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CSR PRACTICES IN HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION ON THE EXAMPLE OF STASZÓW COUNTY IN ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE VOIVODESHIP

Abstract

In recent years, there have been a number of initiatives to promote the social responsibility of public administration. The concept has largely become recognized in the central administration, but it is different at the regional or local administration level. The purpose of the research was to identify and review CSR activities and assess the extent of their application in the area of human capital management in local government units at the local level. The research was of a pilot nature and covered all communes of the Staszów district in the Świętokrzyskie voivodeship (8 communes).The research was conducted using a structured interview with municipal managers (mayors, secretaries of municipalities) according to a prepared interview questionnaire. The research identified CSR practices used by municipalities in the area of human capital management. These were mainly related to organizing working time, integrating employees, building ethical standards, and spreading preventive health and healthy lifestyles. The study, in addition to recognizing the situation in the analyzed area, can contribute to promoting the idea of social responsibility among representatives of regional and local administrations.

Keywords: *social responsibility of administration, human capital management, CSR practices in municipalities*

Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increase in familiarity with and the importance of the concept of corporate social responsibility , which was widely reflected in academic and professional literature. Although social responsibility is most often associated with business, according to the ISO 26000 standard, introduced in 2010, these issues apply to all types of organizations, including public administration. Numerous initiatives are being taken to promote social responsibility of public administration and activities in this area. To agreater extent, theconcept has become recognized at the central government level, but it is worse at the regional or local government level.

Among the primary stakeholders of the CSR concept are employees, who not only fulfill the goals of the organization, but are also responsible for creating the image of the company in the community and for building a competitive advantage based on human capital (Harrison, Freeman, Abreu, 2015, pp. 858–859). How an organization approaches the fulfillment of employee

interests in the human resources management (HRM) process is an important determinant of an organization's level of social responsibility. In the Polish as well as foreign literature, a lot of attention has been paid to the issues of HRM in relation to CSR practices (Borkowska, (2005, pp.9); Mariappanadar, (2012, pp.168-184), Jamali, (2015, pp.125-143), Szczepańska-Woszczyna, (2015, pp.403-409); Sarvaiya, Eweje, Arrowsmith, (2018, pp.825-837); Furmańska-Maruszak, Sudolska, (2017, pp.253-267). There are fewer studies of CSR practices in public administration, especially those describing specific activities carried out in its offices. Thus, the purpose of the study is to identify, review CSR activities and assess the extent of their application in the area of human resources management in local government units, i.e. at the local level. An indirect goal of the study is also to promote the idea of social responsibility among representatives of regional and local administrations. The research was conducted in the communes of Staszów county in the Świętokrzyskie voivodeship.

The results of the study may be useful for managers of local government units to build the image of the administration as a socially responsible employer and to promote the idea of social responsibility in local government units.

CSR AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

There are many references in the literature to the concept of corporate social responsibility. An attempt to define the concept of CSR was made by, among others Sokolowska (2013, pp. 40–62), Teneta-Skwiercz (2013, pp. 13–26), Rojek-Nowosielska (2017, pp. 75–83). Initially, CSR referred only to companies and was regarded as their response to social, environmental and economic challenges, and as a response to criticism of irresponsible behavior by management. Gradually, the meaning of the term has evolved, and over time companies have come to view CSR as a management approach that allows an organization to contribute to sustainable development.

There is no single universally accepted definition of corporate social responsibility in the literature. Bowen defines CSR as *the commitment of a business to pursue such policies, to make such decisions, to adopt*

