

OPTIMIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL WELFARE UNITS. THE CASE OF POLAND

Leszek ZELEK

Krakow University of Economics, Department of Organization and Management Methods;
zelekl@uek.krakow.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-0658-5770

Purpose: The aim of the article is to diagnose the level of optimization of the organizational structures of social welfare units in Poland in the context of challenges determining the change in the approach to the management of social services.

Design/methodology/approach: Using the *Participatory Action Research* method, a diagnosis of organizational structures was made in 2,573 OPS and 328 PCPR local government social welfare organizations in Poland. Using formative indicators, a research framework was developed to diagnose and assess the occurrence of organizational learning, as well as the implementation of programs to manage organizational culture change.

Findings: The diagnosis revealed a lack of internal communication systems and the existence of extensive personnel accountability systems. The problem of overly complex organizational structures and a lack of awareness of the organization's mission among managers and employees was identified.

Research limitations/implications: The study results indicate the need to extend the research to European countries that have carried out extensive public sector reforms in order to conduct comparative analyzes with other welfare models.

Practical implications: An inherent element of the rationalization of organizational structures within units remains their flattening and reduction in employment, primarily at the highest and lowest levels.

Social implications: Rationalizing organizational structures should be a response to the implementation of social services based on relationships, technology, collaboration, and design "from below" rather than being imposed centrally.

Originality/value: Managing social welfare units in an entrepreneurial manner requires changes in organizational culture through rationalization of structures. Without rationalizing organizational structures, it is not possible to implement social services.

Keywords: public management, organizational structures, social welfare organizations, social services.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Dynamic economic, political, and demographic changes, and above all the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, are giving rise to new and increasingly complex problems of various kinds, which a significant part of society is unable to cope with (Quantin, Tubert-Bitter, 2022). These changes require an improvement of the organizational structures of social welfare to optimize the effectiveness of new tasks. The new challenges facing these organizations are forcing them to engage in increasingly frequent cross-sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation and to involve clients in the creation and implementation of social strategies and programs (Cataldi, 2024). Multifaceted cooperation can make a real contribution to solving social problems and bring significant value to improving the living conditions of people in need of assistance. Central and local authorities should focus their attention on optimizing the potential of public entities and strengthening the links between them (Zelek, Strzpek, 2024). Attention is drawn to the management need to improve the quality within organizations and cooperation between public policy stakeholders, as well as the political and social dimension of management (Pestoff, 2012). In an era of globalization and dynamic change, it is important how a specialized state should coordinate cross-sectoral cooperation with other entities such as large corporations, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, or data cloud management organizations, while gaining legitimacy as one of the main characteristics determining the relationship between the organization and its environment (Suddaby et al., 2017). A review of the literature points to an increasingly clear universalization of management theories, concepts, models, and methods, and after appropriate adaptation, there is a real possibility of applying them to achieve the adopted goals, both in the private, public, and social sectors (Frączkiewicz-Wronka, 2009; Aguinis, Burgi-Tian, 2023). The literature on the organizational structures of social welfare units is poor in its scientific output, creating a research gap, which motivates a greater interest in this area (Zelek, 2023). The importance of optimizing organizational systems in social welfare units is increasing due to the growing complexity of social problems and the need for more adaptive public service delivery models (Cataldi, 2024; Quantin, Tubert-Bitter, 2022). Contemporary approaches to public management emphasize cross-sectoral collaboration, co-production, and relational service design, which require more flexible and responsive organizational structures (Pestoff, 2012; Cottam, 2022). However, despite the development of management concepts and their applicability across sectors, empirical research focusing on the internal organizational structures of social welfare units remains limited (Frączkiewicz-Wronka, 2009; Aguinis, Burgi-Tian, 2023). In particular, there is insufficient evidence on how structural characteristics influence the effectiveness and adaptability of these organizations in practice (Zelek, 2023). This creates a research gap concerning the relationship between organizational design and the implementation of modern social services in public welfare systems.

