

DETERMINANTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY IN SOCIAL WORK IN THE LIGHT OF OWN RESEARCH

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Purpose: This article explores the determinants of organizational agility in social work and identifies how agile practices enhance the effectiveness and adaptability of organizations in this field. The study provides theoretical insights and practical recommendations to improve the responsiveness of social work organizations to dynamic social challenges.

Design/methodology/approach: The research is based on a survey conducted in April-May 2023 with 303 respondents representing organizations involved in social work. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data on key agility factors, and Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was applied to identify relationships between variables and dimensions of agility.

Findings: The study reveals that agility in social work organizations is driven by quick responses to beneficiary needs, flexibility in adapting activities, collaboration with diverse institutions, continuous communication, and the use of technology. Continuous improvement of methods and inclusion of beneficiaries' voices are also critical. These factors collectively shape organizations' capacity to adapt and innovate in complex environments.

Research limitations/implications: The study is limited by its reliance on a single method (survey) and cross-sectional design, which captures a snapshot of agility but not long-term trends. Future research could include longitudinal studies or mixed-method approaches for a more comprehensive understanding.

Practical implications: Organizations can enhance agility by fostering collaborative networks, integrating technological solutions, and prioritizing beneficiary engagement to align strategies with evolving social needs.

Social implications: Improving agility in social work can enhance service quality and accessibility for vulnerable populations, enabling organizations to address pressing social issues and foster resilient, inclusive communities.

Originality/value: This study offers a novel perspective on the intersection of organizational agility and social work, a topic with limited exploration in the literature. By combining empirical data with theoretical analysis, it contributes to understanding and implementing agility in social work organizations.

Keywords: social work, organizational agility, organizational, corporate social responsibility, social sector.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

Organizational agility plays an increasingly important role in a dynamically changing world, where organizations must continuously adapt their activities to new challenges and environmental needs. Social work, as a field particularly sensitive to social changes, requires flexibility and the ability to adapt strategies to effectively respond to the specific needs of beneficiaries (Kijak, Podgórska-Jachnik, Stec, 2019). Despite the growing importance of this topic, there is a limited number of studies on the application of the concept of agility in social work, which justifies the need for an in-depth analysis of this issue.

The aim of this article is to address this research gap by identifying the key determinants of organizational agility in social work and understanding their impact on the effectiveness of organizations in a changing social environment. Particular emphasis is placed on practical guidelines that can help organizations better align their activities with dynamically evolving needs and conditions. Organizational agility, which enables effective resource management, building relationships with stakeholders, and implementing innovative solutions, can be a cornerstone for enhancing the efficiency and inclusivity of operations (Aguinis, Glavas, 2012).

2. Literature review

2.1. The idea of social work in modern enterprises

Modern businesses increasingly recognize the importance of social work as an essential element of their operations (Business Pillars, 2023). In a world where social needs are becoming increasingly complex and the role of companies goes beyond providing products or services, social work is becoming a tool for building relationships with employees, local communities and other stakeholders. This approach stems from the need to create more sustainable and responsible models of operation that take into account not only economic goals, but also social and environmental ones (Młyński, 2021).

As part of social work, companies engage in activities that support employees in difficult life situations, such as providing access to psychological counseling, helping to solve family problems or supporting their health and well-being (Szczepkowski, 2018). Such initiatives may also include professional reintegration programs aimed at the long-term unemployed or those who have difficulties returning to the labor market. Companies that undertake such activities not only strengthen the loyalty and commitment of their employees, but also contribute to building a more inclusive work environment (Mrugalska, Ahmed, 2021).

Social work in enterprises increasingly goes beyond the organizational framework, encompassing activities aimed at local communities (Joiner, 2019). These may include educational programs, initiatives supporting the elderly, assistance to children from dysfunctional families, or projects related to environmental protection. Such activities not only respond to specific social needs, but also build the image of the enterprise as an organization involved in the life of the local community and caring for its development (Ramadhana, 2021).

One of the challenges of social work in enterprises, however, is the need to balance these activities with business goals (Chen, Siau, 2020). Companies must take into account budget constraints and properly plan and measure the effectiveness of their social programs. At the same time, for social work to be effective, a collaborative approach with non-governmental organizations, public institutions, and community representatives who have the closest contact with those in need is crucial (Smolińska-Theiss, 2014).

