

UNPAID WORK IN POLISH ORGANISATIONS

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Objectives of the article: to understand perceptions of jobs as unpaid, to identify their characteristics and motivations for these jobs.

Design/methodology/approach: the paper was guided by the tenets of critical management studies, used the case study method, and conducted categorised interviews.

Subject scope of the article: perceptions, attributes and functions of unpaid work, motivation for unpaid work.

Conclusions: the survey confirmed the performance of unpaid work in organisations. As unpaid work, respondents perceived the performance of tasks outside their formal job descriptions. The alleged primary function of such work was cost savings. Employees were motivated by rational arguments, manipulation and even coercion.

Research limitations/implications: limitations arise from the case study methodology - limited opportunities for theory formulation. The research can be taken as a starting point for quantitative research on unpaid work: motives and consequences.

Practical implications: the article makes managers aware of the apparent and ad hoc nature of the benefits of unpaid work, pointing out the potential costs of this practice. It provides an incentive to make employees aware of the importance of organisational flexibility and the role of performing a wider range of tasks in providing it. In addition, it should prompt recognition and appreciation of employees' performance of additional tasks.

Social implications: the article reveals phenomena from the so-called dark side of intra-organisational relations, exposes reprehensible practices of managers and, consequently, broadens the knowledge on the situation of employees in some Polish organisations. It may be a stimulus for reflection and correction of managers' behaviours resulting in the improvement of employees' well-being.

Originality/value: the article is located outside the mainstream of contemporary reflections on management in organisations, addressing the issue of employees' perceptions of their situation when they are instructed to perform tasks outside their job description and their feelings about it. It is aimed at both management theorists and practitioners.

Keywords: work, remuneration, exploitation, manipulation.

Category of the paper: case study.

Introduction

Work is necessary for people, it gives fulfilment, it allows one to experience the satisfaction of achievement, it satisfies the need for companionship. Work is not an Old Testament curse (Gen 3, p. 17) or a necessary evil to be avoided at all costs. It determines people's lives and social contacts, both in a positive and negative sense (Lucassen, 2023). Four functions can be attributed to work: economic, income, social and developmental. From the employee's point of view, the income function is of primary importance, which does not mean that the others are unimportant. However, it is only when the employee feels that the income function of work is sufficiently fulfilled that he or she pays more attention to the other roles. One of the limiting factors of job satisfaction is the limitation or even lack of remuneration for certain tasks performed by employees. Performing such work can be seen as conflicting with the primary motive for undertaking paid work, i.e. providing income.

Numerous varieties of unpaid work can be distinguished: working for oneself, housework, maintenance or repair work, caring for the elderly, sick or children, voluntary community work, political or NGO activism, subsistence farming, helping in a family business. The listed types of work have one thing in common: they could be replaced by paid products (goods or services) (Drela, 2018). In addition, a distinction is made between unpaid work related to consumption and for one's own education (Bruyn-Hundt, 1996).

Unpaid work can be considered, among other things, in a micro context - at the level of a household or a single organisation (as the article does).

In organisations, unpaid work can take various forms, including work placements, unpaid internships, work experience and unpaid trial periods. An unpaid work contract may be entered into for reasons such as: gaining experience in a particular job or industry, testing a particular person's professional skills, dedicating time and effort to work for a non-profit organisation. However, it should be noted that the types of unpaid work listed are such, so to speak, *ex definitione* and the worker is fully aware that he or she will not be paid for the work. As a specific form of unpaid work, one can point to the need to perform numerous additional works of an administrative nature, unrelated to the employee's core duties (Majcherek, 2022). One can also see a specific aspect of unpaid work - employment in positions but for low or even very low wages, as illustrated by data from the USA (Kauflin, 2017).

Nowadays, with widespread declarations of the need for respect and subjective treatment of employees, it may be questionable whether the phenomenon of unpaid work in organisations exists at all, or whether there is a contradiction between declarations and practice. The sad reality is illustrated by observations. K. Markowska (2024) found that one in five Polish employees (21.7 per cent) admit to working for free between 6 and 10 hours per week. On average, Poles work 4 hours and 43 minutes of unpaid overtime each week.

The typology of unpaid work cited in the article by D. Grant-Smith and P. McDonald (2017) does not capture unpaid work performed by employees after they have entered into a contract with their employer. Nonetheless, the article adopts the thesis, derived from readings and interviews with employees, that there are jobs performed in organisations that are **perceived** (author's subclause) by employees as ones for which they are not adequately paid, which have been identified as unpaid work. The text does not prejudge whether this view of the workers is justified from the point of view of labour law, as this would require a judicial decision. What is considered important is the workers' perception of the situation. The essence of it, is that they perform tasks that they believe they are not adequately paid for.

The article deals with employees who have entered into an employment contract under the Labour Code. The situation of persons performing work under other contracts is not of interest to the author. Persons performing work as apprentices, interns or volunteers have also been omitted. Illegal situations of abuse of the institution of the probationary day at work have also not been included.

The importance of the subject matter of the article stems from the functions attributed to human labour, including paid labour, the fulfilment of which is nullified by unpaid work.

The presumption of unpaid work raises a number of fundamental issues: whether workers are indeed performing unpaid work, what determines whether a particular job is considered unpaid, what are the characteristics and types of unpaid work, how workers are motivated to perform unpaid work, which allow for the formulate the objectives of the article:

1. understanding and explaining the ways in which workers perceive work as unpaid,
2. identifying the characteristics of unpaid work,
3. identifying the roles attributed to unpaid work,
4. identifying ways to motivate employees to perform unpaid work.

The article reviews publications on the subject of unpaid work, refers to the provisions of the Polish labour law, from which conclusions can be drawn relating to the tasks that employees should perform in their positions and for which they should receive remuneration. Moreover, the statements of the respondents were quoted referring to four basic phenomena related to the indicated objectives of the article: 1) ways of perceiving unpaid work, 2) attributes and types of unpaid work, 3) functions ascribed to unpaid work, 4) ways of motivating to perform unpaid work. On the basis of these contributions, generalisations were made in conclusion, in which the objectives of the article were realised.

