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ABSTRACT

DOCTORAL THESIS

Improving the management system of public institutions by developing human capital, in order to align with European standards

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Keywords: public management, human capital, public management, managerial act, motivation, personnel management, human capital management, risk management, crisis management, emergency management, competitiveness, pandemic COVID-19

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The current context of perception analysis regarding improving the management system of public institutions

In the current context of globalization, the issue of public management acquires a special significance, in an extremely dynamic social and political environment, in which aspects of quality and efficiency of services provided by public institutions are constantly discussed and criticized most of the time for lack of transparency and credibility and for the high degree of corruption.

Consequently, even if the managerial act takes place in the context of ample and complex activities, in a turbulent environment and characterized by multiple uncertainties, in the conditions of the impact of technical progress, innovation and the galloping IT revolution, managers are required to be intelligent leaders, to demonstrate their skills, to master change and risk, to clarify directions and to ensure the improvement of the system they run and of which they are part.

Synthetic presentation of the doctoral thesis

Through this doctoral thesis, entitled "Improving the management system of public institutions, by developing human capital, in order to align with European standards", we set out to conduct an analysis of the management system of Romanian public institutions, in order to identify ways to improve, taking into account existing regulations, the demands of globalization, technological progress, demographic trends in the workforce and taking advantage of opportunities arising from the conscious and assumed support of human capital development.

In order to align with European standards, public institutions in Romania must take important steps to improve their performance both in terms of the quality of services provided to citizens, transparency, professionalism, and in terms of management (whether we are talking about top management, middle management, low level management or cross-organizational organizational functions). The latter mentioned, constantly and decisively, influences the organizational performance, being able to lead the organization towards fairness and success or towards vulnerability, failure, corruption and criminality.

Undoubtedly, human capital is a key factor in both the equation of organizational performance and sustainable development, as it far exceeds the importance of traditional capital (physical and financial), being represented by the stock of accumulated knowledge and human skills, with which the organization can adapt, it can develop, it can progress, because its limits are not as rigid as in the case of other forms of capital.

In order to meet the general objective of the research, which we pursued throughout our scientific endeavor, the issues mentioned in the previous paragraphs was analyzed, both in the study of the literature and in our study (both research and investigation).

In this sense, the paper is structured in three main parts: the first part deals with the current state of the implications of human capital in improving the management system of public institutions, in order to align with European standards, the second part contains elements of scientific research on benchmarking of human capital management in public institutions in different European countries, and the last part refers to the elements of scientific research on the approach of the COVID-19 pandemic from a managerial perspective (the current epidemiological situation being, in our opinion, an element that which we cannot ignore at the moment, being at the same time a novelty in the scientific field).

The topic has a pre-established logical structure, in the sense that we can not talk about public organizational management, before defining the public organization and integrating it into the global public management system, which is why the first chapter includes relevant issues regarding the organizational environment and diagnosis. organizational culture, organizational communication, organizational success, and the second chapter refers to a series of explanatory paradigms on motivation and presents key solutions in this last regard.

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The issue of the implications of human capital in improving the management of public institutions is addressed in the third chapter, and in the next two chapters, a comparative analysis of human capital management in institutions in Romania, Germany, Italy and Spain is described.

The theme of capitalizing on human potential in European public institutions is presented in the sixth chapter, from the perspective of lifelong learning, analyzing both the investment side and the particularly relevant side of quality of life, while also taking into account the European principle of "zero tolerance for corruption".

The next chapter makes reference to the complex issue of human capital competitiveness, focusing on research on GAPS (differences) between public institutions in Romania and those in other European countries, conducting research on global competitiveness, the balance of competitiveness in Romania and being analyzed the perception of the competitiveness of human capital in public institutions.

Taking into consideration the current epidemiological situation facing almost the whole world, we considered that the introduction of a separate chapter, which would capture the impact of the pandemic on management and public organizations, is of particular importance, especially since this situation has been categorized by some authors as a "viral knockout" on the whole of humanity, resorting, more and more often, in the management of this crisis, to the policies of solidarity, insufficiently consolidated at this time (in our opinion).

Undoubtedly, the COVID crisis has hampered the improvement of the institutional management system, but it has also contributed to the consolidation of aspects once treated superficially, such as: crisis management, risk management or emergency management, in a context where constitutionally stipulated alert and emergency states, turned, overnight, into a harsh reality, which imposed urgent procedures and measures.

At the end of the thesis, we formulated the conclusions, we underlined the personal contributions, the limits of the research and we drew further research directions, without pretending to completely exhaust the subject under discussion, in all its complexity.

Chapter I. Analysis of the management system of Romanian public organizations

The emergence and development of the concepts of public management and public organization corresponds to a progressive evolution of society, as a result of the premises imposed by the new world realities, determining natural and multiple changes in the public sector, emphasizing the complexity of public administration organizations -citizen.

The essence of the approach of this paper is focused on the analysis of the public organization, with the necessary emphasis on the managerial component, taking into account the change of the traditional bureaucratic model of organizations with the new transparent public management, focused on both results (performance) and employee satisfaction / civil servants (as the case may be). Surely, one thing is certain: management cannot be separated from the organization.

In our opinion, contrary to what some specialists claim, we consider that the management of public organizations is not identical with the management of private organizations, there are a number of principles and expectations that undoubtedly delimit them. One of them concerns the legitimacy of the public sector and public interest organizations. It is approached by both political scientists and economists and lawyers, highlighting the foundations of the public sphere, the legitimacy of authority and coercive decisions in the public administration system, but also elements such as state intervention, public domain, services of public interest, public office, general interest of the company, etc.

Today, society is experiencing unprecedented changes: the rigid, authoritarian, hierarchical, purely bureaucratic form of public administration, which previously dominated, breaks down barriers and becomes a new, more flexible form of public management. This is a double-edged sword: a change in managerial mentalities and a change in the role of government, in the desire to improve the relationship between public organizations / public institutions-citizens.

In recent years, acute dissatisfaction (public resentment) with public administration bodies - especially politicians and bureaucracy - has become a constant component of public discourse,

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and citizens feel that public administration bodies are not working well, although managers are working hard in sense.

However, we consider that, despite the challenges imposed by the national and international context, both the Romanian public organizations and the global public management system have made remarkable progress.

The organization is a complex human universe, designed to achieve certain goals, and the design, construction and vision of organizational design must be the top priorities of the leadership team. The existence of the organization is closely linked to the managerial phenomenon, especially since any group needs a leader, and he, in turn, needs disciples to follow him.

The public organization must be managed in such a way as to withstand the pressures of performance and strengthen professionalism. This is why more and more organizations in the public area are looking for experts in the field of expertise and true professionals.

State reform involves substantial changes in both the central public administration and the local public administration in general. The public administration must continuously strengthen its capacity to improve results, adapt to change and constantly improve its vision and way of working. At the same time, the debates regarding the management of public expenditures and public money, but also those related to the issue of personnel management represent special concerns and multiple challenges both for the state bodies and for the general public. Public organizations are practically a space in which a certain part of the employed population spends most of their active life, receiving a material (and sometimes moral) reward generally proportional to their experience and work.

The managerial function of the organization represents the process of identifying and organizing the human resources, and, indirectly, of the material, financial, informational ones, etc., in such a way as to ensure the achievement of the organization's objectives. Basically, the work processes are grouped by positions, work teams, offices, compartments, departments, etc.

The organizational structure refers, in fact, to all the people, the organizational subdivisions and the relations between them, so as to ensure the organizational premises necessary to obtain the desired performance by the top management of the organization. If we talk about the organizational structure, we must definitely mention the organizational chart (schematic / graphic rendering in all the details of the organization, subordination and links between departments within a company or institution or, in other words, the formal translation of the option of allocating authority and responsibilities), the organization and functioning regulations, the internal organization regulations, the statute, as well as the job descriptions or job descriptions (all of which are not lacking in public organizations serving the public interest).

Public administration is approachable, both as a concept and as an activity, meaning an interdisciplinary and very complex concept. The public administration is that executive component of the state, representing, in fact, the means by which the aims and objectives of the state are put into practice or, in other words, it is the concern for procuring the means necessary to implement political decisions emanating from state power. This refers to the organization of enforcement and the actual enforcement of the law, being closely linked to the legislature and the judiciary whose decisions are applied and enforced through and within the public administration.

The activity of the public administration, through public organizations has an exclusively public character, being put in the general benefit and interest of the society, being carried out for the practical and concrete fulfillment of the state functions and the tasks of the state administration bodies.

From our point of view, we cannot discuss public management without discussing public organizations, state public policy and public administration. The seemingly invisible connection between them is a natural and common sense one.