The introduction of social work into corporate structures is part of a broader trend of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which prioritizes care for people and the environment (He, Harris, 2021). This approach not only changes the way companies are perceived, but also gives their activities a deeper meaning, showing that they can be a force for positive change in society. Social work in modern companies is no longer just an addition to their core business, but an integral part of their strategy, which allows them to not only respond to social needs, but also build long-term value, both for the organization and its environment (Carroll, Brown, 2018).

2.2. Social work in agile organizations

Social work in agile organizations plays an important role in adapting to dynamically changing social and economic conditions. Organizational agility in this context is defined as the ability to flexibly respond to the needs of beneficiaries, effectively manage resources, and introduce innovative solutions that allow for the implementation of social goals in a more effective and responsible manner (Kt, Sivasubramanian, 2023). In agile organizations, social work is based on key elements that support their ability to adapt, including speed of response, flexibility of actions, cooperation with external institutions, internal communication, use of technology, continuous improvement of work methods, and taking into account the voice of beneficiaries (Prieto, Talukder, 2023).

One of the foundations of social work in agile organizations is the ability to respond quickly to the needs of beneficiaries (Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy, 2015). Agile organizations must operate in a dynamic manner, which requires both precise monitoring of the social situation and the ability to make decisions immediately (Kamiński, 2017). The speed of response allows for more effective coping with crises and limiting negative consequences for beneficiaries (Chen, Li, 2021). At the same time, flexibility in adapting activities is crucial, which allows organizations to modify their strategies in response to new

challenges and needs. This flexibility is manifested both in planning activities and in the operational implementation of social programs (Porter, Kramer, 2006).

Agile organizations place particular emphasis on cooperation with various institutions (Szmagalski, 2012). These partnerships enable better use of resources, exchange of experiences and integration of activities, which is particularly important in social work, where it is often necessary to join forces in order to solve complex social problems. Cooperation with public institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector allows for a more comprehensive approach to social work, in which different entities can complement each other's competences and resources (Raschke, 2010).

An important aspect of social work in agile organizations is also maintaining continuous communication with the team (Kurnia, Chien, 2020). This communication supports the flow of information, builds employee engagement and enables quick problem solving (Anderson, Wilson, 2017). In agile work environments, communication is not only an operational tool, but also an element of building an organizational culture based on trust, cooperation and openness. This strengthens the organization's ability to operate effectively in difficult and changing conditions (Włodarkiewicz-Klimek, 2018).

Another important element is the use of technology in social work. In agile organizations, technologies play a key role in streamlining processes, analyzing data, and communicating with beneficiaries. Digital tools enable more precise identification of social needs, monitoring the results of activities, and faster delivery of support. The use of modern technologies in social work also contributes to increased organizational efficiency and improved quality of services provided (Chen, Siau, 2020).

Continuous improvement of work methods is another determinant of agile organizations (Szmagalski, 2007). The pursuit of improving the quality of activities and introducing innovative solutions is the basis for organizations that want to effectively respond to changing social needs. Agile organizations systematically analyze their activities, learn from mistakes and implement new approaches that allow them to better achieve their goals (Stolarska-Ślęzak, 2023). One of the most important aspects of social work in agile organizations is taking into account the voice of beneficiaries in the process of planning and implementing activities (Sobczak, 2018). Including beneficiaries in the decision-making process allows for a better understanding of their needs, increases the effectiveness of social programs and builds a sense of shared responsibility for their implementation (Aguinis, Glavas, 2019). In agile organizations, treating beneficiaries as subjects is not only a manifestation of social responsibility, but also a key element of the management strategy that increases the trust and commitment of all stakeholders (Sztumski, 1995).

Social work in agile organizations is based on the synergy between flexibility, responsiveness, cooperation and the use of technology and innovation. This approach allows for effective management of resources, building lasting relationships with beneficiaries and implementing activities that respond to social needs in a dynamic and comprehensive way

(Chen, Li, 2021). As a result, agile organizations not only cope better with changing conditions, but also contribute to building a more sustainable and just society.

2.3. The idea of social work in agile organizations – case studies

Modern organizations increasingly integrate the principles of agility with social work practices, adapting their activities to the dynamically changing environment. An example of such an approach is the PGE Capital Group, which, as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy, engages in numerous initiatives for local communities. These activities include educational programs, support for people with disabilities, and pro-ecological projects, implemented using agile management methods, which allows for flexible adaptation to the needs of beneficiaries (PGE, 2023).

Another example is Telecom Italia, which has implemented agile management methods, promoting tools that enable effective internal communication. This allows employees to respond quickly to emerging needs, which is crucial in the implementation of social work projects (Telecom Italia, 2020).