The relative newness of the topic of unpaid work performed in organisations, as evidenced by the lack of coverage by D. Grant-Smith and P. McDonald (2017), influenced the choice of a qualitative approach. Categorical interviews were conducted in March and April 2024 with a group of thirteen respondents employed under contract in a variety of institutions. An invitation to participate in the study was extended to about 80 people. Of these, only seven responded positively. The remaining respondents were invited to the survey individually. Efforts were made to ensure that they were diverse in terms of demographic characteristics,

occupation and nature of place of employment. Interviews were conducted via the MS Teams platform. The interviews were coded and then transcriptions were made and analyzed. The study used *a priori* coding (Miles, Huberman, 2000). Codes were deductively superimposed on the content of the transcriptions after which they were completed or corrected (Czernek, 2016, p. 182). However, in describing the results of the survey, the masculine gender is used for the respondents mainly due to the desire to ensure their anonymity.

The article can be located in the stream of critical management studies because of its intention to question the organisational order and managerial power, its description of the oppressive actions of managers and its desire to uncover the interests of groups exercising power in organisations (Sułkowski, 2011).

1. Views on unpaid work

1.1. Types of unpaid work

There are specific strands in research on unpaid work. The first refers to the broader context in which it is situated. In it, one can locate M.A. Duran (2015), who pointed out that this type of work has only received special attention since 1995, when the United Nations proposed a reform of the System of National Accounts to include unpaid work. Since then, research on the topic in question has intensified. In the aforementioned text, M. A. Duran dealt in particular with the links between paid and unpaid work, welfare and globalisation, and the differences in the use of these terms in different production and cultural contexts. Also I. Hirway (2015) analysed unpaid work in the context of macroeconomics, including neoliberal ideology, and argued that the strong links between unpaid work and the economy make it necessary to expand the scope of conventional economics and include unpaid work in its analysis. A study of the reasons for the need for unpaid work and the factors influencing its extent and form among different types of digital platforms was conducted by D. Baines and I. Cunningham (2020). They found that digital freelancers show a lower extent of unpaid work under relatively 'open' worker autonomy platform systems. In contrast, 'closed' systems limit unpaid work on food delivery platforms, providing relative security for workers who are easily replaced in an overcrowded sector requiring few skills.

Another strand in research on unpaid work is the observations linking this type of work to gender. This is largely due to the fact that work described as 'care' is almost always unequally distributed between men and women, and when both paid and unpaid work is taken into account, women bear a much greater burden of work than men. This unequal division of labour is unjust and amounts to a violation of women's basic human rights (Hirway, 2015). Included in this trend are D. Baines and P. Armstrong (2019). have been concerned with gender

functioning and social relations in long-term care or nursing homes, examining mainly the female workforce. In women's experiences, one of the strongest themes was unpaid work. Drawing on gendered organisational theory, the article introduced the concept of non-work tasks and suggests the existence of needs and gendered expectations of residents, families and the care workers themselves.

An article by L.R. Shade and J. Jacobson (2015), who dealt with the experiences of young Canadian women undertaking unpaid internships in the creative sector, can also be situated in the gendered stream. The results of their study confirmed the class privilege of such internships, which could be undertaken by those with sufficient wealth. Female respondents, participants in unpaid internships, articulated a desire to gain meaningful, secure and paid employment.

In a subsequent publication with a focus on women, T.H. Coventry, SE. Maslin-Prothero and G. Smith (2015) noted the reluctance of nurses to leave clinical settings to participate in continuing professional development due to, among other things, the possibility of unpaid sabbatical leave or the need to use personal time to complete mandatory training. This implies that the limited opportunities for unpaid work (during internship) limit the enhancement of competence.

To some extent, the negative phenomenon of the wage gap concerning women is linked to women's unpaid work, and this is despite the fact that, in many fields of study, the number of female graduates exceeds the number of male graduates (Mazur-Wierzbicka, Ziembowska, 2024).

The unequal distribution of unpaid work by gender lies at the heart of gender inequality and also implies suboptimal use of the national labour force (Hirway, 2015).

In the critical current, one can situate F. Genko and R. Korschak (1999), who, while describing and analysing the assumptions and practice of lean management, although they did not use the phrase 'unpaid work', concluded that in connection with the additional activities performed by employees of Japanese companies (e.g. inspecting materials and products, tidying the workplace, attending quality circle meetings), it is not about job enrichment, but the opposite. Each additional activity creates resentment and irritation in the workers instead of the expected increase in motivation. The described burdening of employees is in fact unpaid work performed by them, resulting in the cost reduction expected of their superiors by higher levels of management.

A significant contribution to research on the phenomenon of unpaid work has been made by D. Grant-Smith and P. McDonald (2017), who conducted an extensive literature review on this type of work. They explained the terminology associated with unpaid work and synthesised the findings of their research on this topic into a matrix in which, using the two dimensions of purpose of experience and participatory discretion, they identified four forms of unpaid work, as shown in the table below.

Table 1.*Four types of unpaid work*

		Participatory discretion	
		Mandatory	Elective
Purpose of experience	Education	Mandatory educational Unpaid work that is a formal requirement of completing a course of study or qualification (e.g. service learning or practicum)	Elective educational Unpaid work that is pedagogically oriented but not required to complete, or additional, to a course of study or qualification (e.g. industry attachments)
	Productive work	Mandatory productive work Unpaid work imposed by the state (e.g. work-based welfare) or employers prior to entering into a formal paid employment relationship (e.g. work trials)	Elective producing work Unpaid work which involves undertaking productive work but is not linked to educational outcomes (e.g. volunteering, unpaid internships or unpaid professional work)

Source: Grant-Smith, McDonald (2017).

The table provides a clear idea of the types of unpaid work discussed in the literature and, consequently, suggests possible options for management decisions and practices in organisations where unpaid workers form part of their workforce.