2. Organizational Systems of Social Welfare Units

Social welfare management requires a qualitatively different approach to the organization of its mission and objectives, introducing the concept of dignified management (Sharma, Mukhejri, 2011). This approach is an attempt to combine efficiency and effectiveness with the maintenance of humanistic goals in the organization of social welfare (Furman et al., 2020). It requires managers of units to combine managerial and interpersonal skills with the ethical quality of assistance activities (Zelek, 2025). The concept of active social policy, implemented in the Polish social welfare system from Western European countries and the US, means redirecting assistance based on broad social transfers towards empowerment and strengthening empowerment (Kam, 2020) through the professional activation of beneficiaries, which presents social welfare services with new tasks. In an era of advancing digitalization, globalization, migration, and dynamically changing socio-economic conditions, attention should be paid to the benefits of implementing innovation and entrepreneurship in the design and coordination of social services for both clients and state budgets (Wodecka-Hyjek, 2023). P.F. Drucker believes that every public utility institution must be as entrepreneurial and innovative as any company, if not more so (Drucker, 1985). Social links with the environment in which social welfare organizational units operate are of great importance for the quality of management in the social welfare system. Until 1989, social welfare systems in CEE countries were subject to the total domination of communist ideology and a policy of strict control over society and the economy, blurring the boundaries between politics and administration (Hajnal et al., 2021). The accession of CEE countries to the European Union (EU) initiated a process of aligning social welfare service standards with those in leading EU countries (Adiukaite, Navicke, 2022). The Polish administration is based on a bureaucratic model derived from the continental (mainly German) tradition, which is dominated by legalism, hierarchy, and organizational formalism. Strongly rooted in law, decision-making processes are formalized and often cautious, which affects the pace of change and the capacity for innovation (Izdebski, 2021). A new approach to social service delivery is currently being proposed: transformation design based on relationships, technology, cooperation, and bottom-up service design rather than centrally imposed (Cottam, 2022). This is also in line with the "need for cross-sectoral collaboration" between three entities (public, private, non-profit civil society) to ensure service delivery (Butcher, Gilchrist, 2016). The specific nature of local government social welfare organizations in the context of building inter-institutional and cross-sector partnerships requires a qualitatively different approach to these issues by involving clients in the processes of designing and coordinating social services (Clarke, 2020). M. Grewiński's original diagram of a modern, forward-looking social policy model, called the Daisy of Prosperity (Grewiński, 2009), shows that social policy is implemented in three sectors: public, civic, and market. The low financial potential of non-governmental organizations means that they are not significant partners for district and

municipal social welfare organizations (Golczyńska-Grondas, Błaszczuk, 2020). There is also a lack of partnership activities between units and cooperation between public entities in the field of social welfare (Eck et al., 2024). The lack of cooperation within the social welfare system is the cause of organizational chaos, which arises as a result of unclear areas of competence and the dispersion of responsibility for the implementation of tasks in the commune and district (Krzyszowski, 2008). Traditional social welfare derives its legitimacy from values based on compliance with law, justice, effectiveness, and the achievement of results through specific tools, with economic efficiency in the end (Froy, Giguère, 2010). In new approaches, it is a pursuit of quality improvement based on the commissioning of social services (Szarfenberg, 2011). Proper management of planned activities should meet the needs of the individual, bringing their situation in line with that of other members of society (Kulesza, Sześciło, 2013).

2.1. Streamlining Organizational Structures

Changes in organizational culture are brought about by rationalizing organizational structures and promoting the use of social communication techniques, including, for example, implementing communication strategies, appointing spokespersons, and social communication departments in institutions (Gruening, 2001; Wade, Laloux, 2014). In the era of widespread digitization, communication skills are gaining in importance, as they form the basis for activities carried out in entities using information and communication technologies (Maurer et al., 2023). Furthermore, rationalization of organizational structures is reflected in a reduction in employment, mainly in senior and entry-level positions (Cooper et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2017). The reduction in employment affects to the least extent employees in middle management positions and specialists who have been recognized as the pillars of the efficient functioning of the organization (Khaw et al., 2022). The rationalization of organizational structures is based on the postulate of implementing quality management in the public sector (Wolniak, Sułkowski, 2016).

The modernization of organizational structures in public sector entities, which took place in the 1980s and 1990s in the United Kingdom (Hood, Dixon, 2015); Scandinavia (Lapsley, Knutsson, 2017); the United States (Denhardt, Denhardt, 2015); Australia (Johnston, 2000) and New Zealand (Boston et al., 1996), including the transformation of public services (Osborne et al., 2026), including social services (Nielsen, Hammerslev, 2024), was carried out in the reforms of the spirit of the *New Public Management* concept. Rationalization of organizational structures in the public sectors of these countries has led to job cuts, mainly in senior and entry-level positions (Hood and Dixon, 2015).

