

STUDY ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE CULTURAL PROFILE THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE INDIVIDUALISM - COLLECTIVISM DIMENSION AT THE LEVEL OF A LOCAL PUBLIC INSTITUTION

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Received 20 March 2023; Accepted 14 June 2023

Abstract:

This paper aims to identify the cultural profile from the perspective of the dimension individualism - collectivism manifested at the level of a public institution, by interpreting the opinions expressed by the human resources questioned, namely public officials, civil servants and contractual staff, with reference to the Gura-Humorului City Hall. The conclusion drawn as a result of the micro-research carried out shows that, in the analyzed public organization, the human resources questioned manifest, to some extent, collective values: the help given to the co-worker with the risk of sanctions, the power of the group is decisive for the efficient resolution of public affairs compared with individual strength, higher productivity when working in a group, not declaring a colleague's fact of taking long and unjustified breaks.

Key words: cultural management, the institution of the town hall, individualism, collectivism, individual power, group power

JEL classification: M14, Z18

INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is understood as a shared perception held by the members of the organization. (Oparanma, 2015, p. 16) It has been written about organizational culture that it can be described as an administrative culture or a bureaucratic culture. An additional element can be identified in an administrative culture that is not found in the organizational culture, namely politics. Most of the studies that address the topic of culture are focused on the private organization, where politics does not represent a visible component, and even less on the public organization. Since public sector organizations implement public policies developed by governing structures, both theoretically and practically, the political factor cannot be excluded. Furthermore, most public sector organizations are not profit-seeking, unlike those in the private sector which rely on profit for their existence (Alom apud Jamil, 2020, p. 3)

In an attempt to justify the need for cultural adaptation in public organizations, the specialist literature supports the fact that "public sector managers can learn from the experience of private sector management, public organizations facing pressure to adopt management techniques used by private" (Bradley and Parker, 2001, p. 349). Despite the growing similarities between the environments of public and private sector organizations, there are still a variety of specific, fundamental differences at the operational and cultural levels of these organizations. (Schraeder et al., 2005, pp. 494-495). Unlike private organizations, those in the public sector "are, by their nature, less focused on the market and more concerned with political agendas" (Drumm, 2012, p. 6). In the case of public institutions, cultural values must be coordinated with citizens' expectations and with the main goal - to achieve the public good, which justifies the existence of the respective public institution (Moldovan and Macarie, 2016, p. 129).

The individualism - collectivism dimension describes the degree to which individuals in a certain culture see themselves as independent - versus interdependent - of the society in which they

live. This translates into individuals' self-concept of "I" or "we," which in turn dictates how much they care only about themselves and their immediate families, as opposed to the entire community in which they live. (Maaravi et al., 2021, p. 2) Another opinion claims that the individualism-collectivism dimension has an impact on the quality of governance. In the case of extreme individualism, interest in personal achievements and values are likely to lead to meritocracy and efficiency in the public sector, with an effect on the administration process. On the other hand, in the case of collectivism, phenomena of favoritism can occur at the group level, which, not infrequently, happens to generate corruption, nepotism and clientelism in the public sphere. (Kyriacou, 2016, p. 91)

The purpose of the micro-research aims *to identify the cultural profile from the perspective of the individualism - collectivism dimension manifested at the level of a public institution, by interpreting the opinions expressed by the human resources questioned, namely public dignitaries, civil servants and contractual staff.*

In order to achieve the aforementioned goal, the following objectives must be achieved:

O1: Identifying the risk perception of helping a co-worker in need

O2: determining opinions about group power in relation to individual power

O3: examine the distribution of responses regarding individuals performing individual tasks more effectively than collective tasks

O4: highlighting the perception of the respondents in relation to the collegiality shown.

THE POPULATION OF THE MICRORESEARCH ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE CULTURAL PROFILE THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE INDIVIDUALISM - COLLECTIVISM DIMENSION

In order to achieve the purpose and the specific objectives listed in the previous lines, we proceed to the questionnaire-based investigation of the staff within the local administrative apparatus, in order to obtain an overall picture regarding the highlighting of the cultural specificity from the perspective of the individualism-collectivism orientation.

The data collection took place between 6.03.2023-20.03.2023, following the application of the questionnaire, from the human resources population of 171 people from the administrative apparatus of the city of Gura-Humorului, answering 104 people, respectively public dignitaries, civil servants of management and execution and contractual management and execution personnel (see Table no. 1):

Table no. 1. The structure of the researched population – the staff within the Gura Humorului City Hall institution

Sampling base			Sample	
Categories of human resources	Number of human resources	%	Number of respondents	%
Public dignitaries	2	1.17%	2	1.92%
Management civil servants	8	4.68%	4	3.85%
Executive civil servants	68	39.77%	41	39.42%
Contract management staff	12	7.02%	10	9.62%
Contract execution staff	81	47.36%	47	45.19%
TOTAL	171	100%	104	100%

Source: the authors' processing according to the information contained in the Organization Chart of the City Hall of Gura Humorului, available at <http://www.primariagh.ro/primaria/organigrama/> [accessed on March 5, 2023]