1.2. The legal perspective of unpaid work

In today's organisations, there are varying trends in the area of shaping the relationship between employer (superiors) and employees. On the one hand, so-called fruit Thursdays, team-building meetings or trips, medical packages as well as sports cards and additional leave for employees in connection with the birth of a child are well-known. It is postulated that empathy and attentiveness have a permanent place in management (jk, 2024). On the other hand, works have been published (e.g. Januszewska, 2024) exposing pathological interpersonal relations in some organisations or treating of the so-called "manor" organisational culture (Hryniewicz, 2007) or the fuck up culture (pol. zapieprzu) (Szymanik, 2022) or even fuck up culture (pol. zapierdolu) (Smełka-Leszczynska, 2024). The terms exploitation and exploitation (Kim et al., 2020), slavery (Crane, 2013) are also used to describe the relationship between workers and managers in companies. This raises the question of whether the aforementioned terms are mere exhibits from the open-air museum of intra-organisational relations or, nevertheless, phenomena that contemporary employees actually face? Or can the situations indicated be seen as extremes of a specific spectrum describing the state of relations between employees and their superiors in organisations? The picture is probably not black and white, it is expressed in various shades of grey. An important element of the supervisor-employee relationship is the behaviour of the former in assigning tasks to employees and determining remuneration for these jobs. This is regulated by labour law.

In Article 13 of the 1974 Labour Code, the provision "An employee has the right to fair remuneration for work. The conditions for the realisation of this right shall be determined by the provisions of the labour law and the state policy in the field of wages (...)" clearly defines the workers' entitlement to remuneration. In turn, Article 78, §1 of the said Code establishes

that the amount of remuneration should correspond to the type of work, the employee's qualifications and must be determined taking into account the quantity and quality of the work provided. In another provision, Article 94(1) of the Labour Code, it is required that before the employee is allowed to work, the employer must inform the employee of the scope of his or her duties, how to perform the work in the designated position and basic rights. The scope of duties is a description of the activities performed in the position, which should be consistent with the type of work specified in the employment contract.

Familiarising the employee with the scope of his or her duties under the contracted type of work and instructing him or her on how to perform the work in the designated position are among the employer's most important duties (Liszczyński, 2019). It is understood that the employer should draw up the terms of reference before familiarising the employee with them. Acquainting the employee with the scope of duties for the position he or she occupies most often takes the form of providing him or her with the so-called "terms of reference" in writing, which should take place at the conclusion of the employment contract or at the first admission to work and in the event of reorganisation or transfer to another position. However, T. Liszczyński (2019) emphasises: '... there is no general legal requirement to hand employees written scopes of activities. Apart from cases where separate regulations establish such a requirement, it is only a matter of proper work organisation'. On the other hand, as part of the obligation to provide work, in Article 100 of the Labour Code, an employee is in particular obliged to: a) perform the tasks entrusted to him/her diligently and conscientiously, b) perform the instructions of his/her superiors, provided that they do not contradict the law or the employment contract, but also c) take care of the good of the workplace (employer), in particular protect and keep secret certain types of information.

The scope of duties may include an obligation for an employee to carry out orders and other activities than those specified in the scope, which the employee is obliged to perform if: a) they are issued by a competent superior or an authorised employee and in accordance with his/her scope of authority, b) they are in accordance with the applicable law, c) they correspond to the type of work specified in the employment contract (Suknarowska-Drzewiecka, 2011). On the phenomenon of "carrying out other orders" a different view was presented by Cz. Sikorski (1988), who emphasised, especially important for management system designers, the avoidance of the phrase "all other work ordered by the superior". He considers the introduction of such a provision illogical, as it questions the sense of enumerating other activities. This difference of opinion is explained by the different disciplines represented by the authors cited. The scope of activities should be in accordance with the employment contract, accepted and signed by the employee (Suknarowska-Drzewiecka, 2011).

The employee, by remaining ready for the notion of work, secures the interests of the employer, as, due to the possibility of difficulties in the process of the organisation's functioning, the employee's readiness for work constitutes a value for the employer - it ensures

the possibility of disposing of the employee's work when the obstacles to the organisation's activity cease to exist (Zwolińska, 2021).

Article 22 par. 1 of the Labour Code lists several key features of the employment relationship, the most important of which are: 1) performance of work of a specific type, 2) performance of work for remuneration. The first of these means that the boundaries of the employee's duty to work are set by the agreed type of work, thus excluding the 'existence of an omnibus obligation of the employee' to provide work (Zwolińska, 2021) which is important in the context of the phrase 'all other work ordered by the supervisor'. However, the understanding of work as an activity adopted in labour law prejudices the impossibility of specifying all the activities that an employee undertakes to perform at the time of the employment relationship. From the work of the employee, which is only defined in a generic manner - at the establishment of the employment relationship - the need for its continuous concretisation arises, which in turn justifies the existence of employee subordination, and this determines the manner of fulfilment of the employee's labour obligation (Zwolińska, 2021).

Remuneration can be treated as an equivalent for the work performed by the employee therefore, the chargeability of work is a key feature of the employment relationship and employment *sensu largo*. Labour law uses the term 'remuneration for work' in two senses: 1) primary wage entitlement (payment as an element of the employment relationship), 2) secondary wage entitlement (wage claim for work performed) (Zwolińska, 2021).

An employee entering into an employment relationship with a particular employer commits to perform regularly repeated activities under the direction of the employer and secures the employer's interests. Due to unpredictable phenomena in the organisational functioning process, the employee's willingness to work represents a value for the employer (Zwolińska, 2021).

The views outlined above show that it is difficult to establish unequivocally what work and tasks an employee should perform in return for the remuneration he or she receives and which, despite being ordered to do so by a supervisor, he or she is not obliged to perform. Hence, there is subjectivity in the perception by employees of certain tasks as unpaid.

2. Results of the study

2.1. Perception of unpaid work

Respondents' experiences of carrying out unpaid work range from not doing such work at all to doing it very often. Furthermore, those who stated that they perform such work differ in their views on what characterises unpaid work.