such a line of conduc*t, which are consistent with the prevailing goals and values of society* (Golaszewska-Kaczan, pp. 50–51). CSR refers to practices that allow an organization to responsibly manage its impact on society and the environment. This impact results from the organization's decisions and actions, and projects onto the quality of life of the individuals and collectivities with which it interacts and for whose benefit it takes action. The funds that are spent on these activities are not treated in the category of costs, but as an investment that will bring tangible benefits in the future. Being responsible does not only mean meeting all formal and legal requirements, but also increased investment in human resources, environmental protection and relations with stakeholders, i.e. voluntary involvement (Anisiewicz, Wołowiec 2022, p. 226). Nowadays, CSR is considered an effective management concept, through which dialog with the local community contributes to the competitiveness of the organization on many levels, while helping to shape the conditions for sustainable development in economic and social terms (Adamik, Nowicki, 2012, pp. 503). There are many potential areas of action that create scope for public administration to engage in efforts to implement the principles of social responsibility. The first such actions of the administration took place in 2004 in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (Kos, Gudowski, 2022, p. 396; Anisiewicz, 2022, p. 211).

Over time, the concept has also become recognized in public administration, especially at the central government level. Models of administrative social responsibility are drawn from the concept of corporate social responsibility. The international discourse in ISO, OECD and UN forums, as well as the ISO 26000:2010 social responsibility standard, which introduced the terms *social responsibility of organizations* and *sustainable public administration* (Sustainable development…, 2020, pp. 14), played a significant role in this. The ISO 26000 standard pays attention to promoting this idea in public administration, taking into account its peculiarities, particularly the legal framework and the requirements for administration, which by its very nature works for the public good. The standard also identifies key areas of organizational social responsibility and guidelines and recommendations for action in them. These areas included organizational governance, human rights, labor law practices, the environment, fair market practices, consumer issues, community involvement

and community development. An area that requires special attention when considering CSR practices is the organization's people management activities. The research shows that the image of a responsible organization consists primarily of its image as an employer. On one hand, employees are key stakeholders in the organization, and on the other, according to PN-ISO 26000:2012, labor practices have a serious impact on respect for the law and the sense of justice in society (Guidelines for…, 2012, pp. 46–47). The basic principles of social responsibility in the area of human – labor can be derived from the regulations contained in such documents as: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the CSR Green Book, or the ISO26000 standards. It is emphasized that these documents do not so much specify what specific actions should be taken in companies, but indicate areas where the actions taken affect the formation of good (which is understood here as consistent with the idea of CSR) workplaces. These areas include compensation, employment, development and training, internal communication, safe and healthy working conditions, equal opportunity and nondiscrimination, and work-life balance (Celma et al. 2014, pp. 82-99). Adamik and Nowicki (2012, p. 517) distinguished four main domains of CSR related to employees, that is, employee welfare, workplace conditions, human resource development and other. Employee well-being, according to these authors, is as follows: fair and dignified work, equal opportunity and diversity in the workplace, incentive programs and benefit systems, dialog with employees and the provision of information, employee opinion surveys, constancy and convenience of the form of employment. In turn, workplace conditions are formed by safety in the workplace, ergonomics of workstations, reduction of stressors, comfortable working conditions. The third domain is the human potential development policy in place, which consists of funding for courses and training, an extensive career path, the promotion of health-oriented and proactive behavior, and the introduction of opportunities for individual development. The domain also includes: programs to support families, enabling employee involvement in the company's development, programs to support beginners (coaching, mentoring). The indicated areas of human resource management activities in relation to CSR can also be analyzed in public administration.

Research methodology

The purpose of the article was to identify activities, assess the extent and degree of implementation of the concept of social responsibility of public administration in the area of human capital management in local government units at the local level through:

a. identification of the degree of perception of the concept of social responsibility of public administration in municipal offices;
b. identification of actual administrative social responsibility activities and practices undertaken by municipal offices in the area of human capital management.

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- what is the level of perception of the idea of social responsibility of administration in municipal offices?
- what activities are undertaken by local government units in the field of social responsibility of administration in the area of human capital management?

The study used the following research methods:

- an analysis of the literature on the subject to determine the CSR tools used for local government employees.
- in-depth interview with municipal managers (mayors, secretaries of municipalities) conducted by the authors according to a prepared interview questionnaire, consisting of 26 questions.