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF *INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS COLLECTIVISM* AT THE LEVEL OF THE CITY HALL OF GURA HUMORULUI

In the case of the question "On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 meaning total disagreement and 10 total agreement, to what extent do you agree with helping your co-worker, risking sanctions at the same time?", respondents have divided opinions regarding taking risks to help a colleague in need (see Figure no. 1):

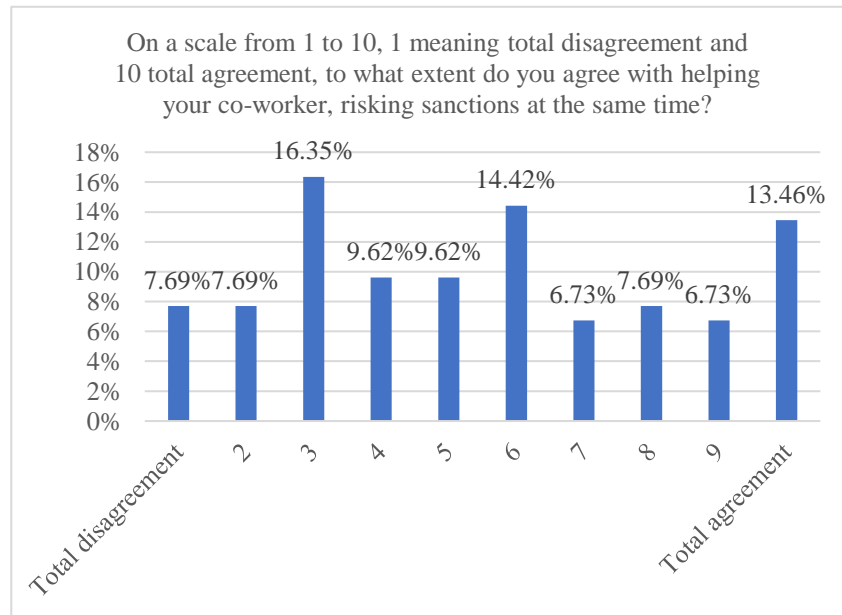


Figure no. 1. The percentage index of the risk of helping

From the interpretation of the answers recorded in the previous figure, there is an almost perfect balance between those who would help ($49.03\% = 14.42\% + 6.73\% + 7.69\% + 6.73\% + 13.46\%$) and those who would not help ($50.97\% = 7.69\% + 7.69\% + 16.35\% + 9.62\% + 9.62\%$) a work colleague when needed.

To the following question "On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 meaning total disagreement, and 10 total agreement, to what extent do you agree with the expression *"Where there are many, power increases"*?", more than half of the respondents (52.89%) chose the maximum option, i.e. total agreement (see Figure no. 2):

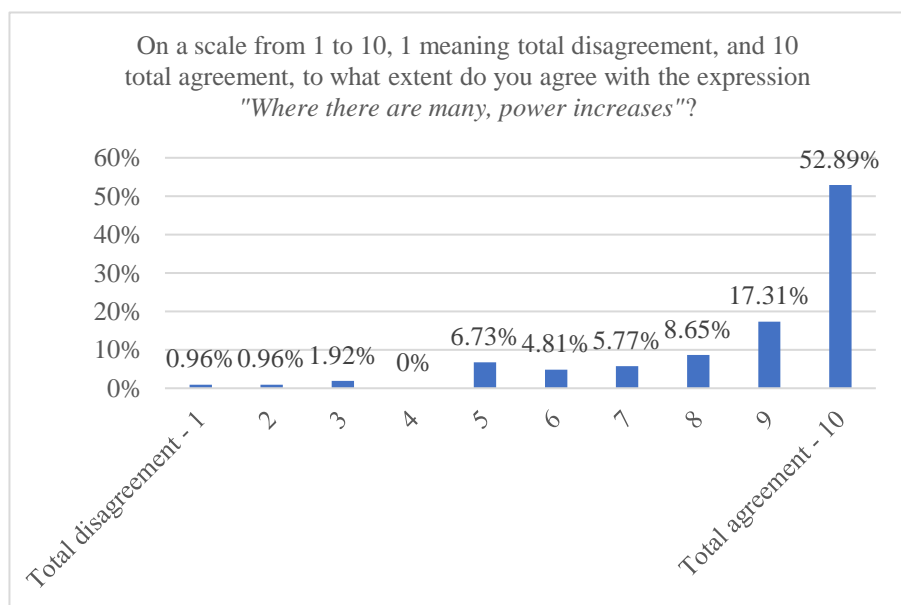


Figure no. 2. Percentage index of group power

Viewing the previous graph shows that most of the respondents believe that the power of the group is dominant over the individual one, recognizing that alone it is more difficult to accomplish certain tasks than together.