The respondent characterised such work as "(...) done to compensate for less than adequate (according to the respondent, author's note) productivity in nominal working time". Furthermore, he added that in such a situation he performs these jobs voluntarily. However, this view does not describe the essence of unpaid work, but indicates the justification for doing such work. It is a kind of form of its legitimisation. Another respondent confirmed the fact of doing unpaid work and added that it is often unforced, natural to help another person employed in the same position or to do some work for such a person. A similar opinion was formulated by another respondent, stating that he does unpaid work, but that there is "not this imposed, it is just my own will to support a colleague". The next respondent defined unpaid work as additional tasks related to his field of expertise, but of a different nature. This is due to an independent interpretation of the remit leading to additional work complementary to the core remit e.g. cleaning work. The respondent pointed to the vagueness of the formal terms of reference as a factor that makes it difficult to determine what tasks he is paid to perform. He added that he instinctively performs work related to providing efficient customer service, although he believes it is not part of his duties, but feels responsible for the satisfaction of the buyers.

Another respondent stated that the criterion for considering a particular job as unpaid was that it did not fall within his job description. He supplemented this by stating that unpaid work was tasks performed by him at times when his supervisor did not provide him with work specific to his position i.e. other than that which fell within his job description. To another respondent, when there are no tasks that are assigned to his position, supervisors do not charge him with additional work.

Another respondent found it difficult to determine whether he performs unpaid work understood as going beyond the scope of his duties because the scope of his duties is of a "top-down" nature, it was drawn up to comply with labour law, and he performs tasks that are necessary at a given time due to the company's projects. He is not in a position to determine "whether he is doing something that is done for free, excessively" because his superiors do not specify his working hours or tasks.

Another respondent understood unpaid work in two ways: 1) a job where no remuneration is received at all for the tasks performed, 2) a job for which remuneration is inadequate to the type of work and competences used by the employee. The first type was seen by the respondent primarily in professional services firms, where jobs are perceived to be so attractive that there is strong competition between applicants. This results in "an atmosphere being created everywhere in such companies that makes the employee feel remorse for not dedicating himself or herself 100 per cent to the job". However, practices related to the first type of unpaid work also occur in larger entities: "In larger companies, it is often the case that one gets time off in exchange for overtime, but not to the extent that is stipulated by the Labour Code, that is, not 150 per cent or 200, but one to one".

Other respondents limited themselves to stating that they do unpaid work, without detailing their understanding.

The spectrum of statements related to the fact of doing unpaid work ranges from no such experience (a rare answer) to frequent performance. The motives for undertaking unpaid work are interesting. Slightly surprising is the voluntary, spontaneous performance (e.g. helping a colleague) of the jobs analysed. On the other hand, it is not surprising to perform them on the orders of superiors.

2.2. Features and types of unpaid work

A corollary to the finding of unpaid work was the intention to identify the attributes of work/tasks considered by respondents to be unpaid.

The respondent stated that unpaid work is standard tasks but performed after working hours, including at home. The unpaid nature, in his case, is a consequence of insufficient work done in nominal time and the need to supplement it at home. Another respondent stated that, in his case, the unpaid work is work of an auxiliary nature, housekeeping and spontaneous help shown to people performing the same tasks. Another respondent indicated that unpaid work is generally work of a periodic nature, e.g. participation in various committees, task forces or projects aimed at the organisation's environment. Another respondent indicated that he was expected to operate equipment and perform work of the same type and complexity as that which he performed as standard.

One respondent raised a different aspect of unpaid work - the expectation on the part of superiors for an employee to use competences that were not required during recruitment for his or her position (e.g. using more foreign language skills during the course of work than were set out in the qualification requirements for a particular position). The same respondent, in the context of unpaid work, drew attention to the performance of work that went beyond the tasks included in the job description in terms of its nature and degree of difficulty: "I point out imperfections in the process, and theoretically that shouldn't be my role. I should be filling in a process that is good and prepared, just filling in, just doing it from A to Z". This person was further required to manage the work of the team: "it happens very often that I distribute the work or do such organisational things and, for example, act on behalf of my teammates towards the manager." The respondent, who initially stated that he did not do unpaid work, however, realised during the interview that he was providing training and coaching to new employees, which was not within his job description. Periodically, he began to fulfil a new function within the organisation - he became an internal trainer. "These are the kinds of things that (...) are not really part of my responsibilities. But they kind of came in through the back door". In the case of this respondent, it is worth noting the impulse that led to doing some of the unpaid work - the desire to help other employees from below, spontaneously, who have more work to do at any given time. The respondent in question also undertakes to coordinate - without the involvement of a supervisor - the performance of tasks, which is essentially self-coordination.

This person concluded that spontaneous, bottom-up, involvement turns into constantly performed tasks, and the employee, who is not able to look at his or her work from a distance, starts to treat it as a normality.

The most glaring case of unpaid work was presented by a respondent to whom the management of the entire organisation had been delegated and who in fact performed the duties of a superior (in his absence), which went beyond the tasks he routinely dealt with. Moreover, he performed work that belonged to positions situated at a lower hierarchical level. The respondent in question performed both tasks of higher difficulty and complexity and tasks that were simpler than those of his position.

Of separate note is the respondent who stated: "in fact, for 90% of what I do, I did not find a single line (...) in my job description". This is a situation he accepts is due to events in the environment, but also due to management negligence: "... the American regulator came up with something two years ago, but only now (supervisors) mentioned that it has to be done. It needs to be done quickly'. Such tasks are sometimes simple, but also complex, requiring teamwork. The respondent takes the performance of such work for granted and as appropriate, even though it is not in his or her area of responsibility.

From the respondents' statements on the attributes of unpaid work, one constitutive feature of this type of work emerges: going beyond the formal scope of employees' duties. In contrast, other attributes of such work are: 1) in terms of complexity and complexity, work that is simpler than standard work, but also work that is comparable and also more complex and demanding, 2) from the point of view of the level of management to which the work in question formally belonged, there is also variation, ranging from work that should be carried out at a lower level of management, to work that is specific to the same level in the hierarchy, to tasks of higher levels of management. All this points to a wide variation in the work perceived by respondents as unpaid.

2.3. Functions of unpaid work

An important issue is the respondents' perceived sense of unpaid work, the functions attributed to it in the organisation and any positive effects brought to the company. Not all respondents were able to directly indicate benefits of this kind, but it was possible to deduce them from other statements.