In Poland, agile work methods are gaining popularity, as evidenced by the fact that 80% of Polish companies declare their use. One example is the CCC company, which implemented agile methods in its social activities, which allowed for a faster and more effective response to the needs of local communities (Filary Biznesu, 2023).

These examples show that integrating agile management methods into social work practices allows organisations to respond more effectively and flexibly to social needs, which translates into better outcomes and greater engagement of both employees and beneficiaries.

3. Methods

The aim of the research was to identify key determinants of organizational agility in social work and to determine how individual factors affect the ability of the organization to flexibly and effectively respond to the needs of beneficiaries in a dynamically changing environment. The research hypothesis was formulated that organizational agility in social work is determined by such elements as quick response to the needs of beneficiaries, flexibility in adapting activities, cooperation with various institutions, use of technology and continuous improvement of work methods.

The research questions focused on identifying and analyzing key aspects of organizational agility, including: which factors are most important for organizational agility in social work, what relationships exist between selected categories, and how organizations can optimize their activities based on agility determinants. The study was conducted using a survey method,

which was implemented in April-May 2023 on a sample of 303 respondents representing various organizations related to social work.

In order to deepen the data analysis, the multivariate correspondence analysis (MCA) method was used, which allows for the identification of dependencies between categories and graphical presentation of complex relationships in the space of two main dimensions. MCA analysis was used to better understand which factors differentiate organizational agility the most and which groups of categories are related to each other. Thanks to the use of this method, it was possible to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of organizational agility in social work, which allowed for the formulation of conclusions and practical recommendations.

4. Results

The research aimed to identify the determinants of organizational agility in social work by analyzing the opinions of 303 respondents (Table 1).

Table 1.

Determinants of organizational agility in social work (N = 303)

Category	Definitely not	Rather not	No opinion	Rather yes	Definitely yes
Quick response to the needs of beneficiaries	12	25	45	145	76
Flexibility in adapting activities	10	20	40	150	83
Collaboration with diverse institutions	15	28	38	140	82
Maintaining continuous communication with the team	18	30	35	135	85
Use of technology in social work	20	25	50	130	78
Constant improvement of methods	16	22	47	142	76
Including the voice of beneficiaries	14	18	40	150	81

Study: own.

Table 1 shows the distribution of responses to the seven key aspects. In the category of rapid response to the needs of the mentees, 12 people indicated that it was definitely not important, 25 people considered it rather unimportant, 45 respondents had no opinion, while 145 people indicated that it was rather important and 76 considered it to be definitely important. In the context of flexibility in adapting activities, 10 people expressed a definitely negative attitude, 20 considered it rather unimportant, 40 respondents had no opinion, while 150 people indicated that it was rather important and 83 rated it as definitely important.

In relation to cooperation with various institutions, 15 people considered this element to be definitely unimportant, 28 rather unimportant, and 38 respondents did not express an opinion. On the other hand, 140 people indicated its rather important importance, and 82 respondents considered it to be definitely important. The category of maintaining constant communication with the team was assessed as definitely unimportant by 18 people, as rather unimportant by 30 respondents, and 35 people did not express an opinion. At the same time, 135 participants of the study assessed this aspect as rather important, and 85 indicated its definitely important.

In the area of using technology in social work, 20 people considered this element to be definitely not important, 25 rather not important, and 50 respondents had no opinion. At the same time, 130 people indicated that technology was rather important, and 78 people assessed it as definitely important. The category concerning continuous improvement of methods of action was assessed as definitely not important by 16 people, as rather not important by 22 people, while 47 respondents did not express an opinion. At the same time, 142 people considered this element to be rather important, and 76 assessed it as definitely important. The last category was taking into account the voice of the wards, which 14 people assessed as definitely not important, 18 as rather not important, while 40 respondents had no opinion. At the same time, 150 people indicated that this aspect was rather important, and 81 respondents assessed it as definitely important.

Table 2.

Results of MCA Analysis: Dimensions of Organizational Agility in Social Work

Category	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
Quick response to the needs of beneficiaries	-0.8	0.5
Flexibility in adapting activities	-0.6	-0.3
Collaboration with diverse institutions	-0.2	0.7
Maintaining continuous communication with the team	0.1	-0.1
Use of technology in social work	0.5	-0.6
Constant improvement of methods	0.7	0.8
Including the voice of beneficiaries	1	-0.4

Study: own.

