career maps, and their replies also indicated that they could not imagine using these instruments in the social services field. Another obstacle to the use of career maps that the directors cited was the small size of their organization. However, the category "professional development of employee progress" was also identified from the responses. Directors

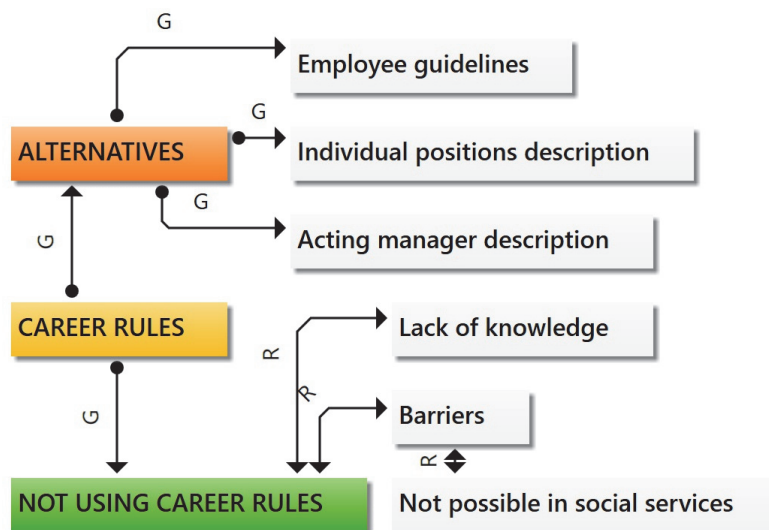
often described how employee progress was handled, even though they did not use career maps. They often described how employee progress was related to whether an employee wished to move or transfer to another job, whether the organization would continue to develop, as well as results from regular employee evaluations. In addition, directors talked about filling leadership positions in their organizations. According to their responses, they issued public offers for leadership positions but often preferred to hire internally.

Fig. 4 illustrates respondents' answers to the question: "How do you use career structures in your organization?" As was the case with career maps (see Fig. 3), most did not use career structures within their organizations, and, in most cases, they did not know of the concept. Once again, the directors stated that they could not imagine using career structures in social services. In interviews, however, directors listed various alternatives they used, such as personnel guidelines or just descriptions of individual positions. Thus, like career maps, career structures were not used by social services organizations. However, they often use similar ideas to track the progress of their employees.



Note: G – "is part of"; R – "is associated with".

Fig. 3. Career maps



Note: G – “is part of”; R – “is associated with”.

Fig. 4. Career structures

Discussion

This article focuses on organizations that provide social services. The management of organizations active in social services is an important topic with regard to management, economics, and social work (Herman et al., 2008).

Research has shown that in most organizations (53% of responses), human resources management is provided by the director/manager. Šikýř (2014) states that in some organizations, this activity is managed by specialized HR staff. It turned out that personnel managers provide human resources management in only 20% of cases, and 8% of the responses showed that the manager also had the role of personnel manager. It should be added that only 15% of the organizations contacted were small organizations, *i.e.*, with no more than 9 employees; it would be easy to understand that these organizations would not need an HR manager. However, 40% of the organizations employed from 10 to 49 people, and so having an HR manager would be expected.

6% of the organizations contacted do not evaluate employees at all. Authors in the literature agree that regular evaluation of workers is one of the most important activities in human resources management, and its complete omission is almost impossible in practice (Koubek, 2011; Naeem et al., 2017).

The threshold for the statistically significant correlations between the size of the organization and the methods used to evaluate the staff was $p < 0.05$ (Table 5). Clear trends show that evaluation interviews in combination with written assessments increase with the organization's size, while the use of evaluation interviews alone decreases (Chart 2). Most organizations (57%) carry out evaluations on a regular basis, albeit only once a year. Given that most organizations use their director for human resources management, it was no surprise that in most cases organization directors also perform staff evaluations.

Most organizations (35%) are in favor of evaluation interviews in combination with written assessments. Here, a statistically significant relationship was found between manager training and the methods used to evaluate employees. Managers with less education (secondary education) were statistically significantly more likely to use written evaluations and evaluation interviews when evaluating employees. Managers with more education were significantly more likely to use evaluation interviews in combination with written assessments or self-assessment questionnaires when evaluating employees (Chart 1); which, according to Kocianová (2010), is one of the more effective methods of employee evaluation.

Written evaluations have their place since they provide more opportunity for comments. Some organizations (35%) combine these two evaluation methods (*i.e.*, the interviews mentioned above and written evaluations). It should be mentioned that there was a strong correlation between worker evaluations and remuneration. Evaluations can be very motivating for employees (Šikýř, 2014).

In most cases, the recruitment of new employees was handled by the directors of the organizations. However, 21% of responses reported that HR staff played a role in recruitment. In 5% of cases, HR was reported as being responsible for employee evaluations. In 15% of cases, social workers were reported as being involved in recruiting new employees. Vajner (2007) describes recruitment as a complex process including strategies and plans.