From this perspective, this first chapter addresses in detail aspects related to:

- Public organization environment and organizational diagnosis
- SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
- Organizational climate designed to attract "happiness at work"
- Analysis of the influence of the external environment on the organization
- Reality investigation, communication intervention

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- Organizational communication, with an emphasis on managerial communication
- Management of change
- The relevance of communication management in achieving the performance of public institutions

If we were to allow ourselves a parallel for a public organization, communication means about the same thing as the "blood system" means to the human body. In this context, organizations are required to have the ability to quickly identify, transmit, receive and understand credible and relevant information, and this can only be done with the support of qualified and responsible staff.

Human resources are involved in any type of organization, representing its "soul", the most valuable capital. Communication problems are imminent in any organization, especially in the case of delegation of tasks (but not only), an element that inevitably becomes a source of frustration or failure, sooner or later.

In addressing the effectiveness of communication, it is very important to remember the elements of effective communication:

Elements of effective communication

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truthfulness, the selectivity, adaptability and accessibility of information for those who receive it;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The usefulness of transmitting information and its development at the right time;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of a common language between the parties involved, based on a codification recognized by both parties (which can be done easily and in an extremely natural way in the case of well-cohesive teams);
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralization of decision-making at the lower echelons, in order to simplify and decongest communication lines (a matter that can be applied to the entire public system - referring here both to administrative decentralization and strictly to a single entity);
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of inconsistencies and ambiguities as a result of harmonizing the transmitter with the receiver;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting the purpose of the communication along with adapting the message according to the people who are going to receive it;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the clarity of ideas, a fact related to ensuring feedback and flexibility in the communication process;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranging a physical and environmental environment according to the purpose established for communication (as far as possible).

Source: personal contribution based on references from the literature

In the context in which a communication is particularly important, especially when we are talking about public communication, failures can occur due to various causes that must be prevented. The causes of communication failures can be varied, such as: time pressure, poor listening, fatigue due to overloading daily tasks, moments of crisis or emergencies, credibility of the source, value judgments and associated prejudices, selective perception, elements of emotional intelligence and managing the emotional states of the communicators and even the different hierarchical positions on which the communicators are located.

In these conditions and considering the relevance of the message of public interest that comes from a public institution, we consider it necessary to standardize communication, following the analysis and monitoring of the entire information system in the organization, using specific work instructions and operating procedures. We categorically think that there can be no performance in public institutions without performance in the field of communication.

Organizational culture imprints employees' sense of identity and transposes the prevailing ideologies into the minds of organizations. Organizational culture is particularly significant and through it we can understand organizational life in all its richness and complexity. Organizational culture addresses global mindsets, ideologies, myths, and the dominant "fashion" in an organization throughout its development.

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The organizational culture includes elements such as: stories, practices, rituals, symbols, control systems practiced, as well as the organizational paradigm. The paradigm refers to the organization's philosophy and includes the organization's focus (either on results or employees), public awareness and reward of success, ongoing analysis of the internal and external environment (to detect opportunities and threats in a timely manner), and openness to possible organizational change.

The leadership style and the way of making implicitly decisions, the applied policy, the level of formalism, the promoted organizational structure represent the modelers of the organizational culture. An intelligent manager will always have the ability to develop employee dedication through organizational culture orientation and will do his best to achieve the desired performance, despite the inherent disruptions in the internal or external environment, while maintaining employee dedication to the organization.

We can say with certainty that it is born with the organization, from the moment when the founders of the organization, confident in their own strength and truly believing in their ideas, define for the first time the mission, vision and strategy through which they aim to achieve success, also choosing the partners with whom they will set out. The founders of the organization can become the promoters of performance in a certain field, assuming that they are a kind of symbol of the organization. Through an assumed way of thinking, through carefully established and promoted principles, through the values emphasized, even without proposing, they lay the foundations of the organizational culture (which is formed, in fact, by their repeated interactions with the rest of the members of the organization).

Although organizational culture seems a unitary element, overall, there are two levels of organizational culture:

- easily visible from the outside (code of dress at work, configuration of workspaces, type of furniture, office arrangements, standard behavior by which employees communicate with each other or with the outside);
- the inner one, the deep one (the values that underlie the beliefs and judgments that determine the behaviors and give rise, in fact, to the aspects of the external level culture).

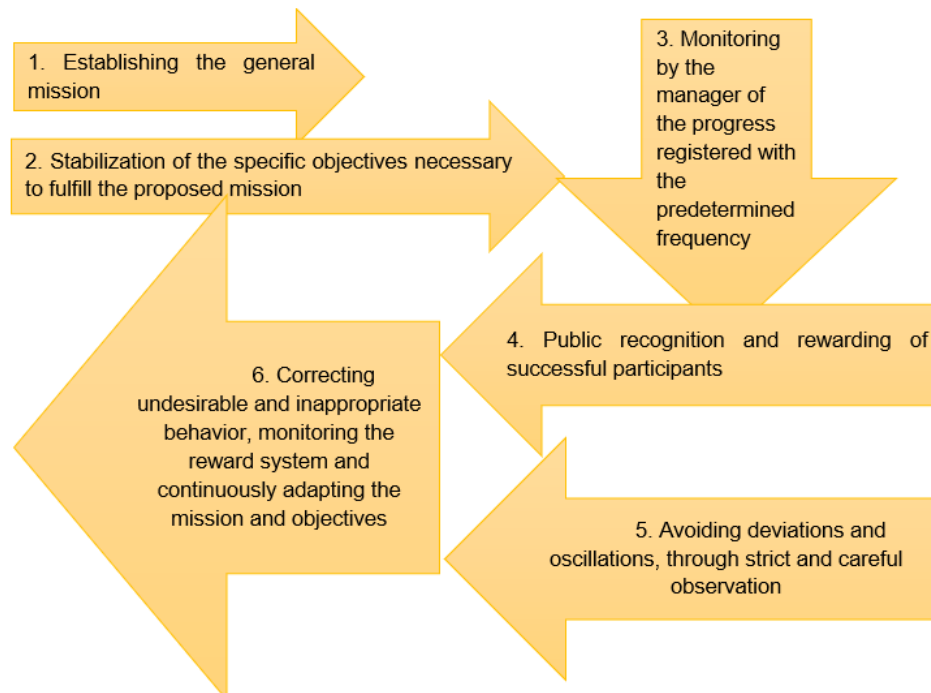
Managers are a very important component of an organization's life. These are the persons who exercise the attributes of the organization's management, having at least three major responsibilities, respectively: professional (his quality of specialist, who must ensure the achievement of the organization's objectives), legal (the managerial process must proceed in compliance with led activity) and moral (both towards the organization and towards the subordinates).

The managerial act would be much easier if all the employees were the same or at least similar, but as they differ from each other in personality, professional training, socio-cultural status, degree of intelligence, abilities, etc., the manager must somehow bring human interactions to a common denominator in order to meet the interests of the organization.

Therefore, the manager must be able to understand the observed behaviors and predict their evolution so that he can diagnose the organization to which he belongs. Therefore, managers are concerned with relationships with subordinates, especially since, in general, human behavior can be unpredictable (especially in extreme and crisis situations). Human reactions are conditioned by the changing environment in which they live and the pressures they have to respond to, in the context in which they have to take into account their individual desires and needs.

Managing an organization, in order to achieve the desired performance, must take into account the following aspects:

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Performance and progress management

Source: personal contribution based on references from the literature

The main concern of the manager is to transform the group into a real team that will operate at full speed in the interest of the organization.

In other words, managerial behavior is influenced by a number of factors, such as:

- belonging to a certain kind of organization;
- personal beliefs and ideals;
- managerial experience;
- hazard;
- psychological climate.

Finding talented people is one of the most important managerial concerns, and some public organizations are even going through a real chronic crisis of lack of talented and dedicated people. The managerial concern of finding the "right person in the right place" is addressed by a new process known as talent management. It is often described as a systematic attraction, identification, development, involvement / retention and development of talent. Currently, in the economic and social dynamics, talents are the key element in the profitability and sustainability of any process and any organization.

Another topic discussed in the first chapter of the thesis refers to the significance of success in public organization. Success in any field, whether it is about success in the public sphere or whether we are talking about the business environment, is conditioned by both the primary role of information and intellectual capital.

Even if intellectual capital is the least visible part of the organization, we believe it attracts the success of an organization in the most visible way. In this regard, we must also mention that, in order for an organization to be successful, the employees who are part of it must be fully involved, as much as possible, in the area for which they are responsible and in which they have specific duties and competencies. which he occupies.

The significance of the idea of success also refers to the prestige that the organization has in the external environment. In other words, the image is a public reflection of an organization's reputation, personality, or identity. This guarantees the notoriety of the organization and the quality of the services offered by it.

For the organization to be successful and to be perceived as having a good image, it must be able to build a program to create its own identity, using image events, symbols, built atmosphere, and so on. Some authors believe that the public image of the organization is, in fact,

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an asset of its heritage. The image guarantees the notoriety of the organization and the quality of the services offered by it. A good image is a guarantee of the organization's success, while a negative, unfavorable image will affect the prestige and notoriety previously built. That is why many managers today consider that a well-developed public relations policy contributes to a surprising extent to the success of the organization.