Table 2 presents the results of the multivariate correspondence analysis (MCA) concerning the determinants of organizational agility in social work. Each category was described by the values of two main dimensions, which reflect the key axes of differentiation between the analyzed aspects. The category concerning quick response to the needs of clients obtained the value of -0.8 on the first dimension and 0.5 on the second dimension, which indicates its specific location in the analytical space. Flexibility in adapting activities is characterized by the values of -0.6 on the first dimension and -0.3 on the second dimension. Cooperation with various institutions reached the values of -0.2 on the first dimension and 0.7 on the second dimension, which emphasizes its positive links with the dimension related to integration and cooperation.

In the case of maintaining continuous communication with the team, these values were 0.1 and -0.1, respectively, which indicates a more neutral place in the analyzed space. The use of technology in social work was assigned values of 0.5 on the first dimension

and -0.6 on the second dimension, which may suggest more technical and specific characteristics of this aspect. Constant improvement of methods of action was characterized by values of 0.7 on the first dimension and 0.8 on the second dimension, which indicates its close connection with positive aspects of agility. Considering the voice of the mentees reached values of 1.0 on the first dimension and -0.4 on the second dimension, which places this category as one of the most pronounced in the analyzed space.

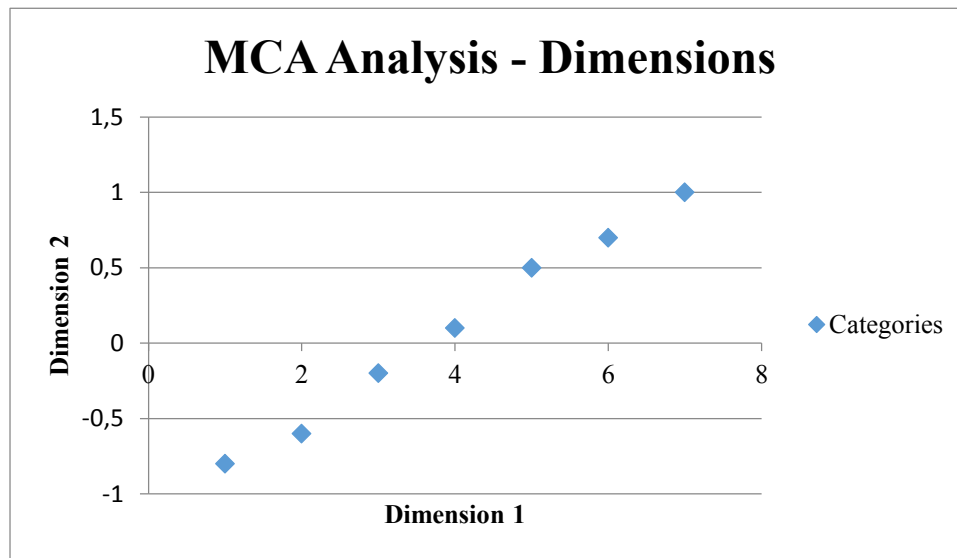


Figure 1. MCA Analysis – Dimension.

Study: own.

The data presented in Table 2 are visualized in Figure 1, which presents the results of the MCA analysis in the form of a scatterplot. The axes marked as “Dimension 1” and “Dimension 2” are arranged in a way that illustrates their mutual connections and differences. Each point on the graph represents one category, and its position reflects the values obtained in both dimensions. This visualization allows us to see which aspects are more distant from each other, indicating their differences, and which categories are grouped, suggesting their similarity in the context of organizational agility in social work.

5. Discussion

The conducted research and theoretical analysis allow for the formulation of conclusions regarding the determinants of organizational agility in social work and their importance in practice. The results of the multidimensional correspondence analysis (MCA) indicate clear differences in the perception of individual aspects of agility by the surveyed respondents. Key categories were identified that differentiate organizations in the context of their adaptability and level of flexibility. The highest values in the first and second dimensions were

obtained by the categories "Taking into account the voice of beneficiaries" and "Continuous improvement of methods of operation". This means that these two factors play a key role in shaping organizational agility, and taking into account the opinions of social work beneficiaries is the basis for building a more open and flexible approach to the organization's activities. Continuous improvement of methods of operation is an indicator of the continuous pursuit of efficiency and adaptation to changing conditions and social needs.