Exercising power in an entrepreneurial manner requires necessary changes in organizational culture (Errida, Lotfi, 2021). This relationship has stimulated interest in the use of organizational culture change management programs and the implementation of the concept of a learning organization and good management models in administration (Ward, 2017).

The widespread use of social communication techniques has also contributed to the practical implementation of instruments of democratization, customer orientation, and improvement of public service delivery (Gruening, 2001). Key skills play a special role in the learning process; they are essential for people to achieve social goals and are used particularly in managerial positions (Roszyk-Kowalska, Kraśniak, 2020).

These analyzes constitute a research problem that led to a diagnosis of the adaptation of the organizational systems of social welfare units in Poland, that is, the social welfare centers (OPS) and the district family assistance centers (PCPR), to dynamically changing needs in terms of matching social services to the needs of the clients. The following research hypotheses were adopted in the article:

H1: OPS and PCPR implement organizational culture change management programs, increasing adaptation to new conditions.

This hypothesis assumes that organizational culture change is already institutionalized within social welfare units. It reflects the growing importance of adaptability and learning in public organizations facing dynamic environmental conditions.

H2: OPS and PCPR have defined missions, strategies, and goals that increase the effectiveness of services.

This hypothesis emphasizes the strategic maturity of organizations as a determinant of service effectiveness. Clearly defined missions and goals are treated as key elements of performance-oriented public management.

H3: OPS and PCPR implement internal and social communication systems that increase the accessibility of supervisors to employees.

The hypothesis highlights the role of communication systems as a critical infrastructure supporting organizational efficiency. Effective communication is assumed to enhance coordination and accessibility within hierarchical structures.

H4: OPS and PCPR have an extensive system of personal responsibility that prevents the efficient operation of organizational structures.

This hypothesis addresses the potential dysfunctions of excessive formalization and accountability systems. It suggests that overly rigid control mechanisms may reduce organizational flexibility and decision-making efficiency.

H5: OPS and PCPR operate in a highly centralized system that prevents adaptation to dynamically changing needs of clients.

The hypothesis reflects the tension between centralization and adaptability in public sector organizations. It assumes that high levels of centralization limit responsiveness to local and rapidly changing client needs.

3. Research Methods

The study used the *Participatory Action Research (PAR)* method (Eden, Huxham, 1996), which was subjected to a more in-depth analysis at the end of the 1990s, particularly with regard to the opportunities it offers for solving organizational problems (Kafel, 2016). When considering research methods in action separately, the following approaches can be identified: *action research* (Greenwood, 1998), *community action research* (Senge, Scharmer 2001), and *PAR* (Karlsen, 1991). However, it is the PAR method that best utilizes scientific achievements in solving practical social problems, with the broad participation of those affected by the problem (Cornish et al., 2023). The basic assumption of the research process based on the *PAR* method is scientific consulting, also known as research strategy or action research (Heron, 1996). Participants in the study become their full subjects (Brydon-Miller, 2020). The subjects are co-participants in the research process in all areas of research (Karlsen, 1991).

The study covered all social welfare organizations at the municipal (OPS) and county (PCPR) levels, which constitute the basic element of the social welfare system in Poland. Using the cooperative research method through a set of formative indicators (statements) for the construct ‘organizational structure’, the scales were given a multi-index form recorded in electronic diagnostic forms adopted under the names *OPS-OpenIndex* and *PCPR-OpenIndex*. The statements were identical for both groups of organizations. Units received an email with a link to a survey questionnaire, which managers and employees were asked to complete. Access to the surveys was only possible through two direct links, created separately for each tool in a Google form.

Table 1.

A summary of the statistical data

Type of organization	Total		%
	Questionnaires sent	Complete surveys received	
OPS	2573	1959	76.1%
PCPR	328	242	75.7%

Source: own study.

The responses obtained were exported to MS Excel and then subjected to statistical analysis in Statistica 13. The following tools were used to perform the descriptive statistical analysis of the research results:

- *Cronbach's α* coefficient to assess reliability (internal consistency of constructs).
- *Cramér's V* coefficient to examine the relationship between qualitative variables.
- *Kendall tau* coefficient to assess the correlation between respondents' responses to statements on a 5-point Likert scale.