Studies in the field of human resources have shown over time that successful organizations have an organizational culture that is based on modern principles different from the classical principles of human resources, such as:

- it is not bad to make mistakes from time to time (giving up the classic mechanisms of control and punishments, encouraging initiatives / autonomy of actions and tolerance to certain mistakes);
- the employee is more important than the job description (flexibility built around people);
- each employee has a talent (identifying him and encouraging the individual to take responsibility for the assigned role, according to the potential of the employee).

The knowledge society requires blurring the boundaries between organizations and teams, creating interdependent, interconnected and coordinated networks with speed of reaction and flexibility. The managerial act also adapts permanently, and the employees understand that individualism works less and less.

Virtual organization is not a recent concept, but it has grown in recent years, thanks to the development of information and communication technology. In our opinion, a virtual organization includes all the organizational forms in which there are characteristics such as those shown in the table below:

The characteristics of the virtual organization

The technology	Sophisticated information infrastructure
Connectivity	An essential factor that makes it possible to fulfill the mission and achieve the objectives
Interdependence	Essential factor through which the unit / infrastructure is created
Empowerment	Cooperation and synergy, either between organizations, or between departments, or between teams, or between individuals
Harmony	Delegation of power / delegation of responsibilities
Dispersion	Receptivity, consensus/acceptance of changes and challenges. Elimination of resistance and proper management of enthusiasm and talent
Dynamics	Geographical distribution that can give rise to local cultures, associated languages, which can create communication problems and affect organizational culture
Reaction speed	Ability to access the most appropriate available human and material resources
Teams and	In order to exploit opportunities and eliminate internal dysfunctions and external threats
Virtual projects	Regarding the entire activity and the entire staff, but also the existence of the possibility to promote it at any time (usually when the mission is fulfilled or when the objectives are fulfilled)

Source: personal contribution based on references from the literature

In other words, a virtual organization involves virtual work, which is defined as a series of interdependent activities performed by a group of individuals gathered in virtual teams, who work in different physical locations.

Although initially, virtual organizations destabilized conventions, cultivating the unusual, today it can even be said that they have become routine formations, but which impose great managerial challenges, due to the fact that sometimes employees work in different time zones, with time zone shifts. they are part of a similar culture, sometimes developing unusual habits.

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Although for some it is a discomfort all this change of mentality and actions specific to virtual work, virtual teams have become, in recent years, especially in some areas of activity, rather the rule than the exception.

Thus, team leadership processes need to be rethought, tested and refined later, employees - part of virtual teams need to be trained in new ways of working and new dynamics, and the culture of the organization must be reformed with a reasonably adapted reward system.

Chapter II. European and international guidelines on the involvement of managers in motivating staff

Employees, as complex resources, are much more difficult to "manage" than financial, informational, technical, material, etc. resources. being unique in this sense. Even if a manager has a good grasp of theory and carefully analyzes organizational behaviors, drawing parallels with "Maslow's hierarchy of needs" or "dual factor theory developed by Herzberg" in organizational practice, much more is needed to identify employee needs.

In this context, even if the interests of employees are different and fluctuating from one professional stage to another, the manager's goal is to align them with organizational interests, if possible. We can say that motivating staff is an art, a whole philosophy, especially since motivation differs from one official / employee to another (which motivates someone easily, can demotivate, just as easily, someone else).

From our point of view, the basic conditions for ensuring professional satisfaction can include substantially higher remuneration and a fair system of remuneration, real opportunities for promotion, careful and sensitive management to the needs, desires, expectations and feelings of subordinates, an attractive work environment. , varied and interesting work tasks, as well as the necessary autonomy, so that the employee feels valued and important.

Influencing the workforce is no easy task. People are the most relevant category of assets that can be used by an organization, only management needs to know how to find the way to achieve this. On the other hand, the management of an organization must be equally aware that all people are the only assets that can act against the goals of the organization (and this argument is not at all convenient, but it is very realistic). Consequently, only through a cooperative effort can both employees and employers come to serve the purposes of the organization.

Although motivation is a personal experience, managers must strive to find the connectors between personal motivation and performance. They also have the task (in fact the challenge) to do so in such a way as to ensure the right conditions for the harmonization of people's personal goals with those of the organization.

Another aspect to consider is the key feature of motivation, which is that it determines the extent to which the employee wants to provide the organization with knowledge, skills, intuition, creativity and effort and even more so, reaching to block/ eliminate the effects produced by the obstacles and difficulties encountered during its work.

Managers need to keep in mind that if the employee has a desire to work, then there is a high probability that he will be successful and produce good results for the organization, only that he needs help and encouragement. In situations where employees do not show a desire to work, even if his IQ is high, even if he has the necessary knowledge and skills, definitely his performance will be low.

Throughout this equation, both the term "manager" and "employee" are important, influencing each other's behaviors and having mutual expectations from each other.

As mentioned before, the emotional involvement of employees is a very important issue in any type of organization and in any field of activity. Achieving professional performance and organizational success is directly correlated with individual professional performance and individual motivational potential. The role of the manager is a key one, and he must not forget that just winning the hearts of employees will attract their full intellectual involvement. The affectivity and the human side complement the technical side and the performance so easily and beautifully.

In situations where certain employees perform very poorly, the manager must find out what the problem is: lack of motivation of the subordinate, incompetence, incompetence or incapacity, lack of resources, bad intentions or even the proper management style and

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inappropriate communication tasks. Regardless of the situation, the manager must know how to act to improve the situation and take appropriate measures, being totally wrong to start from the premise that only the salary increase can ensure and maintain performance.

Few employees work at their all capacity, and this is because organizations fail to motivate their employees to work "not only with the mind" but also with the "heart" or if they succeed in this true performance, they fail to maintain it. long-term. It is very difficult to maintain a continuous state of enthusiasm, contentment and satisfaction in an organization, and it is very easy to get boredom, disinterest and even irritation and irritability within a team in a short time.

Motivational involvement is a qualitative aspect, from our point of view, it refers, in fact, to the person's willingness to intend and accept to act in order to contribute to the achievement of objectives. This is closely related to the intrinsic and extrinsic forces that mobilize the individual, shaping his behavior, directing his actions or inactions. Intrinsic forces refer to the satisfaction that results from the nature of the activity carried out, from the aroused challenge or interest, etc. Extrinsically, the individual is determined to get involved due to an external conditioning, he strives to perform an activity, for the expected rewards, for the long-awaited public recognition or, in position, to avoid an unpleasant consequence (avoidance of punishment or sanction).

The relationship between a manager and his team is very important in ensuring performance both at the individual level and at the communication level. The leader of the organization must consider himself part of the team, integrate into it and make himself desired there, being at the same time its leader (somehow he must find the way to be both the formal leader and its informal leader).

The literature also revealed some keys to motivating employees, the main two being the adoption of participatory management (continuous interaction with employees, so that they feel they can influence the course of things, even if the final decision is the manager) and a style of assertive communication (the manager to express his opinion clearly, but without harming / upsetting someone).

Another particularly relevant aspect that deserves to be considered is the correct delegation, so that the manager does not get exhausted doing everything himself, for fear of not getting things out of control and employees feel valued and responsible.

Another key to motivation is to encourage and support employees, whether they are novices or experienced (employees' proposals must be discussed, when setting and allocating new tasks to be performed, the manager must express optimism, etc.), but without presenting themselves under form of "babysitting", so as not to fall into the other extreme and give employees the feeling that they are not trusted.

The specialized literature emphasizes aspects related to situational management and the individual and differentiated approach to the situations that arise, treating employees according to their personality, but without creating the feeling of inequity. Applying management styles in a situational way (sometimes authoritative, sometimes facilitative, sometimes supportive, sometimes delegating) is not easy to achieve, as it requires a longer time and a high level of flexibility on the part of the manager.

Last but not least, we mention as a key solution for motivating employees the feedback provided by managers on a regular basis. Without active communication, by providing mutual feedback, the "healthy" professional relationship is definitely affected and suffers. Specialist studies have shown that good relationships at work and constant feedback in relationships have been identified as the second most important factor, immediately after the financial part (salary).

Without claiming that we managed to exhaust this subject, we consider that the main motivating factors for employees who are part of public sector organizations are: reasonable salary for work done, harmonious relationships with the head of the institution and colleagues, opportunities for promotion and recognition of individual merits in public, interesting activity at work, job security, good conditions in the space for daily activities and, in the future, a decent pension.

Chapter II also covers comparative issues related to staff motivation in the E.U., U.S.A., and Japan. In fact, the studies carried out in all 3 geographical areas show that managers must be concerned with motivating employees, so that they want to make efforts to improve and reach their full potential. If all or most of the employees were willing to do these things, the organizations

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would be competitive and would know the performance, the excellence, the profit, the public recognition, the competitive advantage.