Studying the answers received to the question "Are there colleagues who show increased productivity when they perform individual tasks?", reveals significant differences (see Figure no. 3):

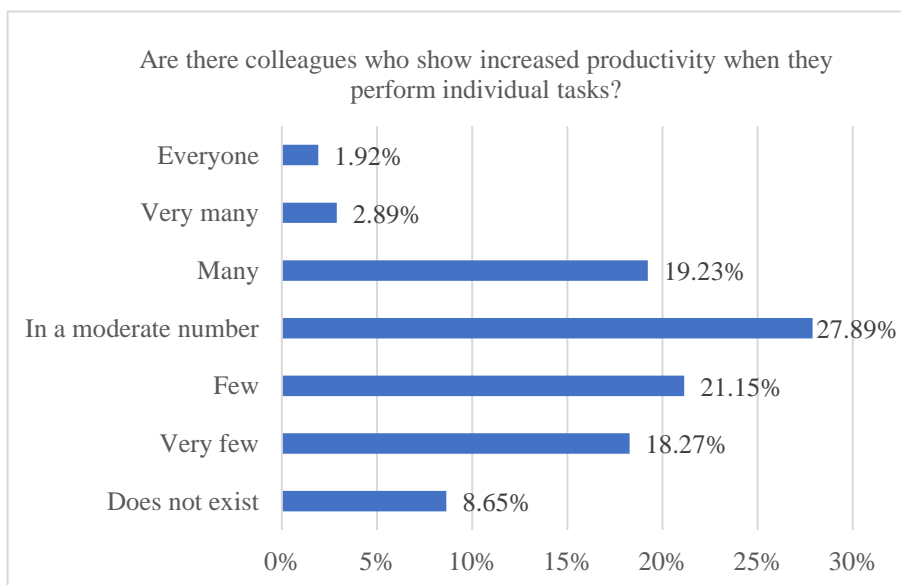


Figure no. 3. Percentage index of people who work more effectively individually

In the perception of the majority of respondents, the share of colleagues who work more efficiently individually is quite low ($24.04\% = 1.92\% + 2.89\% + 19.23\%$), compared to the percentage of 48.07% ($21.15\% + 18.27\% + 8.65\%$) who declare the opposite opinion.

Regarding the respondents' opinions expressed to the question "If a co-worker takes long and unjustified breaks, do you notify your supervisor?", the analysis of the answers also highlights different opinions (see Figure no. 4):

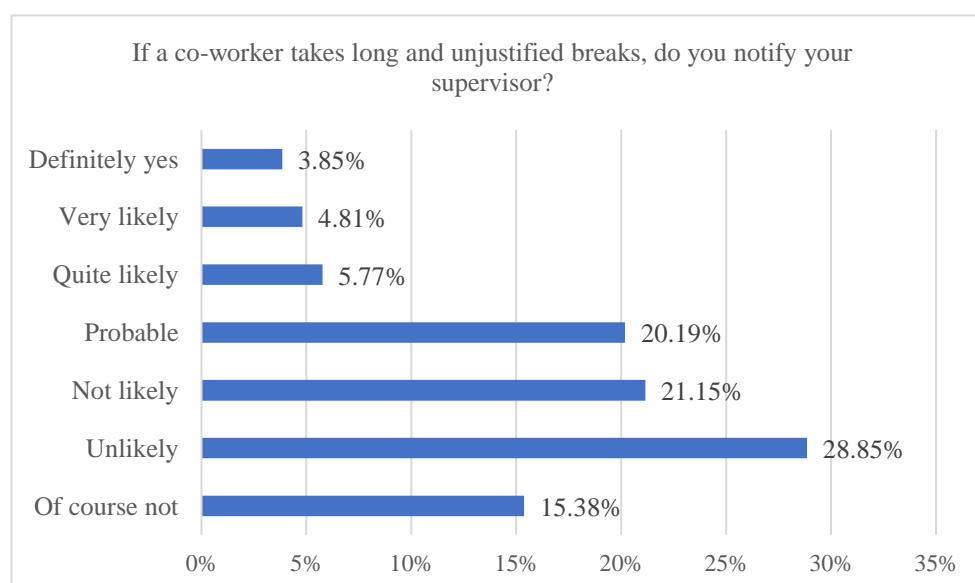


Figure no. 4. The percentage index of collegiality

The majority of respondents ($65.38\% = 21.15\% + 28.85\% + 15.38\%$) affirm with certainty that they would not notify the head of service if a colleague took long and unjustified breaks. This result proves that the spirit of collegiality is quite high within the group under analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

The investigation of the results found in the questions asked gives us support to affirm the fact that the institution of the City Hall is inclined towards group power. The arguments for this statement consist of the following results:

- in the case of respondents who would help a colleague at the risk of sanctions, the percentage is almost identical to that of respondents who would not do so ($49.03\%/50.97\%$), a situation that indicates a fairly balanced balance;
- more than half of the surveyed staff (52.89%) agree with the statement that *"Where there are many, power grows"*;
- the largest share of respondents (48.07%) declares that in the institution, colleagues work with better efficiency when they work in a group;
- most of the respondents (65.38%) claim that they would keep a colleague's act of taking long and unjustified breaks a secret.

The final conclusion of the micro-research consists in the fact that the staff of the Gura Humorului City Hall manifests, to some extent, collective values: the help given to the colleague at the risk of sanctions, the power of the group is decisive for the effective resolution of public affairs compared to the individual power, the higher productivity when working in a group, the failure to report the colleague's fact of taking long and unjustified breaks.

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