The study was conducted in January 2024 and was a pilot study. All municipalities in the Staszów district of the Świętokrzyskie province (8 municipalities) were covered. The interview questionnaire was answered by the authorities of these municipalities.

Study results

In order to implement good CSR practices in a public administration unit, it is very important to have an unequivocal positive attitude of the management of the public administration unit towards socially responsible activities. In the first stage of the survey, respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the concept of social responsibility of administration and whether they were taking such actions. The majority of respondents answered in the affirmative and said that the local administration takes numerous measures in this area. The research paid particular attention to CSR practices in the area of employee management in municipal offices. According to respondents' information, social responsibility activities toward employees mainly focus on areas such as workplace conditions, employee engagement, employee recruitment, induction, and development and training.

The first area analyzed concerned working time. Respondents were asked whether remote working is possible in their offices, as well as organizing flexible working hours. Remote work is occasional, and can be shaped flexibly by the employer, which is conducive to the activation of certain groups of employees, such as parents or people with disabilities. Only one surveyed municipal office did not have remote work provision. In other units, the possibility to do remote work was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic and continued to exist. Most often, however, this was done at the request of the employee and in justified cases.

Another area analyzed was integration and building employee commitment by organizing team-building events, excursions, joint outings to the cinema, theater, among others. The employer should initiate and support integration activities that help build a sustainable and cohesive organization. In all the surveyed units, such measures are being taken. In four units, in addition, employees receive various non-wage benefits. These are usually passes to sports facilities, sports activities, cultural events financed by the Company's Social Benefits Fund. The survey respondents were also asked whether surveys of employee job satisfaction are conducted at the offices. Satisfied and engaged employees translate into better work performance, lower absenteeism

and many other benefits. Only one of the surveyed offices conducts monitoring of employee job satisfaction.

For the employer, the physical and mental health of the employee is an important issue. This has a bearing on the effectiveness of the subordinate's work, and thus on the outcome of the entire organization. According to information obtained during the interview, employees of the offices participate in actions and initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles, which are conducted in the municipalities, but physical activity is also promoted among employees. Mostly through: rehabilitation, sports exercise, participation in disease prevention campaigns, informational meetings, support for preventive examinations and immunizations. In some municipalities, runs are organized in which employees participate (for example, in the municipality of Staszow – a 10 km run).

An important area of taking care of employees' health is also an appropriate occupational health and safety policy or issues related to workplace discrimination or countering bullying. As declared by respondents, seven out of eight surveyed units have implemented health and safety policies and rules against discrimination in the workplace. Five offices have procedures in place to counter bullying. These solutions make it possible to effectively manage the health and safety area, as well as the personal safety aspects of employees. An important document that makes it easier for employees to function and provide services is the Employee Code of Ethics. Such a document exists in five of the surveyed units. Table 1 shows the results of the survey on workplace conditions in municipal offices.

Table 1. *Workplace conditions as assessed by respondents*

Respondents' opinions on working conditions	Share of responses [%]	
	yes	no
Is it possible to organize flexible working hours in the office, e.g. for people with disabilities, for parent employees?	87.5	12.5
Is it possible to work remotely in the office?	87.5	12.5
Are there social events for employees and retirees at the office?	100	0
Are outings to the cinema, theater, excursions organized in the office?	100	0
Does the office organize any perks, non-wage benefits for its employees, e.g. sports cards, additional insurance, medical packages?	50	50
Does the office participate in actions, initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, sports activities?	87.5	12.5
Is there any promotion of physical activity among employees?	100	0
Has the office been vaccinated against influenza, Covid-19?	0	100
Has a Health and Safety Policy been established and implemented at the office?	87.5	12.5
Have "anti-bullying procedures" been developed/exist in the office?	62.5	37.5
Has the office formulated policies relating to anti-discrimination in the workplace?	87.5	12.5
Is/was there an "Employee Code of Ethics" implemented in the office?"	62.5	37.5
Are employee job satisfaction surveys conducted at the office?	12.5	87.5

Source: own study.