The unpaid work carried out by the respondent provides assistance to other employees in carrying out their tasks. The results of the unpaid work are used by other units - they enable them to complete their tasks earlier: "For example, if I prepare a presentation for the sales department, they have it at their place earlier. If I do it at the weekend, instead of sitting down to it on Monday, they have more time to review it". Furthermore, the effect of the unpaid work of the respondent in question is observed trends or phenomena in the environment, knowledge of which is indispensable for the company. Another respondent also pointed out the benefits that the whole organisation has from his unpaid work - replacing a superior ensures continuity

of management. This person pointed out additional positive effects of unpaid assignments: "(...) they made deep sense because they served to retain customers and grow the company". Respondents pointed out that it is not only the organisation as a whole that benefits from their work, but also individuals - usually their supervisors, managers: the benefit is "(...) the organisation, but certainly my supervisor has less work. He gets certainly a managerial salary. And he has less work and he has some of the things done well, because he wouldn't be able to do them well himself. It's just, I'll do it better. He has some resource for free".

The benefit to the organisation of unpaid work, otherwise, was employees prepared "(...) at the same level as us. New girls or new employees in general who come and join the team, if they are trained by us, our team will work even better together." The respondent emphasised that the benefits gained by the team are also benefits gained by the organisation as a whole: "It seems to me that if it benefits us, it should also benefit the whole company. Well, because it is logical". Another respondent pointed out that having them do unpaid work makes it possible to dispense with possible additional employment, which results in cost savings for the organisation. An interesting point of view was used by one respondent, who saw his performance of unpaid work as a way of educating his children (the thing took place in a kindergarten): "Children also learn by observation, so if they see adults cleaning up and doing some activities, they are also happy to participate themselves. It is education by example". A key benefit of unpaid work identified by another respondent was increased organisational flexibility, quicker adaptation to changed conditions in the environment.

The benefits of unpaid work need to be considered in the context of the nature and specificity of the jobs in which the employees performing it are employed. The benefits identified by respondents were enjoyed by clients (e.g. children in the nursery), other employees (e.g. easier performance of tasks by them) and the organisation as a whole (e.g. greater flexibility, better trained employees). A separate category of benefits seems to be the greater ease of task performance by some supervisors, for whom selected tasks are performed by subordinates. The study allows us to see a regularity, which is rather unsurprising, in that employees employed at higher levels of management or performing more complex work necessarily produced positive effects of greater magnitude than those employed at executive level and performing relatively simple tasks. The nature of the tasks performed by the respondents also influenced the specificity of the positive impacts caused by unpaid work.

The implicit rationale for charging employees for unpaid work is the desire to achieve cost savings. The majority of respondents explicitly indicated such a motive. One respondent gave the following answer: "Of course it was. That was the main motive". Other respondents tried to describe the mechanism of the alleged cost savings, such as: "Some unpaid work is outsourced to employees instead of being outsourced". Another respondent, through a comparison with a previous workplace, indicated a different mechanism for achieving savings: "It was also a corporation, but there was a trainer position and it was just a person employed by the company who trained new employees. I think nowadays, with the outsourcing of employee training,

it's all about cost". Still another respondent, from previous jobs, was aware of instances where the scopes of work of those positions where there were vacancies and no one had been hired had been passed on to current employees. Another respondent indicated that if unpaid work were to be abandoned, additional tasks would need to be formally assigned and employees paid for them, which is what happens with some out-of-scope work, but on a much smaller scale. Another respondent perceived that the commissioning of unpaid work is also driven by individual managers' motives: "(...) in these situations what the supervisor is thinking about is to ask as little of themselves as possible and to pass on as many things as possible to someone below them". On the other hand, outsourcing unpaid work, in the context of cost savings, the respondent whose views are presented believes: "There are people who have bonuses depending on their performance, on how much money they bring to the company, or how much their team brings to the company, for example. This encourages them to outsource unpaid work". The same respondent identified factors that encourage such savings: 1) the small size of the organisation, 2) the personal interest of managers in the bottom line. Only one respondent did not see cost saving intentions as a motive for outsourcing unpaid work. In the organisation where he is employed the priority is to ensure flexibility.

From the statements made, there is a widespread belief in the desire to reduce costs for organisations as the overriding motive for commissioning unpaid work. It is also important to note the selfish rationale attributed to some supervisors charging their subordinates.

2.4. Motivation for unpaid work

Unpaid work is ambiguous in nature. On the one hand, it brings certain benefits to organisations, while on the other, it can be perceived by employees as an unjustified, personal inconvenience. It is therefore interesting to see how the requirement or expectation is formulated for employees to do some unpaid work.

The mildest form of such communication was information about the necessity to perform a certain task, without specifying the conditions for its execution, e.g. giving a deadline. The respondent interpreted this signal as the superior's expectation that the employee would understand the allusion and perform a certain task on his or her own. It seems that a variation of informing is - indicated by another respondent - the mention of a 'certain task' combined with the suggestion that it is worth doing. For another respondent, messages about completing additional tasks raised concerns about the possible consequences of refusing to complete them. However, these were not caused by the orderer, but rather anticipated by the employee himself. Another formulation of the expectation of unpaid work was discussed by another respondent. It was a message, not even a suggestion or a command, from which the employee was expected to deduce what was implicit in it - the expectation that subordinates would themselves pick up the initiative to do the extra work: 'It was kind of a message: did you see this, can you help him?' It's just a masterpiece (...). I laugh that my team leader must be after some kind of management psychology". The same respondent also pointed to a gradual and unnoticeable

increase in the number of unpaid tasks someone performs - e.g. a gradually increasing number of clients or processes being handled. Additional tasks are sometimes commissioned as temporary, ad hoc tasks. They may relate to the provision of training (not part of the job description) - the supervisor asks for extra work for one day and then this period is extended. Subordinates are left free to decide how to organise and divide the extra work among themselves. A more pronounced form of unpaid workload is to employ an employee in a position formally lower in the job hierarchy (and less well paid), and have them perform tasks specific to a position with more complex and demanding tasks.