A test probability value (p) less than 0.05 provided grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis. The strength of the relationship was then examined using *the Cramer V* coefficient. The latter takes values from 0 to 1 from a closed interval. The higher its value, the stronger the relationship between the variables.

4. Results of the Research

The purpose of the study within the organizational structure construct was to diagnose the occurrence of organizational learning and to determine whether organizational culture change management programs are being implemented. An attempt was made to determine whether the units have logos, defined missions, strategies, and goals, an internal and social communication system, the availability of supervisors to employees, and the complexity of the organizational structure at the management levels. Questions were asked about the training and staff development system and the implementation of quality management. An attempt was made to examine the degree of advancement in the use of information technology and the possibility of giving greater autonomy to units.

The construct measuring organizational structures within OPS and PCPR consisted of 15 statements. The numbering of the statements was not kept in chronological order to ensure the reliability of the responses (Table 2).

Table 2.
Statements for the construct "organizational structure"

No	Statement
21	I have the opportunity to take advantage of additional training, conferences, courses, studies, business trips, expert meetings, advisory meetings, and industry meetings.
50	Employees understand the expectations for the effective performance of their mission.
43.	Working in the unit, I feel like a "co-owner" of the projects and activities in which I participate and take responsibility.
19.	Continuous learning and professional development are expected in my job.
2.	The unit has developed them and uses logos on documents.
1.	The unit has its own website.
55.	The unit is managed according to its stated mission and developed strategy.
40.	I provide information quickly and efficiently to those who need it.
67.	The entity uses electronic communication systems between employees.
7.	Managers can make important decisions without consulting their superiors.
72.	There are too many people in managerial positions in the unit.
35.	The unit focuses on increasing awareness of the services it offers.
32.	The unit does not limit itself to performing its statutory duties.
77.	The entity implements projects aimed at expanding the scope and quality of its services.
3.	The unit has a high degree of autonomy and is not dependent on other entities.

Source: own study.

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4.1. OPS results

The construct is reliable, as confirmed by *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient of 0.74. The distribution of the responses of the OPS respondents is presented in Table 3. As a rule, respondents have the opportunity to take advantage of additional training, conferences, and other types of trips (Statement 21). This opinion was confirmed by 76.42% of the surveyed group, including 43.85% who moderately agreed with it. The aggregated results showed that 47.01% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 38.39% moderately disagreed with Statement 50, indicating that it is not clear to employees what expectations the unit must meet to effectively carry out its mission. Respondents working in the unit generally feel that they are "co-owners" of the projects and activities in which they participate (Statement 43), which was moderately confirmed by 44.05% of respondents, while 22.72% strongly agreed.

A high level of agreement was observed in response to Statement 19, with 44.61% of respondents moderately agreeing and 37.83% strongly agreeing that continuous learning and professional development are expected in their work. The aggregated responses of the respondents to Statement 2, that entities most often have logos that they use on documents, clearly indicate that 49.06% of the respondents confirmed the statement. More than 76.21% of the respondents strongly confirmed that the entity has its own website (Statement 1).

Table 3.

Responses of OPS respondents within the organizational structure construct (in %, N = 1959)

Specification	S. 21	S. 50	S. 43	S. 19	S. 2	S. 1	S. 55	S. 40	S. 67	S. 7	S. 72	S. 35	S. 32	S. 77	S. 3
	in %														
Strongly disagree	5.97	47.01	7.50	2.60	14.70	5.46	2.40	25.98	17.82	13.63	3.32	44.31	3.57	3.27	19.45
I rather disagree	12.30	38.39	15.77	6.84	7.81	2.60	5.87	34.66	28.18	29.66	8.93	26.49	9.49	8.93	34.81
No opinion	5.31	8.32	9.95	8.12	10.62	3.01	5.31	9.90	18.48	16.64	49.62	11.94	20.83	23.43	15.93
I rather agree	43.85	4.34	44.05	44.61	17.82	12.71	51.30	22.31	24.35	30.99	29.35	12.20	41.04	42.16	21.39
Strongly agree	32.57	1.94	22.72	37.83	49.06	76.21	35.12	7.15	11.18	9.09	8.78	5.05	25.06	22.21	8.42

Source: own study based on research results.