The research shows that the perception of a responsible entity/organization consists primarily of its image as an employer. The study also assessed this area of municipal offices. Table 2 below presents examples of CSR practices in municipalities used in the area of recruitment and induction of new employees into the workforce.

Table 2. *Examples of CSR practices in municipal offices – recruitment and adaptation of employees*

CSR practices for employee recruitment and employee adaptation	Share of responses [%]	
	yes	no
Using innovative solutions in the recruitment process	0	100
Information in advertisements about the office being an equal opportunity employer, encouraging people with disabilities to apply	50	50
The existence of an effective, formalized process for bringing a new employee on board	87.5	12.5
Assigning a mentor to a newly hired employee to assist in adaptation at the new workplace	75	25

Source: author's own study.

The survey shows that recruitment in the offices is carried out in a standard way, with none of the offices surveyed using innovative solutions in the recruitment process such as recruitment platforms or electronic tools, for example. A good direction is to include in the ads information that the institution is an equal opportunity employer, and to encourage people with disabilities who meet the requirements specified in the offer to apply. Such activities are declared by half of the surveyed units.

Another area analyzed is the process of adaptation in the new workplace. Proper induction of a new employee into the workplace should culminate in full adaptation, implementation and self-reliance. Research indicates that employees are more likely to stay longer in an organization if they feel good about their implementation process (Sustainability…2020, pp. 38). According to the information obtained, only one of the offices surveyed does not have a formalized process for inducting a new employee. In other units, such a process is in place, and a mentor is assigned to the newly hired employee to help with adaptation in the new workplace. For those hired for the first time in an official position, this process is called preparatory service and ends with an exam.

One of the elements of human resources policy, understood as effective human capital management, is to ensure that all working people, at every stage of their career path, have opportunities for development. Employee development is important in ensuring the satisfaction and well-being of employees because, among other things, it affects healthy living, the acquisition

of knowledge, which in turn makes it possible to achieve a decent standard of living. As the respondents indicated, there is a friendly training environment in the surveyed units. In all of the surveyed offices, training is organized, most often to improve the level of knowledge and skills necessary for a given position, while there is less training related to corruption risks, customer service, or ergonomics at work.

Table 3. *Examples of CSR practices in employee training and development*

CSR practices for employee training and development	Share of responses [%]	
	yes	**no**
Organization of training	100	0
Training related to corruption risks	37.5	62.5
Customer service training	25	75
Training in environmental attitudes	62.5	37.5
Training in office ergonomics	25	75
Organization of internships for people with disabilities	50	50
Is there a friendly training environment in the office?	87.5	12.5

Source: author's own study.

Conclusions

Implementing the principles of social responsibility in local government has multifaceted benefits for both those who work there and external beneficiaries**.** The analysis of CSR activities in the area of human capital management in the offices of municipalities of Staszow County in the Świętokrzyskie Province allows us to formulate several conclusions.

1. The idea of social responsibility is well-known in municipalities and they are taking action in this area. However, the range of practices that offices use is much poorer than in the private sector.

2. In the surveyed municipal offices, practices were identified that can be categorized as activities within the framework of social responsibility of administration, mainly in such areas as work organization, integration of employees, building ethical standards or spreading preventive health and healthy lifestyles.

3. Noteworthy are activities related to the induction of new employees into the workforce. Such support positively influences their professional adaptation, and at the same time allows them to pass on the principles of organizational culture.

4. An important area of CRS' activities is employee training. The survey shows that there is a friendly training environment in the units. It mainly concerns the expansion of expertise, which is an important part of building a positive image of the administrative unit, but also enables the individual development of employees. In turn, the implementation of health-promoting activities contributes to the spread of preventive health.

5. CSR activities undertaken in offices also testify to the growing awareness of local government management of the importance of the human factor for the efficiency of the entity, as well as the influence of employees on its performance.

The research was limited in scope, as the analysis covered municipalities in only one county, but it was a pilot study. In the future, the survey will be expanded, both in terms of the issues analyzed and the size of the research sample.

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