To order unpaid work, some supervisors used manipulation, e.g. appealing to the employee's professional ethos, making him feel that he was in a coercive situation. One respondent was given instructions, suggestions were made to him, but also appealed to his professional ethos, especially when the work expected to be done belonged to employees at lower levels: "Yes, this pressure was exerted by sending messages, for example, via instant messaging, Messenger or other applications and demanding that I address these issues even after hours, even in the late evening and night hours." Another respondent identified two main ways of delegating unpaid tasks: 1) a task imposed on the whole team, e.g. the development of a project or part of a project - and each member of the team has some part of this task to perform, 2) the employee takes the initiative himself, spontaneously identifies for himself tasks of an improvement nature, e.g. of the processes in progress.

Supervisors used a variety of ways to communicate to respondents the expectation of unpaid work. The methods of formulating the requirement to carry out this work can be presented as a spectrum of forms varying in their degree of relativity to workers, ranging from soft forms, appealing to the default or goodwill of workers, through manipulation of workers to coercion. Respondents rarely saw any form of commissioning of a formal nature, much less in writing.

One can see a spectrum of motivators used by superiors in different situations. At one extreme of this spectrum there is even a lack of suggestion by the supervisor for such tasks. In this case, the performance of unpaid tasks is the result of the employee's own conviction to do so. The next point on the spectrum is a "small request" from the superior to perform additional tasks and the next one is a rational explanation by the superior of the sense and need to perform an unpaid task, e.g. giving arguments related to benefits for the organisation and individual benefits in the form of a higher employee evaluation. The observation made by the next respondent is similar to those already presented: "It was such an emotional, and businesslike explanation of it, so to speak. He was explaining, saying why we were doing it, what the benefits would be for the company, like for us, or why we were doing something totally pointless, for example". Further forms of argumentation were perceived by respondents to be related to the use of various forms of manipulation against them. One of these was the use of the argument of downplaying the amount of work that would have to be done while discharging unpaid tasks (replacements): " (...) 'but that's actually almost nothing, there's actually nothing to do there'. And these were things that theoretically this person

(who was supposed to be deputised, author's note) was doing full time". Also perceived by the respondent as a form of manipulation was the argument about the possibility of learning and broadening one's competences:

(...) I was to take over, alongside my own, the responsibilities of the person who was leaving. This was presented as an opportunity for me to learn. Indeed, the bet was that I would learn a lot, I could gain some knowledge and experience. But what my employer would have gained is that they wouldn't have had to pay someone who I'm sure would have earned a lot more than me, because they would have been an experienced employee, in a higher position.

Another respondent also perceived attempts at manipulation "The supervisor cleverly expressed that: 'because, after all, you guys have experience, you're so capable. And, of course, that it should be distributed within working time, so that it doesn't interfere with our duties, so that it doesn't hinder us". The supervisor suggested that, for the duration of the unpaid work, the employee's standard tasks should be taken over by another employee. This was in fact a cascade initiative of unpaid work.

On the contractual spectrum of justifications for doing unpaid work, the next place is occupied when there is a lack of explanation or justification for the need to do unpaid tasks. This is when the command 'you must do it' is used. Extreme in nature is the explanation identified by the respondent as "An unequivocal command to do unpaid work". The argument used by the supervisor is: "because there is no one to do it". Another respondent described a situation where an argument of a similar nature was used:

I was only in a team with my supervisor (...) and our team of two couldn't really find their way around the company. She felt such pressure that she had to find some budgeting for the team and was coming up with various projects that she was implementing with my hands. They were disconnected from everything and not really feasible, also technically. She could use such strong passive aggression. But at times she would switch to a more active aggression.

It is difficult not to agree with the respondents who saw such incidents as a violation of their dignity.

Justifying the need for unpaid work can be understood as an additional form of motivating respondents to perform such work. The cited explanations used by the respondents' superiors testify, on the one hand, to the characteristics of the superiors and, on the other hand, are an expression of the organisational culture prevailing in the entities employing the respondents, which in some cases is oppressive towards employees.

The use of orders to carry out unpaid work raises the question of respondents' perceptions of the possible consequences of not accepting such requirements or even not carrying them out. Therefore, the observations and views of respondents about the potential consequences of doing or not doing unpaid work are important. Furthermore, it also seems interesting whether the possible consequences would only be implied, suggested by superiors or explicitly announced. The responses of the respondents can be presented as a palette of varied experiences of agreeing or not agreeing to the type of work in question.

At the first extreme of such a set can be located the situation of a respondent who believes that his or her commitment and willingness to develop (expressed by doing unpaid work) will be recognised by superiors and translate into a pay rise. Another respondent, whose observations can be situated around this end of the spectrum, stated that there was no concern that not doing unpaid work would affect employees. Another respondent expressed that he had not encountered such situations and consequently had not experienced pressure. Here it should be added that this respondent was not fully aware that he or she was doing unpaid work - he or she became aware of this during the survey and this is probably why he or she did not perceive the impact of doing unpaid work on his or her situation. One respondent stated that he currently had no reason to believe that he would face any negative consequences for refusing to do unpaid work. However, he added that in the past he had been bullied in this type of situation, but that this appeared to have been the result of his supervisor's personality traits rather than company policy. Another respondent replied that *expressis verbis* threats were not formulated in relation to not doing unpaid work, but the respondent was concerned that the rule "ten are waiting for your place" could be applied to those refusing to do unpaid work. It can therefore be concluded that the possible consequences were implicit and based on the respondent's experience or that of other workers of which he was aware.

The experiences of further respondents with agreeing or not agreeing to unpaid work differ significantly from those already discussed. One of these respondents stated that he was convinced that doing unpaid work affects the employee's appraisal: doing it facilitates a positive appraisal and not doing it results in a negative appraisal: "If you do it, you get a positive evaluation, or if you don't do it, you get a negative evaluation, so it works both ways". However, the respondent acknowledged the difficulty in identifying the impact of unpaid work on the grade due to the insufficient precision in the wording of the terms of reference. Identifying the impact of doing or not doing such work is further hampered by the secrecy of pay. The interviewee presumes that there is a practice of salary increases in the company employing him/her to compensate for the performance of unpaid work. However, the increases are judged to be out of proportion to the amount of additional work performed. Possible consequences are rather implicit, conjectures about them coming from conversations between employees, e.g. conjectures about the possible consequences of not performing a certain task. The respondent whose observations are discussed drew attention to the ambiguous attitude of superiors in the context in question:

You have to do and not ask questions, and also I often have the impression that managers play such a game. I mean I have my doubts whether they are playing a game or whether it's really like that on the basis of 'I don't have any influence on it, I got it too. I'm not happy with it, but it's the right thing to do, we have no way out.' Well then theoretically the manager gains in the eyes of the employee and the employee feels such a sense of solidarity, of togetherness in the situation.