In this regard, managers must constantly assess the degree to which basic needs for motivation are met (physiological and security needs, self-related needs, social and cognitive needs, self-realization needs, aesthetic needs, etc.).

What is surprising, however, is that the secret to the success of Japanese companies and organizations was not technology (as we would all expect), but the unique and special way in which managers knew how to manage the organizational engine - the people. The management style adopted aimed at a strong leadership philosophy, based on a solid corporate culture, created by long-term training of staff and approaching consensus in the decision-making process.

The paradox is that the issues highlighted by economist and professor William Ouchi (the promoter of Japanese consensus theory - treated by the literature as an assumption) 41 years ago, are confirmed today by multiple research in the field of human capital management at the level of the European Union, but also in the field of managerial psychology, namely that: employees want to be associated with the employer and their colleagues, they do not want to create discrepancies and dissociations.

Another finding from research in Japan was that employees have a strong desire to connect. From this perspective, we consider that the connection process is absolutely necessary and natural in the organizational framework, but we must not omit the fact that this is not easy to achieve. Therefore, connecting employee-employer, employee-colleagues requires a high level of support from the manager and the organization, so that a safe work environment can be ensured, associated with adequate facilities (this last aspect gives rise to many controversies, because individuals are very different from each other). The list could continue with opportunities for development and training, as well as public recognition of employee merit (the latter being increasingly rare).

Chapter III. Current approaches to the implications of human capital in improving the management of public institutions

The literature defines human capital as the set of skills characteristics of individuals, which remain the same in any social environment, and can be capitalized on the labor market, in exchange for economic resources of any kind (usually income), which is why it is said that human capital is developed as a concept in economics.

Human capital has two aspects:

- educational capital (skills acquired by individuals in a formal and non-formal context);
- biological capital (physical abilities of individuals frequently described by their state of health).

Human capital is unique in terms of development potential, as evidenced by the ability of individuals to push their own limits to meet current and future challenges and demands. In this sense, education (improvement) is the essence of human capital, complementing itself extraordinarily with the elements of biological capital, associated with health.

The reference to "social capital" is intended to clarify the nature of the relationship between employees, interpersonal communication and elements of culture born in their community (organizational culture). In any public organization (but not only) are born and perfected interpersonal relationships, relationships of trust, solidarity, mutual attachments, cooperation and support, the desire to work in a team and so on.

From this perspective, we note that the formation of human capital is a global responsibility of both governments and each of us. Ultimately, it is about successfully integrating the workforce and achieving the associated satisfaction in both the national and European markets, which is unlikely to be achieved without an adequate collective psychology and without permission to change certain mentalities. .

Personnel management is a specific area of management, and improving the management of public institutions means, in particular, improving personnel management. In this sense, we emphasize the perception of personnel management as a continuous and permanent

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process, aimed at motivating employees to obtain maximum participation in the organization, so that the results of the work of each of them are significant for the institution from which they come.

In the management of public institutions, great emphasis is placed on the personnel management component, this being considered an independent type of activity of specialists, which aims to encourage the creativity of employees, using new rules for recruitment, selection and promotion of staff, but also for training, qualification and loyalty of employees.

Regardless of the type of organization they come from, managers need to know very well the "inputs on which they are based" (human resources, technical and material resources, information resources, financial resources) in order to ensure the achievement of objectives and the interests of the general public. It is no secret that the most relevant input is the staff of the institution, in the context of the current evolution of information, in all areas and in the context of the transition to the "knowledge-based economy".

People are the vital resource of any institution, regardless of the field in which it operates, a resource that ensures survival and stability, on the one hand and is the main generator of change and progress, on the other hand, supporting development and competitive success / organizational performance. .

Management decisions in the field of human resources, although varying from country to country and organization to organization, must take into account fundamental moral and ethical principles and reflect the state of development of the organisation's value system. Managerial practice must demonstrate fairness, mutual respect, fair treatment, transparency, fair competition, open and honest communication, responsibility and attachment to the organization, loyalty to the company, a strong policy of employee loyalty, empathy and, last but not least, compliance with the legislation in force (even when it is not exactly favorable to the natural course of the institution).

Taking into consideration the frequent criticisms of the European Commission regarding the administrative-political situation in Romania, in recent years, government programs have addressed the acceleration of reform in the Romanian public administration, attracting changes in the public management system.

Public management aims to meet major objectives such as:

- restructuring in-depth of central and local public administration and public institutions;
- adjusting the administration-citizen relationship;
- improving administrative management;
- depoliticization of administrative structures;
- decentralization of public services and consolidation of local administrative autonomy;
- elimination of bureaucratic bottlenecks in public institutions;
- ensuring transparency in public institutions and operative communication with citizens,

involving civil society in the decision-making process and stimulating participatory democracy, permanent harmonization of the national legislative framework with the *acquis communautaire*, etc.

Basically, the objectives are complex, varied and numerous, and the task of the Romanian public institutions and authorities is particularly complicated.

In public institutions, managers would be much easier to perform if they had adequate human, material, technical and financial resources at their disposal. Institutional strengthening must take place gradually, adapted to internal needs and on a permanent basis. In addition, the public system needs administrative-functional coherence, beyond bureaucratic barriers, legislative changes, political interests and the influences of the external environment.

Unfortunately, today's managers must also learn to deal with the mentality that the capacity of public administration and public institutions dissolves in political interests and in public discourse dominated by wooden language and manipulation.

The managerial challenge is immense, especially since the field of public management is in a permanent and sustained development, and managers must meet the requirements imposed by the functioning of public institutions in a very complex national and European environment (of which a very special component is part). important: the absorption of European funds.

Chapter IV. Peculiarities of human capital management in European public institutions

Today's society is strongly affected by the phenomenon of globalization, which has affected and still irreversibly influences the economic-social, political-administrative, cultural, communication, financial and, of course, managerial processes.

Thus, our intention is to highlight relevant issues related to human capital management in European public institutions, emphasizing its particularities in four European countries, in a comparative approach, respectively: Germany, Italy, Spain and Romania.

Managers and governments mindsets have changed, collective psychology has changed, and today all decision-makers agree that investing in human capital (in human skills and abilities generated by investment in education and health) is a profound responsibility, especially in the context in which, this determines the obtaining of higher incomes, through the work process.

At the same time, Romania must align itself with the strategic objectives of the European Union, including increasing economic competitiveness and strengthening social cohesion, with an emphasis on knowledge, innovation and the optimization of human capital.

Decision makers in Romania have understood, especially in recent years, that investments in human capital are capital for development, providing substantial long-term economic benefits, requiring time to materialize, the benefits for society are not always visible from the beginning of the investment act.

At the level of 2018, Romania was ranked 67th out of a total of 157 countries analyzed in the study conducted by the World Bank, which refers to the human capital index, designed to quantify the contribution of health and education to the productivity of the next generation of workers.

Human capital index in European Union countries - reference year 2018

U.E. countries	Scor	U.E. countries	Scor
Austria	0,79	Latvia	0,72
Belgium	0,76	Lithuania	0,71
Bulgaria	0,68	Luxembourg	0,69
Czech Republic	0,78	Malta	0,69
Cyprus	0,75	Poland	0,75
Croatia	0,72	Portugal	0,78
Denmark	0,77	UK	0,78
Estonia	0,75	Romania	0,60
Finland	0,81	Slovakia	0,68
France	0,76	Slovenia	0,79
Germany	0,79	Spain	0,74
Greece	0,68	Sweden	0,80
Ireland	0,81	Netherlands (Netherlands)	0,80
Italy	0,77	Hungary	0,70

Source: Author's own research study

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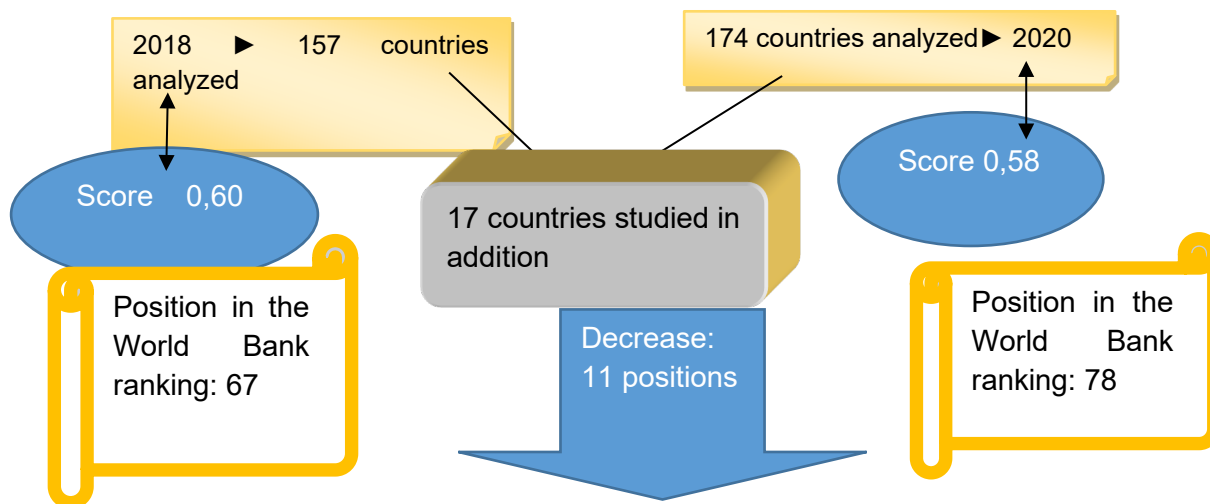
Romania has the lowest score of the human capital index in the Union European, ranking immediately after Bulgaria, Greece and Slovakia (with HCI score = 0.68), which is why we consider that our country still has a long way to go in order to align with European performance in the field of human capital.