The category "Rapid response to the needs of clients" also occupies an important place in the analysis, indicating the importance of time and the ability to immediately adapt activities in social work. This result emphasizes the necessity of an efficient system for monitoring needs and quick decision-making. "Flexibility in adapting activities" and "Cooperation with various institutions" also obtained positive values, which suggests that organizations with high agility are characterized by the ability to dynamically change strategies and the ability to build a network of cooperation with external partners. The results also indicate the importance of technology in social work, which, although it does not occupy a central place in the analysis, plays a supporting role, enabling better organization of work and access to resources necessary for quick action.

The category "Maintaining constant communication with the team" obtained values close to neutral, which may indicate that although internal communication is important, its impact on organizational agility is not as clear as other analyzed aspects. This may be due to the fact that communication is treated as a standard element of organizational activity, and not as a distinctive factor of agility.

The research results emphasize that organizational agility in social work depends on the ability to react quickly, flexibility and the ability to learn and improve methods of action. Understanding and taking into account the voice of the beneficiaries is also crucial, which indicates the need to build relationships based on trust and cooperation. The identified factors can be the basis for designing a development strategy for organizations dealing with social work, especially in the context of changing social challenges and expectations of beneficiaries. The analyses conducted indicate the need for a balanced approach, in which organizations will be able to combine flexibility with efficiency, while taking into account the needs of local communities and the dynamically changing environment.

Based on the conclusions from the conducted research, recommendations can be formulated for companies operating in the field of social work, which can significantly contribute to increasing their organizational agility and effectiveness of operations. A key recommendation is to develop mechanisms that allow for a faster response to the needs of beneficiaries, which requires investment in monitoring systems and the introduction of data-based decision-making processes. Companies should strengthen their competences in the field of flexibility, which means the ability to dynamically adapt activities and strategies to changing conditions and emerging challenges. To this end, it is necessary to create a work environment that promotes openness to change and experimenting with new approaches.

It is also recommended to build partnerships with various institutions and organizations operating in the public and private sectors, which will enable more efficient use of available resources and facilitate the implementation of common social goals. Cooperation with local communities should be an integral part of the strategy, because it allows for a better understanding of local needs and strengthens the involvement of beneficiaries in the implementation of projects. It is also important to increase the role of technology in social work, especially through the introduction of digital tools supporting communication, organization of activities and data analysis. Investments in technology can not only increase operational efficiency, but also enable better adaptation of services to the needs of beneficiaries.

Companies should place particular emphasis on the continuous improvement of methods of operation, which requires the creation of systems enabling regular evaluation of the effectiveness of undertaken actions and implementation of changes based on the obtained results. It is also important to take into account the voice of beneficiaries in the decision-making process, which increases the sense of joint responsibility for the implemented initiatives and allows for the provision of services more adapted to their expectations. In this context, the development of consultation systems and constant dialogue with beneficiaries is recommended in order to better identify and meet their needs.

In addition to operational activities, it is recommended to promote an organizational culture based on trust, cooperation and openness to change. Team competences should be strengthened through training in flexible management and communication, as well as skills related to the use of modern technologies should be developed. Creating a work environment that is conducive to cooperation and innovation will contribute to increased organizational agility, which will allow companies to operate more effectively in a dynamically changing social environment. Ultimately, implementing these recommendations can lead to increased effectiveness of activities and better matching of services provided to the real needs of beneficiaries, which is a fundamental goal of organizations dealing with social work.

Technology plays a crucial role in shaping organizational agility, particularly in the context of social work, where the effectiveness of actions depends on quick access to information, efficient communication, and flexible resource management. Modern technological solutions, such as information management systems, communication platforms, and analytics tools powered by artificial intelligence, enable organizations not only to respond more quickly to beneficiaries' needs but also to better anticipate changes and adapt activities to dynamic conditions. An example of technology application is digital mapping of social needs, which allows for precise identification of groups requiring support, significantly improving resource allocation. Additionally, technology supports monitoring the outcomes of organizational activities, enabling ongoing evaluation and the implementation of improvements. By integrating such tools, social work organizations can manage data more effectively and make evidence-based decisions, thereby enhancing their adaptive capacity.

However, leveraging technology requires adequate organizational preparation, including staff training, the implementation of data security systems, and fostering a culture that encourages innovation. Without these elements, the potential of technology may remain underutilized, limiting an organization's ability to enhance its agility. Therefore, future research could focus on analyzing the extent of technology adoption in social work and its impact on key aspects of agility, such as responsiveness, flexibility, and inclusivity

6. Conclusions

Comparing the results of the conducted research with the findings of other researchers, one can notice both similarities and differences in the perception of organizational agility in social work. In our own research, the key importance of such factors as taking into account the voice of the beneficiaries and continuous improvement of methods of operation was emphasized. Similar conclusions appear in the literature on the subject, where organizational agility is defined as the ability to quickly respond to changes and flexibility in adapting to a dynamic environment. In the publication by Włodarkiewicz-Klimek (2018), enterprise agility is described as the ability to quickly adapt to changes and take advantage of emerging opportunities, which is consistent with the results of this research.