Another area of importance involved the diversity of resources used during the recruitment process. Kocianová (2010) lists the use of internal and external resources. Our research included external resources only, *i.e.*, the questions did not evaluate the use of internal resources. Resources such as the employment office, the Internet, advertising, and recommendations from employees of the organization were used to almost the same extent. Only 9% of the organizations contacted reported that they cooperated with educational institutions when recruiting staff, even though this method provides a mu-

tual benefit for employers looking for employees and graduates looking for employment. Graduates also bring new ideas and innovations to organizations. Horvátová et al. (2016) note that this approach to finding employees also benefits society at large.

Research shows that the most critical criterion for recruiting new employees is work experience, although the job interview does play an important role. In social work, how a person treats people and how they affect people is also critically important (Šikýř, 2016).

In the framework of education and development of employees, only one director from all those contacted (quantitative part of the research) stated that they do not provide training for employees. Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, imposes an obligation on social workers to participate in continuing education (Malík Holasová, 2014). According to research, 40% of organizations provide employee training based on the current needs of the organization and the needs of individual employees. Organization directors often combine the organization's educational needs and the wishes of employees. Research has confirmed that organizations often have educational plans in place. Průcha (2014), on the other hand, describes training methods that do not consider the needs of employees. There is a clear link between employee evaluations and employee training, especially when employees can express their needs and wishes with regard to further training. Of course, financial limits affect organizations in other respects as well (Gruber et al., 2016; Kocianová, 2010).

Training methods used by social service organizations are very diverse. However the choice of the appropriate training method by social service organization is very important with regard to its effectiveness, which was confirmed by Šikýř (2014). Research has shown that organizations have elaborate training plans that are linked to specific educational plans. Each year these plans are updated and supplemented with new training objectives. Organization directors also reported that training topics were often repeated. Research has shown that while training topics are varied, they are often inadequate. Organization directors report using other methods of education (e.g., coursework, internships, seminars, consultations, conferences, and workshops). Research has shown that organization directors try to provide their employees with engaging, relevant, and beneficial training.

The quantitative part of the research showed that only 2% of the organizations surveyed work with career maps and most directors were not familiar with the term "career structures". Pilařová (2008) mentions the importance of career maps, although the directors interviewed disagreed with this statement. Only 6% of the organizations surveyed reported working with career structures. On the other hand, these organizations often have educational plans as a human resources

development tool. These educational plans are often a combination of the educational needs of the whole organization and the educational needs and wishes of individual employees.

Conclusions

There were statistically significant links between manager training and the methods used for evaluating the employees. The director's level of education was also found to affect evaluation methods. There was no statistically significant link between the size of the organization and evaluation methods, but the value is borderline for statistical significance $p < 0.051$. There are clear trends in the contingency tables, showing that evaluation interviews used in combination with written assessments increase with the size of the organization, while the use of evaluation interviews alone decreases (Chart 2). Another key result of the quantitative research was a statistically significant link between the entity/body that manages human resources and career structures. They are significantly more likely to have career structures when there is a human resources manager.

One primary research question was: How do social service organizations use selected human resources management tools? Organizations providing social services offer employee training according to the organization's current needs in combination with the educational needs of individual employees. Respondents mentioned the use of training plans, which were regularly updated, and training methods such as seminars and coursework. Career maps and career structures, which were also the focus of research, were seldom used in social service organizations, and the directors of these organizations felt no need to use these tools. Development plans are used in place of these tools, in which, among other things, descriptions of individual positions in organizations are fully described.

Limitations of the study

The research results are not representative as the research was not conducted throughout the whole of the Czech Republic, but in 6 randomly selected regions. The research is also influenced by the return of 396 responses out of 1,245 organizations contacted.

Funding

This article was created thanks to funding from the budget of the GAJU project entitled "Selected aspects of social work management" (Reg. No. GAJU 052/2019/S).

Ethical aspects and conflict of interests

The authors have no conflict of interests to declare.

Lidé na prvním místě – řízení lidských zdrojů v organizacích sociálních služeb

Souhrn

Tento článek popisuje komplexní téma řízení lidských zdrojů se zaměřením na organizace sociálních služeb v rámci šesti náhodně vybraných krajů České republiky (Středočeský kraj; Moravskoslezský kraj; Jihomoravský kraj; Praha; Olomoucký kraj; Jihočeský kraj). Cílem výzkumu bylo zjistit, jak je řízení lidských zdrojů implementováno poskytovateli sociálních služeb – z pohledu ředitelů/manažerů těchto organizací. Dalším cílem bylo zjistit, jak je v těchto organizacích implementována personální politika. Konečným cílem bylo zjistit, jak probíhá výběrové řízení při nábore nových zaměstnanců. Přestože je řízení lidských zdrojů v organizacích sociálních služeb nezbytnou součástí práce manažera, existuje jen málo recenzované literatury na toto téma. Náš výzkum byl proveden pomocí smíšené strategie a modelu QUAN-qual. Díky tomu byl kvalitativní výzkum použit pro doplnění dat shromážděných kvantitativním výzkumem. Výsledky ukazují, že organizace poskytující sociální služby (a sociální práci) jsou velmi specifické z hlediska řízení lidských zdrojů a odborné znalosti v oblasti řízení organizací nemusí být vysokou prioritou.

Klíčová slova: hodnocení pracovníků; management lidských zdrojů; nábor; organizace poskytující sociální služby; školení zaměstnanců

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