- Eradicating poverty remains a notable and interesting issue, especially since, in the context of human capital management, it can lead to the fragmentation and degradation of the human capital stock, creating blockages in its support and development expenditures, entering a vicious circle, in the sense that insufficient economic resources lead to the inability to acquire quality services in the field of health and education.

- Chronic poverty is closely related to the fact that in Romania although measures have been taken in recent years to eliminate income disparities and inequalities, we still face a gap between the salaries of the most educated employees (which, as a rule, continue to rise) and the salaries of the less educated (and which, in general, are even worse paid), an issue which has negative effects in spite of the legislation in force in the field of pay.

- The framework legislation for unitary pay in Romania was exclusively targeted public sector.

- At the same time, it is known that in our country labor costs are among the smallest in the European Union, this happening in the context in which Romanian employees are, in some fields, the best specialists in the European Union (we refer here mainly to areas such as: information and communication technology, medicine and others) and given that their salary / wage income is generally their main (or even only) source of income. In this sense, it is obvious that, in Romania, the expenses that an employee can afford to make by investing in his education or in the health component are visibly lower than the employees who work in similar fields and positions in the EU countries.



Comparative analysis HCI 2018 -2020. Data analysis regarding Romania

Source: Author's own research study

Even if the study for 2018 was conducted on a number of 157 countries, and at the level of 2020, the same study analyzed a number of 174 countries, given that the method of calculation was the same, we can draw a series of conclusions, taking into account exclusively the score obtained by each country.

The comparative evolution of the human capital index situation in the European Union countries, in the period 2018-2020

U.E. countries	Score 2018	Score 2020	The difference +/-	Position in the 2020 world rankings
Austria	0,79	0,75	-4	26
Belgium	0,76	0,76	0	19
Bulgaria	0,68	0,61	-7	60
Czech Republic	0,78	0,75	-3	24

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U.E. countries	Score 2018	Score 2020	The difference +/-	Position in the 2020 world rankings
Cyprus	0,75	0,76	+1	21
Croatia	0,72	0,71	-1	31
Denmark	0,77	0,76	-1	22
Estonia	0,75	0,78	+3	12
Finland	0,81	0,80	-1	6
France	0,76	0,76	0	18
Germany	0,79	0,75	-4	25
Greece	0,68	0,69	+1	37
Ireland	0,81	0,79	-2	9
Italy	0,77	0,73	-4	30
Latvia	0,72	0,71	-1	33
Lithuania	0,71	0,71	0	34
Luxembourg	0,69	0,69	0	39
Malta	0,69	0,71	+2	32
Poland	0,75	0,75	0	23
Portugal	0,78	0,77	-1	17
UK	0,78	0,78	0	11
Romania	0,60	0,58	-2	78
Slovakia	0,68	0,66	-2	44
Slovenia	0,79	0,77	-2	14
Spain	0,74	0,73	-1	29
Sweden	0,80	0,80	0	8
Netherlands	0,80	0,79	-1	10
Hungary	0,70	0,68	-2	40

Source: Author's own research study

And this time, Romania has the lowest score of the human capital index in the European Union, being in the ranking immediately after Bulgaria (with HCI score = 0.61), Slovakia (with HCI score = 0.66), Hungary (with HCI score = 0.68) and Greece (with HCI score = 0.69), which is why we consider that our country still has a long way to go in order to align with the European performance in the field of human capital, especially that the rest of the countries they obtained scores in the range [0.70-0.80].

In our opinion, the expansion of the European spirit in all fields of activity, has determined Romania to make considerable efforts and to assume educational, social and ecological responsibilities, respecting the "unity in diversity" imposed by the EU and doing everything possible to maintain harmony. in the context of internationalization imposed by the phenomenon of globalization.

Germany is the most favorably perceived state in the European Union, and the presumption that the Germans are the fairest, most hardworking and least corrupt is a kind of "Romanian myth". Thus, according to a survey conducted in 2012 by the Pew Research Center, Europeans perceive Germany led by Angela Merkel more favorably than any other Member State of the European Union, being also the only country, whose citizens consider, in an overwhelming proportion - 59%, that European integration had positive effects. At the same time, Germany has the strongest economy on the European continent, which promotes entrepreneurship and at the same time seeks to maintain a social balance. At the same time, Germany excels in sectors such as ICT, medical technology and biotechnology, and the German government is working hard to support research and innovation. The German state ranked 12th, after the HCI score (human capital index) for 2018.

 Germany is one of the countries where tertiary education is considered to play a particularly important role, promoting innovation, development and economic growth, which in turn influences the overall well-being of citizens.

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📖 According to official OECD statistics, life expectancy at birth was 80.7 years in 2015, slightly above the EU average of 80.6, which is slower than in most EU countries and is 2 years below life expectancy. at birth in Spain and Italy.

Italy, according to the World Bank's analysis of human capital index, ranks 18th, with a reported human capital index of 0.77 (HCI index similar to the following countries: Denmark, New Zealand, Norway). and Switzerland).

- 📖 Italy uses a staff recruitment system that favors career-based staff selection.
- 📖 Italy prefers to use the salary performance system, using unique performance bonuses, in an amount of up to 21-40% of the basic salary.
- 📖 Only 1.3% of Italian GDP was spent on research and development, compared to an average of 1.9% in the euro area, which is observed by analyzing the share of companies investing in research and development or the patenting trend.
- 📖 The same study by the Bank of Italy reveals that Italy has the lowest number of graduates from all major European countries: less than a fifth of workers have a college degree, compared to almost a third in the euro area.
- 📖 Italy is characterized by a very high elasticity of labor demand in relation with the supply of labor, also showing a higher degree of substitutability between skilled and unskilled labor.
- 📖 The life expectancy of the Italian people is among the highest in Europe. So, life expectancy at birth in Italy reached 82.7 years in 2015, from 79.9 years in 2000, being the highest in the EU, after Spain.
- 📖 Since the early 2000s, Italy has been raising the issue of migration of the best specialists, both to Europe and to the USA. Thus, Italy was forced to promote measures to attract the competent human resources in the country, by practicing dedicated systems of extremely low taxes, which determined that, many years later, the situation would change radically and Italy would become a point of attraction on the labor market, for citizens of other nationalities, including Romanians.

Spain, with a human capital index reported at 0.74 (as well as Iceland), according to the World Bank, ranks 33rd out of a total of 157 countries included in the study. From this perspective, we present some conclusions about Spain:

- 📖 Spanish system-level policies are designed to be counteracted the high level of school dropout and the unemployment rate among young people.
- 📖 Spanish education policy aims to improve quality the educational act, the quality of teachers and the school leadership through an approach oriented towards continuous training.
- 📖 Spanish schools need sustained support to respond to rapid growth of the proportion of immigrant children they have experienced, as their level of education and higher education skills generally translate into a higher participation in the workforce and higher salaries given to them.
- 📖 In 2011, the proportion of the Spanish population with at least a secondary qualification remained below the OECD average for those aged 25-34 (65% compared to 82%). Overall, the level of education of the population has improved since 2000, as the proportion of people aged 25-64 with higher education has decreased.
- 📖 With an enrollment rate in the preschool education system of almost 100% for children of 3-5 years, Spain has one of the highest enrollment rates among children in OECD countries. Early education is provided by the government, although 25% of preschoolers are enrolled in private institutions dependent on the government and 11% in private institutions independent of the state public system.
- 📖 Life expectancy in Spain (83 years in 2015) is the highest of all EU countries (as can be deduced from the previous chapter).

Chapter V. Comparative-qualitative analysis of human capital management in public institutions in the analyzed countries

In addition to the grounded theoretical research in the previous chapter, we undertook a comparative-qualitative analysis of human capital management in organizations in the countries studied above, based on a questionnaire based on the relevance of the topic studied and taking into account the information outlined in Chapter I.