High scores were observed among the aggregated survey results for statement 55. 51.3% of the respondents moderately agreed that the entity is managed in accordance with its stated mission and the strategy developed to solve social problems in the municipality (Statement 55). Furthermore, another 35.12% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement.

The respondents expressed negative opinions about the speed and efficiency of information transfer to interested parties (Statement 40), which was observed among 34.66% of the respondents, although, on the other hand, 22.31% of them moderately agreed that there were no communication problems. A moderate 28.18% of the respondents maintained that their units did not use electronic communication systems between employees (Statement 67), but slightly fewer, 24.35%, disagreed.

High ratings were recorded for Statement 7. 30.99% of the respondents moderately agreed and 29.66% disagreed with this statement, suggesting that in some units, managers can make many important decisions without consulting their superiors, while in others the decision-making process is longer. 49.62% of the respondents did not express a clear opinion when answering the statement on whether there are too many people in managerial positions in the unit (Statement 72), although 29.35% of the respondents moderately agreed with this opinion. According to the respondents, the units do not focus on increasing the customer's awareness of the importance of the services offered (Statement 35). 44.31% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this opinion, and 26.49% expressed moderate agreement. 41.04% of the respondents moderately agreed with statement 32, indicating that the entity does not limit itself to performing statutory tasks resulting from applicable regulations and legal acts.

A moderate correlation was confirmed by 42.16% of the respondents, who stated that their unit implements projects aimed at expanding the scope of services and improving their quality (Statement 77), while another 22.21% believed that it fully implements such projects. There was a moderate belief among the respondents that the unit does not have much autonomy and is dependent on other entities (Statement 3), which was agreed with by 34.81% of the respondents. On the other hand, 21.39% of the respondents confirmed the existence of dependence to a moderate degree.

The construct contained 15 statements; therefore, the range of possible results was between 15 and 75 (Table 4).

Table 4.

Descriptive statistics for the organizational structure construct in the OPS sample

N of important	Arithmetic mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Deviation std.
1959	49.42	50.00	19.00	74.00	55.00	7.89

Source: own study based on research results.

The minimum response was 4 units higher than the lower limit of the construct, while the maximum was 1 unit lower. A high mean and median of 50.0 and a standard deviation of 7.9 were recorded.

There was a weak and statistically significant positive correlation between Statements 3 and 7, with (p) below 0.05 and *Kendall tau* at 0.29. This means that people who agreed that the unit has a high degree of autonomy and is not dependent on other entities generally also believed that managers in the unit can make many important decisions without having to consult their

superiors. The relationship between Statements 7 and 67 was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), positive, and weak (τ coefficient = 0.28). Respondents who expressed the opinion that managers in the unit can make many important decisions without consulting their superiors were also generally of the opinion that the unit uses electronic communication systems between employees. A not very strong, positive ($\tau = 0.36$) and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation was found for the pair of Statements 19 and 21. Respondents for whom continuous learning and professional development were expected in their work generally maintained that they had the opportunity to take advantage of additional training, conferences, etc. The correlation between Statements 43 and 55 was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) positive and not very strong (τ coefficient = 0.35), which means that people working in the unit who feel that they are "co-owners" of the projects and activities in which they participate generally believed that the unit was managed according to its stated mission and strategy for solving the municipality's social problems.

4.2. PCPR results

The distribution of the responses of the PCPR respondents is presented in Table 5. The construct is reliable according to the *Cronbach alpha* coefficient of 0.72. More than 44.63% moderately agreed with Statement 21 on the possibility of using additional training and conferences, while 40.91% of PCPR respondents strongly agreed with this Statement. Similarly, the opposite situation occurred for Statement 50. 85.54% of the respondents confirmed that employees do not understand what expectations an entity must meet to effectively carry out its mission. As a rule, the respondents felt that they were "co-owners" of the projects and activities in which they participated (Statement 43), with 43.8% agreeing to a moderate extent. Similarly, they believed that continuous learning and professional development is expected in their work (Statement 19), which was strongly supported by 41.74% of the surveyed group.

Table 5.