Another respondent felt that those unwilling to do unpaid work were perceived as uninvolved workers because they were only doing their job. This kind of assessment was sometimes suggested to the respondent and this was the interpretation he was to guess. "Doing the work was to ensure that the work would be done at all, and not doing it would be associated with being seen as someone who is not committed, does not care about the welfare of the company, shirks his responsibilities and does not bring value to the organisation". However, the participant in the study also experienced strong pressure, an explicit demand to perform unpaid work or an expectation to fulfil these demands also outside working hours.

The last respondent referred to here had encountered a situation of being threatened with dismissal for failing to meet the supervisor's expectations of unpaid work. This situation would be at the other end of the spectrum referred to above. His statement suggests that the situation described was a result of the personality traits of the supervisor rather than an organisational policy. The respondent talked about how his supervisor addressed him in this way: "(...) if not (in relation to doing unpaid work, author's note) then we can say goodbye. I can slowly collect myself from this company. Literally that kind of bullying, but that's the only situation I think, it lasted six months and it was quite hard".

The range of situations presented, in which an employee may find himself in relation to his attitude to unpaid work, testifies to the diversity of relations between employees and their superiors in the organisations surveyed. A relatively common situation is the creation of an ambiguous atmosphere, creating misunderstandings that would have employees willing to do unpaid work for fear of more or less real consequences. However diverse the supervisors' behaviour discussed was, it can be thought that this is not the kind of diversity that is desirable in modern organisations.

3. Conclusions

As already mentioned, the space of experiences of unpaid work starts with their absence and ends with a high frequency of occurrence. This observation confirms the validity of the thesis adopted and indicated in the introduction about the occurrence of this type of work in organisations. Several ways of understanding them can be discerned among the respondents:

1. Work where no remuneration is received at all for tasks performed, including:
 - a) work carried out on one's own initiative, without reference to formal terms of reference, with a view to:
 - to compensate for overly low (according to the person surveyed) productivity,
 - spontaneous, natural assistance to another person employed in the same position,
 - voluntarily helping a colleague at work,

b) work carried out in accordance with a supervisor's instructions but beyond the formal scope of duties.

2. Work for which remuneration is inadequate to the type of work and the competences used by the employee in the course of the work.

It is interesting to note that employees are willing to work without pay and do so spontaneously, even without suggestions from superiors. The original attribute of work perceived as unpaid should be considered to be the receipt of a salary inadequate to the competences used during the work, which is reminiscent of jobs described in the US as underpaid (Kauflin, 2017). The given ways of defining unpaid work expand the knowledge of employees' attitudes and expectations towards work in organisations.

The respondents' subjective perceptions of the nature of unpaid work are in line with views presented in the literature (Mayer, 2007; Shelby, 2002). The respondents' declared reason for describing work as unpaid in the form of going beyond the scope of duties may be indicative of a sense of being exploited workers, which is in line with the views of J. Snyder (2013) and M. Zwolinski (2007). Such a situation can be seen as a manifestation of injustice, which occurs when employees do not receive sufficient benefits from the excess and/or demeaning work they are obliged to do (Zwolinski, 2007). At the same time, managers benefit, even personally, from the same work of employees, as mentioned by one respondent.

As an aside, there is an interesting motive for some workers to undertake unpaid work by doing so spontaneously, spontaneously, driven to some extent by passion and a sense of mission, as described in the literature (Kim et al., 2020).

The work that was carried out as unpaid was characterised by varying properties that can be described using the following criteria:

- 1) place of performance: a) performed at the organisation's headquarters, b) performed at the employee's place of residence,
- 2) degree of dissimilarity to the tasks in the job description: a) identical work, b) similar work, c) work of greater complexity and sophistication,
- 3) frequency of unpaid work: a) work carried out systematically, b) work carried out periodically, c) work carried out occasionally,
- 4) execution time: a) during nominal working hours, b) outside nominal working hours,
- 5) the nature of the competences needed in the course of unpaid work: a) typical of the position held, b) more advanced than those required for the position held,
- 6) the hierarchical level to which the unpaid work belonged: a) the same level at which the employee was employed, b) different (higher, lower) than that at which the employee was employed.

Unpaid work, apart from being outside the scope of workers' duties, does not share common characteristics that distinguish it from work performed regularly in accordance with the said scope. The performance of unpaid work has the effect of broadening the spectrum of tasks carried out by the workers and, in many cases, this work may have formed the basis for the

extension of the workers' formal scope of duties. Only in some cases were these tasks performed as a substitute for other absent employees. The observed phenomenon may confirm one respondent's statement that formal terms of reference are developed primarily to comply with the law, while their impact on the actual tasks performed is very limited.

The functions attributed to unpaid work can be considered from different points of view. The first criterion is the nature of the benefits that this type of work brings to organisations. The next criteria are the type of entities that obtain profits through the type of work analysed and the time horizon of the profits resulting from this work.

1. Nature of the advantage:
 - a) material benefits:
 - reducing costs for the organisation,
 - retaining the organisation's clients,
 - b) intangible benefits:
 - greater organisational flexibility,
 - ensuring continuity of the organisation's management,
 - knowledge of the environment.
2. Entities profiting from unpaid work:
 - a) the entire organisation,
 - b) other organisational units,
 - c) others employed by the organisation,
 - from the same hierarchical level,
 - supervisors.
3. Time horizon:
 - a) immediate, short-term benefits,
 - b) long-term benefits.