However, other studies draw attention to additional aspects of agility that were not highlighted in these analyses. For example, Stolarska-Ślęzak (2023) emphasizes the importance of innovation and the ability to learn quickly as key elements of organizational agility. In the context of social work, innovation can manifest itself in the search for new methods and tools for working with clients, which was not directly taken into account in the discussed studies.

Moreover, the literature on the subject often emphasizes the role of technology in building organizational agility. Włodarkiewicz-Klimek (2018) indicates that the use of modern information technologies can significantly support adaptation processes in organizations. In this study, this aspect was taken into account, but it does not occupy a central place in the analysis, which may suggest the need for further research in this area. It is also worth noting that some studies draw attention to barriers in the implementation of agility in organizations. Szmagański (2012) indicates bureaucratization of processes and lack of flexibility as the main obstacles to building agile structures in social work. The results of this study, which emphasize the importance of flexibility and rapid response, are consistent with these observations, suggesting the need to simplify procedures and increase the autonomy of social workers.

In summary, the results of the conducted research are largely consistent with the findings of other researchers regarding the key determinants of organizational agility in social work. However, there are areas, such as innovation or the use of technology, that require further exploration to fully understand their role in building agile organizations in the social sector.

The limitations of the conducted research result from several key factors that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. First of all, the research was based on a sample of 303 respondents, which, although ensuring representativeness to a certain extent, does not allow for full generalization of the results to all organizations involved in social work. In addition, the use of multivariate correspondence analysis (MCA) as the main method of data analysis introduces limitations related to the interpretation of the results, as this method provides only a simplified picture of the relationships between the studied categories.

Another limitation is the subjective nature of respondents' responses, who could have had different understandings of individual questions about organizational agility. Differences in interpretation could have affected the distribution of responses and made it difficult to precisely identify the actual relationships. Additionally, the studies focused mainly on the perspective of the organization, omitting the broader socio-economic context that also affects organizational agility, such as government policies, regulations, or the economic situation in the region.

Another limitation was the insufficient consideration of the role of technology in shaping organizational agility. Although this aspect has been partially explored, its impact has not been thoroughly analyzed, which may limit the full understanding of its importance in social work. The research also lacked comparative analysis with other sectors, which could help to determine the specific features of agility in social work compared to other industries.

Finally, it is important to note that the study was cross-sectional, meaning that data collected at a single point in time were analyzed. The lack of a longitudinal perspective limits the ability to understand the dynamics and changes in organizational agility over a longer period of time. These limitations suggest a need for further, more comprehensive research that could take into account a broader context and provide more detailed results.

Future research directions could focus on a more detailed analysis of the determinants of organizational agility in social work, taking into account both internal and external factors that affect the functioning of the organization. Particular attention could be paid to the analysis of the long-term effects of implementing agility-based strategies, which would allow for a better understanding of the dynamics of organizational change over time. Research could also expand the scope to include comparisons of different sectors of activity to determine whether the specific features of agility found in social work are unique or universal.

An important area for future research is the role of digital technologies in increasing organizational agility. One could focus on examining the impact of specific technological tools, such as artificial intelligence, information management systems or communication platforms, on the ability of organizations to adapt and respond to change. It is also important to deepen knowledge about innovation in social work, especially in the context of developing new

methods of working with clients and implementing solutions that support cooperation and engagement of local communities.

An international perspective can provide valuable information on differences in the perception and practice of organizational agility in different countries and social systems. Cross-cultural comparisons could help identify best practices and barriers that hinder the implementation of agile strategies. Additionally, it is worth considering changing social needs and expectations of beneficiaries, especially in the context of global crises such as the pandemic or climate change, which may affect the priorities of social work organizations.

Another important area of research is the analysis of the interactions between organizational agility and employee engagement, psychological well-being, and motivation. This can help to better understand how agile strategies affect organizational structure and work culture. Additionally, future research can also focus on developing and validating measurement tools that more accurately reflect the multidimensional nature of organizational agility in social work. The development of such tools will enable a more precise assessment of the effectiveness of implemented strategies and programs, while providing practical guidance for leaders and decision-makers.

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