Responses of PCPR respondents within the organizational structure construct (in %, N = 242)

Specification	S. 21	S. 50	S. 43	S. 19	S. 2	S. 1	S. 55	S. 40	S. 67	S. 7	S. 72	S. 35	S. 32	S. 77	S. 3
	in %														
Strongly disagree	3.31	51.65	6.61	2.89	8.68	4.96	1.24	22.31	12.81	15.70	2.07	43.80	4.55	1.24	20.25
I rather disagree	5.37	33.88	14.05	3.31	5.37	1.24	3.31	31.40	30.17	26.45	9.50	29.75	6.61	6.20	29.34
No opinion	5.79	7.44	11.16	5.37	6.61	0.00	4.96	9.50	19.01	21.07	44.21	11.57	14.88	13.22	14.88
I somewhat agree	44.63	4.13	43.80	46.69	17.36	4.13	48.76	28.10	19.42	30.99	32.64	12.40	40.08	38.43	24.79
Strongly agree	40.91	2.89	24.38	41.74	61.98	89.67	41.74	8.68	18.60	5.79	11.57	2.48	33.88	40.91	10.74

Source: own study based on research results.

Similarly to OPS, PCPR employees clearly confirmed that their units have developed and use logos on documents (Statement 2) and that they have their own website (Statement 1). The percentage of "strongly agree" responses for these two Statements was 61.98% and 89.67%, respectively. A significant majority of affirmative responses were recorded for Statement 55. However, 48.76% of the respondents moderately agreed that the unit is managed

according to its stated mission and developed a strategy to solve social problems in the municipality, while another 41.74% strongly confirmed this relationship.

A summary analysis of the survey results for Statement 40 showed that respondents did not agree that they provide information quickly and efficiently to those who need it, with 31.4% moderately disagreeing and 28.1% strongly disagreeing. 30.17% of the respondents moderately disagreed that the unit uses electronic communication systems between employees (Statement 67), while 31.4% of the respondents expressed a moderate opinion that the unit managers can make many important decisions without consulting their superiors (Statement 7). 44.21% of the respondents were generally unable to determine whether the entity employs too many people in managerial positions (Statement 72), while 32.64% of the respondents expressed positive responses.

The aggregated results of the survey for Statement 35 in the responses of 73.55% of respondents indicated critical comments in the context of the statement that the unit focuses on raising customer awareness of the importance of the services offered. A total of 43.8% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, while 29.8% disagreed to a moderate extent. On the contrary, respondents expressed the opinion that the entity does not limit itself to performing statutory tasks resulting from applicable regulations and legal acts (Statement 32), which was strongly confirmed by 33.88% of respondents, and moderately confirmed by another 40.08%. Similar responses were recorded for Statement 77. 79.34% of the respondents strongly agreed that their unit implements projects aimed at expanding the range of services and improving their quality. Only 7.44% of the surveyed group disagreed with this. The respondents were undecided whether the unit has a high degree of autonomy and is not dependent on other entities (Statement 3). Moderate dependence in this regard was confirmed by 24.79% of the respondents, but 29.34% of them presented a different opinion and another 20.25% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement (Table 6).

Table 6.

Descriptive statistics for the organizational structure construct in the PCPR sample

N of important	Arithmetic mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Deviation std.
242	51.68	52.00	27.00	70.00	43.00	7.37

Source: own study based on research results.

The minimum response was significantly higher than the lower limit of the construct and amounted to 27.0. The PCPR sample had a slightly higher median and mean compared to the OPS, which amounted to 52.0. The standard deviation was lower and was 7.4.

The relationship between Statements 21 and 43 was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), positive, and moderately strong (τ coefficient = 0.47), which means that people who declared the possibility of using additional training, conferences, etc. were generally of the opinion that, working in the unit, they felt like "co-owners" of the projects and activities in which they participated and for which they took responsibility. There was also a correlation between

Statements 32 and 77, which was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), positive and not very strong (*Kendall's tau* coefficient = 0.36). Respondents who believed that the unit was not limited to performing statutory tasks resulting from applicable regulations and legal acts also expressed the opinion that the unit implements projects aimed at expanding the scope of services and improving their quality.

A statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), positive and not very strong correlation (*Kendall tau* = 0.39) was found for Statements 55 and 72. Respondents who believed that the unit was managed in accordance with its stated mission and strategy for solving social problems in the municipality also generally maintained that there were too many people in management positions in the unit.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the analysis of statistical data, key areas requiring improvement in the organizational structures of social welfare centers were identified, namely: (1) lack of clear expectations that entities must meet in order to effectively carry out their missions; as many as 47% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, and 38.4% moderately disagreed; (2) lack of speed and efficiency in communicating information to interested parties, with 34.7% of respondents seeing problems in this area; (3) lack of electronic communication systems between employees, with 28.2% of respondents expressing this opinion; (4) managers' inability to make important decisions without consulting their superiors; approximately 30% moderately agreed and disagreed with this statement; considering the number of questionnaires received, this result should be considered a negative phenomenon; (5) too many people employed in managerial positions, 29.4% of respondents moderately agreed with this opinion; (6) lack of raising customer awareness of the importance of the services offered, 44.3% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while 26.5% of respondents expressed moderate agreement; (7) lack of autonomy of individuals and dependence on other entities, which was agreed with by 34.8% of respondents.

Areas requiring improvement in the organizational structures of PCPR include: (1) lack of electronic communication systems between employees, which was confirmed by almost 1/3 of respondents to a moderate degree; (2) too many people employed in managerial positions, with 32.6% of respondents leaning towards a positive answer; (3) a lack of focus on raising customer awareness, with 43.8% of respondents expressing this opinion and 29.8% agreeing to a moderate extent; (4) lack of autonomy of individuals and dependence on other entities, which was confirmed to a moderate degree by 29.3% of them, and another 20.3% strongly confirmed the dependence; (5) too slow and inefficient transfer of information to those who need it, with 31.4% of respondents expressing moderate dependence in this regard.

Table 7.

Identified problems and proposed solutions within the organizational systems of OPS and PCPR – verification of the adopted hypotheses

Identified problems	Verification of the hypothesis	Proposed solutions	Ways to solve problems in the organizational systems of OPS and PCPR
Lack of awareness of the condition organization's mission	H1 rejected H2 rejected	Organizational culture change management programs	- organizing and participating in regular team meetings, - conferences, meetings, and training sessions on the directions of activities.
Lack of internal communication systems	H3 rejected	Implementation of information technology	- electronic internal communication systems.
Extensive system of personal responsibility	H4 confirmed	Flattening of organizational structures	- delegation of tasks and powers to lower-level managers and team coordinators.
Extensive organizational structure		Reducing employment	- reduction of employment at the highest level (merging departments with similar competences), outsourcing services to external entities, - outsourcing.
Strong dependence on local authorities	H5 confirmed	Increased autonomy of OPS and PCPR	- decentralization of management, - limiting the role of county councils, city presidents, mayors, and commune heads to supervisory functions.

Source: own study.

As indicated by the results of the research and the assumptions developed on their basis, to improve the organizational culture of social welfare units, it is necessary to develop and implement complete solutions in the area of social communication strategy and to promote the use of information technology. An integral part of rationalizing the organizational structures of these units remains their flattening and the reduction of employment, mainly at the highest and lowest levels. An important determinant for the introduction of changes in this area, as indicated by the respondents, is the achievement of greater autonomy by municipal and county social welfare organizational units in their day-to-day activities.

Managing social welfare units in an entrepreneurial manner requires changes in organizational culture through the rationalization of structures. This relationship becomes the main determinant when implementing organizational culture change management programs and the idea of a learning organization. The widespread use of social communication techniques will also contribute to the practical implementation of instruments to improve the provision of public services. As a result of the analyses carried out, an important conclusion should be drawn, namely that without rationalizing organizational structures, it is not possible to implement modern social services.

The obtained results are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the limitations of bureaucratic structures in the public sector (Izdebski, 2021; Hood, Dixon, 2015) and the need for more flexible, communication-oriented organizational models (Gruening, 2001; Maurer et al., 2023). The identified deficits in communication systems and organizational autonomy confirm earlier findings on the barriers to effective cross-sectoral collaboration (Butcher,

Gilchrist, 2016; Van Eck et al., 2024). At the same time, the persistence of hierarchical structures reflects the institutional legacy of administrative systems in Central and Eastern Europe (Hajnal et al., 2021). These results reinforce the argument that structural rationalization is a prerequisite for implementing modern social service models based on co-production and innovation. A key limitation of the study is its focus on a single national context, which restricts the generalizability of the findings and indicates the need for comparative international research.

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