The applied questionnaire consists of 14 unique, unanswered questions (both closed and open), of which 8 directives, 2 semi-directives and 4 non-directives, in which respondents were given the chance to answer freely, completing and justifying and answers according to their own aspirations, attitudes, values, cultures, lifestyle, experience, each according to their power of understanding, ability and intuition).

The subjects have experience in the organization they belong to, and the questionnaire is addressed exclusively to people with management positions (and are part of both top management and middle and line management). The total number of respondents was 30, for each of the 3 countries, being completed an equal number of questionnaires, respectively 10.

We comparatively analyzed the information provided based on the answers to the questionnaire by the respondents from the three countries, so as to highlight the specifics of each country, the similarities and differences between the Romanian managerial mentalities and those in Italy or Spain.

- 📖 Respondents know and use the notion of "human capital" in all three countries studied.
- 📖 Managers in Romania and Italy say they are concerned about studying the elements related to managerial psychology, while managers in Spain state that they are not concerned with managerial psychology, but are attracted to the analysis of managerial styles.
- 📖 The interviewed managers claimed that the managerial activity it is a very complex one, there are situations in which, probably, their managerial approach was not necessarily "smart", and the decisions taken in certain circumstances were not necessarily the happiest.
- 📖 In terms of emotional intelligence, the answers
- 📖 Respondents confirmed that this is currently a fact in all organizations, and fortunately managers understood that there is no communication without communication, no communication without emotions, and that emotional intelligence is the contributing factor to quality management

The level of listening to the voice of the employees according to the respondents

Romania	Italy	Spain	The average for the 3 countries
64%	73%	65%	67,3%

Source: personal contribution

Subjects state that relationships are harmonious / cordial in the organization which they lead. However, 3 Romanian respondents state that the relations are cold, but based on respect, and 2 Spanish respondents specify that the relations are tense. Remarkable is the fact that the subjects from Italy gave only favorable answers.

Respondents' opinion on organizational culture

Country	Romania	Italy	Spain
The predominant type of organizational culture according to the respondents	-task focus culture	-power culture	-role type culture

Source: personal contribution based on content analysis based on respondents' responses

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- 📖 With regard to the services provided by the respondent companies / organizations, they consider that the degree of trust of the citizens in the institution / organization / company they run is high, although the national and European media have repeatedly reported that the degree citizens' trust in public institutions is not exactly satisfactory.
- 📖 In the organization from which the respondents came, the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is given special attention.

The QCA methodology is optimal for analyzing the factors that influence human capital management in public institutions, starting from country-specific conditions included in a comparative perspective. QCA gives us an overview of the causal relationships between combinations of factors specific to the capitalization of human capital in public institutions.

The objective of the qualitative-comparative study carried out in this chapter of the doctoral thesis is to determine the causal recipes that lead to the highest level of knowledge and intensive use of the concept of human capital in public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain.

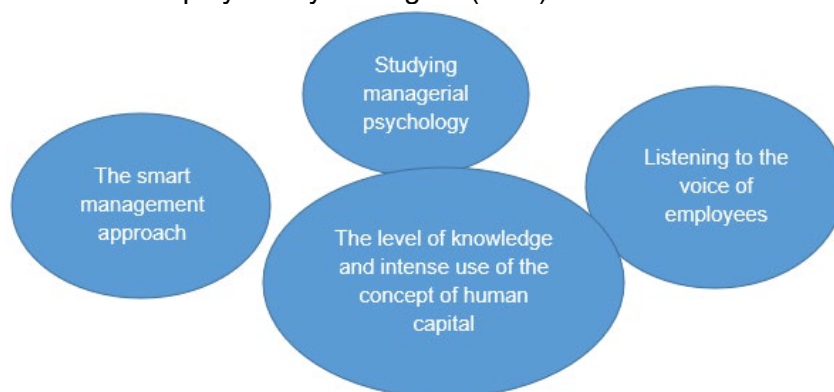
We implemented in this study a technique specific to the QCA method, namely qualitative comparative analysis using fuzzy-set or fsQCA. The use of fsQCA is required when the causality in the research phenomenon has multiple facets.

We designed a hypothesis: different combinations of antecedent conditions associated with the study of managerial psychology, the approach of intelligent management in decision-making processes and the listening by managers to the voice of employees influence the level of knowledge and intensive use of human capital management in public institutions from Romania, Italy and Spain.

In order to test this hypothesis, we designed a conceptual model, which does not aim to identify causal relationships between variables, but configurations of antecedent conditions that impact the expected result.

The figure below highlights both the expected result (level of knowledge and intensive use of the concept of human capital in public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain - CUICCU) and the previous conditions in the hypothesis:

- ☐ the study of managerial psychology by decision makers from public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain (SPM);
- ☐ approaching intelligent management in decision-making processes at all hierarchical levels of public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain (AMI);
- ☐ listening to the voice of employees by managers (AVA).



Conceptual model of configuration study

Source: personal contribution

The calibration process specific to the fsQCA method involved the processing of data obtained from managers of public institutions in the 3 countries (Romania, Italy and Spain), the calibration results are presented in the table below:

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Calibration of antecedent conditions and result

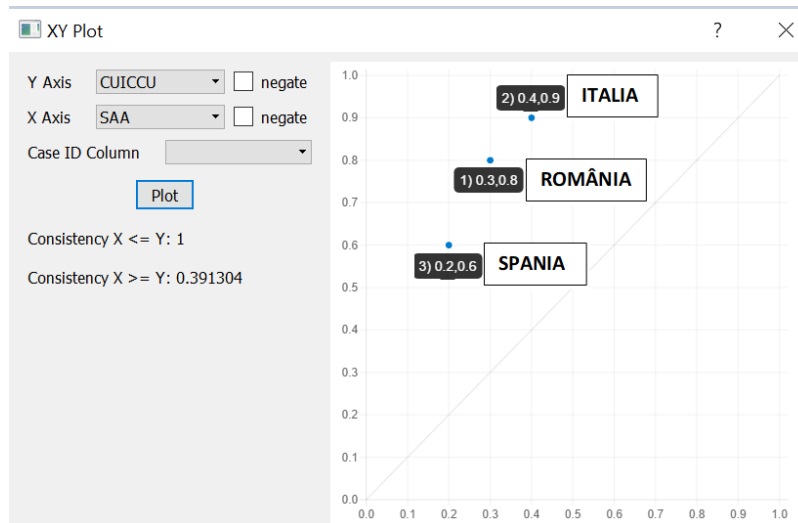
Variable label	Variable description	The fuzzy value		
		Romania	Italy	Spain
CUICCU	level of knowledge and intensive use of the concept of human capital in public institutions	0.8	0.9	0.6
SPM	the study of managerial psychology by decision makers in public institutions	0.8	0.6	0.2
AMI	the approach of intelligent management in decision-making processes	0.3	0.4	0.6
AVA	listening to the voice of employees by managers	0.64	0.73	0.65

Source: calibration performed by the author

Through this empirical study, we aim to find combinations of conditions that are sufficient to impact a result. We created a composite variable (SAA) that illustrates the cumulative impact of the three preceding conditions on the result by applying the Fuzzyand function:

Compute: $SAA = \text{fuzzyand}(SPM, AMI, AVA)$.

The XY Plot graph reflects the distribution of cases on the response samples from the managers of public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain, placing the composite variable SAA on the horizontal axis, and the result (CUICCU) on the vertical axis. The above conditions are considered sufficient to influence the result, as all 3 cases are placed above the diagonal in the graph.



Distribution of cases on sample responses from managers of public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain

Source: report generated by fsQCA software

In this case, the consistency score ($X \leq Y$) is 1 (maximum possible) and the coverage score ($X \geq Y$) is 0.3913. These results indicate that the distribution of fuzzy sets in this study is consistent with the assumption that the composite variable (SAA) is a subset of the result (CUICCU), because the consistency score is above the recommended threshold (0.80) and the coverage of the result (CUICCU) is 39.13%. The Truth Table illustrates all the logical configurations that can occur in a given set of conditions. The cases in which all the previous conditions are found have the value "1", while the cases in which all the conditions are absent indicated the value "0". In the truth table associated with the research hypothesis, there are 2 case configurations, after eliminating the lines whose consistency scores were below the critical threshold of 0.8. The analysis of the truth table facilitates the identification of combinations of conditions that are sufficient for the result and represents the step preceding the running of the Quine-McCluskey algorithm.

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Truth table associated with hypothesis testing in the configuration study

Edit Truth Table
File Edit

SPM	AMI	AVA	number	CUICCU	raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist
1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1
0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: report generated by fsQCA software

The Quine-McCluskey algorithm generates a complex solution based on the tested model $CUICCU = f(SPM, AMI, AVA)$, which highlights two combinations of antecedent conditions with direct influence on the result, as well as the sufficiency relation within the hypothesis associated with the configuration model, on the sample from data from the three countries, Romania, Italy and Spain.