Respondents' perceived benefits to the organisation from unpaid work vary. However, when considering these benefits, it is important to note the fact that employees performing excess tasks may have had a legitimate sense of unfair treatment (Zwolinski, 2007). The majority of respondents emphasised cost benefits, but it is important to recognise that these were achieved in different ways. Furthermore, it should be noted that respondents, although few, were aware that their unpaid work had a positive impact on the flexibility of the organisation. The insights indicated are in line in principle with the observations of Andrałojć (2024), who concluded that mature workers are more likely to use an 'external' narrative to describe the meaning and value of work (what their work gives to the world), while young workers use an 'internal' narrative (what work gives to themselves).

When considering the ways in which workers are motivated to perform unpaid work, several specific issues can be discerned: the way in which the message is conveyed about the existence of work that would be performed as unpaid, the use of manipulation of workers, the use of

coercion and the way in which the need for unpaid work is justified. Due to these criteria, the study identified different ways in which supervisors behaved.

1. Communication on unpaid work:
 - a) information on the existence of work to be done,
 - b) information about the existence of work to be done combined with a suggestion of the need to do it,
 - c) information on the need for unpaid work.
2. Manipulation:
 - a) downplaying the amount of unpaid work to be done,
 - b) Using the argument of learning opportunities and broadening competences.
3. Coercion:
 - a) formal employment in a lower position and assignment of tasks specific to a position at a higher hierarchical level,
 - b) an order to carry out unpaid work given by a supervisor,
 - c) The threat of dismissal if unpaid work is not carried out.
4. Method of justification:
 - a) use of rational arguments,
 - b) use of emotional arguments.

None of the respondents explicitly refused their superiors to do work that was identified as unpaid. This can be seen as an expression of a certain degree of loyalty to the organisation, as they supported the employers' interests with their activity, even though this required them to sacrifice certain aspects of their own interest. It is in line with J.M. Elegido's (2013) or B. Schrag (2001). This observation is relevant in view of the fact that M.L. Stanley, C.B. Neck and C.P. Neck (2023) found that loyal employees are selectively chosen by managers for exploitation in hypothetical situations, and that the choice of loyal employees is mediated by the expectation that loyal people are willing to make personal sacrifices for the objects of their loyalty. The ways of motivating essentially loyal employees to work unpaid, identified during the study, are indicative of a lack of partnership with subordinates, the use of coercive elements and a desire to demonstrate one's power. These are behaviours indicative of the persisting traces of a manor culture in contemporary Polish organisations (Hryniewicz, 2007).

When analysing the motivation of employees for unpaid work, it is important to note the omission by supervisors in their communication with respondents of the positive impact of such work on the flexibility of the organisation and the positive impact on their functioning. This can be interpreted as supervisors being unaware of this impact and/or underestimating employee awareness and loyalty.

The conclusions listed above clearly demonstrate that the objectives of the article have been met.

4. Summary

Although labour laws define what tasks employees should perform and for the performance of which they are remunerated, today's reality is more complex than the legislator would like. The functioning of organisations often deviates significantly from the intentions of legislators or the ideas of designers of management systems and organisational structures. For this reason, it seems very difficult to avoid employees performing certain tasks that go beyond those included in the employment contract and - in particular - in the terms of reference. There are arguments to justify such practices, which does not alter the fact that employees may perceive the performance of such tasks as unpaid work, i.e. work performed without adequate remuneration.

When examining the phenomenon of unpaid work, several phenomena can be discerned:

1. The use of a traditional tool to organise work in the form of terms of reference for a job occupied by an employee is sufficient in a stable and predictable environment. However, when the environment is volatile or even disturbed, as one interviewee mentioned, the terms of reference only serve to comply with the law and the tasks actually performed by employees are based on current needs and differ substantially from those recorded in organisational documentation.
2. A factor that contributes to the completion of tasks not included in the terms of reference are the values that guide employees, which are called core values. These can be thought to have been driven by respondents spontaneously performing tasks for their colleagues. Core values 'are conducive to (...) embedding the company firmly in reality' (Hopej-Kamińska, Hopej, Kamiński, 2007).
3. The behaviour of the supervisors of some of the respondents seems to more than exhaust the hallmarks of false leadership (Bieńkowska, Tworek, 2024) detrimental to both employees and the organisation. Moreover, in the case of one respondent, it can be believed that the supervisor used gaslighting.
4. It seems that, in addition to the key values mentioned in section 2, an important factor influencing the performance of unpaid tasks by respondents is the psychological contract (Ratajczak, 2007), which influences greater commitment to work and the achievement of organisational goals. However, it is important to be aware of what M.J. Abdalla, H. Said, L. Ali, F. Ali and X. Chen (2021) - violation of the psychological contract directly increases organisational distrust while indirectly it increases emotional exhaustion.
5. The desire to reduce costs as a motive for contracting out unpaid work indicated by respondents is not in doubt. However, it should be noted that in Poland as many as 82 per cent of companies are experiencing a shortage of workers, especially skilled workers (JD, 2024), and it can be thought that work, including unpaid work, already

employed will make up for the shortage of workers. In the context of savings, it is important to situate meaningless work (Graeber, 2020), which is the opposite of unpaid work: it is unnecessary, but its contractors are paid. Reducing such work will reduce the need for savings from unpaid work.

6. Work perceived by employees as unpaid has become a tool to ensure that companies increase flexibility - it can be thought that the need to ensure organisational flexibility leads to the outsourcing of work that employees perceive as unpaid because it is not part of their job description.
7. It seems reasonable to call for a change in the rules and/or the way in which the scope of work is determined in workplaces in such a way that the employee is not in doubt as to what he or she should or should not do. Perhaps a greater role in defining employee tasks should be given to core values and the psychological contract. Managers, on the other hand, should be made more aware of the fact that the condition for the successful performance of a leadership role in an organisation is to get rid of the folkish trappings accompanying the majority of managers pursuing a leader style of management (Hryniewicz, 2007).

The article is limited to capturing the phenomenon of unpaid work from a management perspective. However, it seems that such work deserves to be approached from the point of view of other disciplines, such as labour sociology or labour psychology. These disciplines will enable additional light to be shed on the performance of unpaid work.

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