Results of the application of the Quine-McCluskey algorithm

```

--- COMPLEX SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1
consistency cutoff: 1

           raw          unique
           coverage     coverage   consistency
-----
SPM*~AMI*AVA  0.626087    0.278261    1
~SPM*AMI*AVA  0.521739    0.173913    1
solution coverage: 0.8
solution consistency: 1
    
```

Source: report generated by fsQCA software

We note that both combinations of causal conditions have the maximum consistency score (1), but are differentiated by the coverage score, higher in the case of the $SPM * \sim AMI * AVA$ combination (0.6260). This shows that the main predictors of the result (level of knowledge and intensive use of the concept of human capital in public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain) are: the study of managerial psychology by decision makers in public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain (SPM) and employees' listening to the voice of employees (AVA). The "~" symbol associated with a precedent condition denotes little or no impact in a causal configuration.

Analysis of the necessary conditions within the configuration model

Antecedent conditions tested	Consistency	Covering
SPM+AMI	0.8695	1.0000
SPM+AVA	0.9260	0.9770
AMI+AVA	0.8565	0.9752

Source: report generated by fsQCA software

The need analysis confirms that the same two predictors (the study of managerial psychology by decision makers in public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain (SPM) and the listening by employees to the voice of employees (AVA) have the highest consistency score among the 3 alternatives and implicitly the greatest impact on the high level of knowledge and intensive use of the concept of human capital in public institutions in Romania, Italy and Spain.

A preliminary conclusion of this qualitative-comparative analysis is that we can identify the most influential predictors of the high level of knowledge and intensive use of the concept of human capital in public institutions, based on data collected from samples from target countries, without using correlational analysis, which requires a much larger volume of data to ensure statistical relevance.

Chapter VI. Unlocking the potential of human capital in European public institutions

The fact that the purpose of any public policy is to ensure the general well-being and to create the preconditions for increasing the quality of life is no longer a secret for today's society. In this context, the implementation of the education reform and an efficient, qualitative and financially accessible health system are, without a doubt, the premises for obtaining the increase of the quality of our life, of all of us.

From this perspective, the specialists unanimously consider that the primary resource of the current society is its people, and the resource of the future is based on the knowledge and skills they have. Individuals, as knowledge workers and creators of visions that incorporate current technologies, are challenged to act in accordance with the law and the performance criteria of society, shaping the future in the context of globalization, without losing sight of ethics, morality and professional ethics. We must keep in mind that globalization and increasing the quality of life not only bring benefits to society, but also subject governments to many challenges.

The new paradigm of education aims at the concept of lifelong learning, as a continuous process, in the sense that the educational process must be completed and perfected. As the famous physicist Albert Einstein put it, "those who have the privilege of knowing have the duty to act." For our part, and in the context of the topic we have addressed in this subchapter, it is relevant to emphasize the importance of the sustainability of a process of flexible learning opportunities, properly associating lifelong learning with practical knowledge and skills acquired in both formal contexts, non-formal and informal, thus carrying out an uninterrupted process.

In order to capitalize on human capital, we need to highlight a number of complementary competencies, which must be pursued by all responsible actors and those involved in implementing a sustainable lifelong learning system, so as to ensure individual / organizational professional success, namely: competencies cognitive type (logical thinking, creativity, intuition, memory), specific technical skills and abilities, socio-emotional skills, own conceptions about life influenced by lived experiences and family background, everyone's personality, perseverance, tenacity, conscientiousness, motivational aspects, the ability to integrate in the team, the openness manifested towards the elements of novelty / new experiences) and, last but not least, the specific professional competencies adapted in the targeted field of activity (competencies associated with practicing a certain profession).

Just as everyone eagerly wants a higher standard of living and a gradual improvement in their condition, so do the managers of organizations in an irrepressible way to pursue organizational success and performance. Similarly, national governments tend to improve their performance in order to increase the general well-being of the population.

The Europeanization of national communities requires adequate investment in each area, a context in which there is widespread discussion about investment in the human capital component. Expectations about the impact of the European Union on national governments are high and, for the most part, positive, except for the views of Eurosceptics.

Smart managers document themselves and are informed that there is certainly a positive correlation between increasing individual/general well-being and investing in human capital. The decision to invest in human capital is a challenge, both individual and governmental, and it must be rational and the result of an in-depth analysis of the costs involved in terms of the benefits that could be obtained.

Investments in human capital should not be supported exclusively by the budget of the organization or institution, as they can be made by both the individual (or, as the case may be, the family) and the company (through governments), given that the benefits obtained reach all three levels listed: individual, organization, state. If we are to refer to the national governments, they must implement real intervention mechanisms on the development of human capital (with emphasis on ensuring equity, higher education, health care, ensuring a high standard of living for the population, etc.).

There is no doubt that the right employees, who are constantly improving their skills and who have a good command of IT knowledge, are the key to success in any field of activity. However, from our point of view, investing in human capital does not guarantee the desired

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success and performance. There is a very relevant component that needs to be given due importance, namely: trust.

In this regard, we highlight the results of the Edelman Global Confidence Barometer for 2020, which reveals aspects of confidence in the sense that, despite a strong global economy and high employment none of the four social entities - government and public institutions, companies and the business environment, NGOs and the media - have confidence in the population. The cause of this paradox is found in people's fears about the future and the role of perspective in how they get involved. The study highlights the fact that it is imperative to rebuild trust, embracing a new way of acting: by balancing competence with ethical behavior.

Another component directly related to the issue of capitalizing on human capital from an investment perspective is research and innovation, both of which require additional investment. At European level, there are currently a number of studies (EU instruments), namely the European Innovation Scoreboard and the Regional Innovation Scoreboard, both conducted in 2019, published by the Commission. European Union and which shows that, in the last 4 years, the performance of the European Union has constantly improved, which is gratifying. From an international perspective, we note that for the first time in recent years, the innovation capacity of European countries exceeds that of the United States of America, although the US is also surpassed by China, Japan and South Korea (at the same time) . Very relevant is also the most recent study carried out by the European Commission, suggestively entitled European Innovation Scoreboard - the European Innovation Scoreboard at the level of 2021 year 2020) in which the main strengths of Romania are highlighted, namely: the field of sales-sales impact, digitalization and environmental sustainability.

Unfortunately, the European figures indicated that Romania does not excel in terms of research and innovation (aspects revealed especially by the studies of the last 3 years). At the same time, our country has not achieved extraordinary results in terms of raising awareness about the relevance of human capital, if we were to mention the project launched by the World Bank on the human capital index. Thus, Romania has the lowest score of the human capital index in the European Union, as well as the lowest index in the field of innovation, which is why we consider that our country still has a long way to go to align with European performance in the field of human capital.

The results of the studies show that in our country attention has started to be paid to the human capital component, but not enough and that investing in the field of human capital is a deep responsibility for both managers and the Romanian government.

From this perspective, we consider that investments are also needed to improve the public management system, in some cases being necessary to launch a broad process of "true" public sector reform and not just a "fundamental reform on paper". The development of a professional body, both managers and executors, without political implications, which will ensure an increase in the satisfaction of the public interest, respecting with priority the existing legislative framework should be a fundamental objective for governments, as it happened in the great western democracies.

Taking into account the above aspects, we consider that just as human capital influences the quality of life - by increasing performance, in the same way, human capital is influenced by the quality of life, in turn. No matter how we look at it, we get the same certainty: human capital and quality of life are the links in the same chain, without which society could not progress (especially since the implications are both for the needs of the individual and society). Taking into account the need to meet individual needs and the need to register social progress, we believe that investment in education and health leads to an increase in the preparation of human capital and, consequently, to economic development and an increase in living standards.

In other words, we consider that there are some defining and accepted dimensions that influence the quality of life, among which we list: the evolution of society and its trends, the environment, the entourage, the family, investments, income, lifetime capital, level personal development, approved health status, perception of safety status, etc.

At the same time, we emphasize the subjective component that characterizes the quality of life, in the sense that each person has their own interpretations, feelings and perceptions, depending on their culture, level of education, their own value system, their own expectations and

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standards, and the conjunctural situation in which he finds himself at a certain moment in his life. So we can consider that when the standard of living reaches the level of a person's expectations, he has obtained the measure of the quality of life (or the level of well-being) that he wanted (pursued or proposed). , taking into account also external factors and the financial possibilities of the person concerned.

Based on the same considerations, it is absolutely necessary to discuss the aspects revealed by the study conducted in 2020 by the non-profit organization Social Progress Imperative with the support of Deloitte, entitled SPI - Social Progress Index. Romania ranks 45th out of 163 countries included in the study according to which quality of life and social welfare are measured by scoring based on 3 main dimensions, namely the basic needs component (food, water and sanitation, family-household-housing, safety personal), the component of perceived well-being (access to education, communications, health system, quality of the environment) and the component of identified opportunities (rights and freedoms, access to advanced education, etc.).

Ideally, the organizational environment should be characterized by legality, responsibility, competence, efficiency, honesty, fairness, loyalty, morality and ethics. In reality, however, European public management faces many challenges in order to eliminate the many acts of bad faith committed, to the detriment of the rights of other individuals or legal entities, as appropriate, in order to obtain sources of profit or personal advantages / benefits. At this juncture, the biggest managerial challenge is related to the predictability and prevention of these complex phenomena, especially since the Romanian institutions seek to align with the standards imposed by the European Union, an objective that includes compliance with the European principle "zero tolerance for fraud and corruption".

Corruption is a complex phenomenon that is currently facing all countries in the world, which is why international institutions are undertaking numerous studies to investigate and control this complex phenomenon. In this regard, we recall the existence of a specific tool: the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) - the result of extensive analysis by Transparency International - the global coalition against corruption. The ICC brings to the public comparative data from around 180 countries and territories, according to perceived levels of public sector corruption and provided by experts and business people. The CPI uses a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means very corrupt and 100 means very clean. Sweden (85) and Switzerland (85). At the bottom of the rankings are Romania (44), along with Bulgaria (43) and Hungary (44). Unfortunately, in the most recent study conducted in 2020, Romania totals the same score as the one highlighted in 2019, respectively 44, occupying the 69th position out of 180 countries.

Chapter VII. Research on identifying gaps (differences) regarding the competitiveness of human capital (public institutions in Romania versus public institutions in other European countries)

Each year, the World Economic Forum (WEF) publishes the Global Competitiveness Report, a study that draws the attention of both academia and organizations / institutions and the general public. The report (comprising 650 pages of studies, explanations and analyzes) provides an overview of the performance of 141 countries by analyzing issues such as: institutions, infrastructure, ICT, macroeconomic stability, health, skills, labor market, financial system, market size, business dynamism, and innovation and capacity.

Analyzing broadly, Romania's position in the ranking, we can highlight the fact that it ranks in the first half of it, respectively on the position no.51 out of a total of 141 countries, which, at first glance, could be a positive. However, if we are to analyze the level of development of the countries in the second part of the ranking, then our optimism is complemented by skepticism.

In addition to all the aspects mentioned above, we cannot conclude the subject of Romania's competitiveness balance, without taking into account the conclusions generated by the Report on the Social Progress Index, made in 2019. Within it, the Social Progress Imperative Organization, with the support of Deloitte , analyzed and assessed the quality of life and social welfare in 149 countries, based on 3 axes of study: basic needs (food, health care, personal safety, housing, sanitation), fundamental aspects of well-being (access to information, communications , basic knowledge, quality of the environment and medical services) and a

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number of opportunities (rights and freedoms, access to advanced and lifelong education, tolerance and social inclusion).

Romania versus other EU member states - Social Progress Index, 2019

Ranking of EU countries	EU country	Position according to Social Progress Index	Score obtained
1	Denmark	2	90.09
2	Finland	4	89.56
3	Sweden	5	89.45
4	Germany	8	88.84
5	Netherlands	11	88.31
6	Ireland	14	87.97
7	France	15	87.79
8	Luxembourg	16	87.66
9	Spain	17	87.47
10	Portugal	18	87.12
11	Belgium	19	86.77
12	Austria	20	86.40
13	Slovenia	21	85.80
14	Italy	22	85.69
15	Czech Republic	24	84.36
16	Estonia	25	83.98
17	Cyprus	28	83.14
18	Malta	29	82.63
19	Greece	30	82.48
20	Lithuania	32	81.30
21	Poland	33	81.25
22	Slovakia	35	80.43
23	Latvia	36	80.42
24	Croatia	38	79.21
25	Hungary	39	78.77
26	Bulgaria	43	76.17
27	Romania	45	74.81

Source: The author own analysis according to the Social Progress Index, 2019

Assuming that increasing the competitiveness of public institutions cannot be achieved without increasing the quality of human capital and without ensuring and maintaining the competitiveness of staff, we have developed another case study which aims to demonstrate that organizational success and increased competitiveness are given. The increase in individual performance, as well as the fact that the key factors of performance and competitiveness are the knowledge of the workforce and its qualifications, as well as mastery and adaptation to the information and communication technology revolution.

The self-administered questionnaire was applied by e-mail to a number of 100 subjects - persons working in Romanian public institutions, from all counties of the country (both in rural and urban areas). The period in which the questionnaire was prepared, launched and received was September 2019 - May 2020. Thus, the following aspects were highlighted:

- 📖 The link between human capital optimization, performance and competitiveness is an indissoluble one. In another form, we could even consider that the three components we referred to are complementary.
- 📖 Both the specialized literature approached and the statistical analyzes revealed in the paper (macro-scale) and the study conducted in Romanian public institutions (micro-scale) confirms once again that managerial challenges are huge, when it comes to increasing performance and competitiveness, especially that today's society must keep up with turbulence specific to the phenomenon of globalization and take advantage of the opportunities it offers.

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- 📖 Competitiveness is the engine that gives life to the energy of human capital, and this from the track is the catalyst for the performance of the company as a whole, without a doubt.
- 📖 Intelligent managers with skills (born or built) of leaders understood that improving competitive performance is possible through a proactive, well-assumed and tailored leadership approach. It is no coincidence that we have brought leaders into question, because human capital performance and competitiveness cannot exist in the absence of a leader who knows how to inspire, create vision, motivation and imprint enthusiasm in his team.
- 📖 Every society needs to learn to promote strategically thought leaders, so as to make forward-looking decisions, emphasizing their own competitive advantages and doing their best to mitigate competitive disadvantages.
- 📖 Competitiveness must be considered a "must have" and not an "untouchable luxury".
- 📖 Competitiveness is complementary to equal opportunities and social inclusion, and these cannot be achieved without a satisfactory level of education, training and health for the population, in line with the technological changes imposed by globalization and globalization.
- 📖 Fundamental investment must be made in people, with an emphasis on human capital.
- 📖 The intensification of innovation activity is the key to competitiveness, as it has as a consequence, technological competitiveness, which entails a high rate of profit.

Future orientation and sustainability of competitive performance are the long-term priorities of companies, and they can only be achieved with the contribution of all links in the chain of society (through a true and solid partnership between government - as a decision maker, society and business).

Chapter VIII. Covid pandemic approach - 19 from the perspective of human capital management and risk management in the European Union

More and more world leaders, aware that the pandemic has changed the world, say that COVID 19 has established a new international order. This, although initially seen as a threat to humanity, from a managerial perspective, can be seen as an opportunity to regain global solidarity, with the "all for one" principle now re-emerging in this regard.

Even if the situation generated by COVID required ad-hoc adaptations and solutions with overnight repercussions, one thing is certain: all the concerns had a central element, namely: the human factor. The paradox was that the latter was the most affected and he himself had to not only survive, but also reinvent himself, re-establish his priorities, give up competitive pride and make sure that each individual can benefit from the global recovery. It seems that now, more than ever, we have felt the benefits of ensuring compliance with the European principle of equal opportunities and treatment, the European principle of free movement of persons, services and capital, and many other rights which until now meant to us. only simple statements from Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly affected every individual and was felt by every organization, be it public or private, small or large, local, national or international. It was described as an unforeseen risk, which is why it was virtually impossible for decision makers to anticipate solutions, in many cases having to practically improvise.

There is no complete and responsible managerial act, ignoring performance and risk. Under these conditions, all managers struggle to address these two complex issues with tact, talent, conscientiousness and openness, understanding that all their work must be guided by mechanisms to ensure organizational success.

Communication management, talent management, time management, and performance management must be united in a logical way, and risk management must accompany all actions, step by step.

No matter how skilled a manager is, he cannot eliminate the risks from the activity he coordinates, definitively and 100%.

To highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public organizations in our country, a questionnaire with 33 questions was designed, which was sent to complete a number of 300 respondents.

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In order to carry out the case study, the questionnaire was applied, between March and June 2021, to respondents belonging exclusively to the public space (103 respondents with management positions and 197 with executive positions), respectively representatives of decentralized public institutions of ministries - 148, county councils - 62, as well as administrative-territorial units / town halls - 90, of which 47 from urban areas and 43 from rural areas.

Approaching hypotheses

Approaching hypotheses	Keywords	Potential causes of the phenomenon
Assumption A	Exaggeration	Exclusive approach from a religious perspective
Assumption B	The fabricated crisis	Common flu virus
Assumption C	Impossibility of adaptation	Disorientation
Assumption D	Ignoring the phenomenon	Exaggeration and manipulation through the media
Assumption E	Panic	Fear has become chronic

Source: Authors' own research

Detailed and structured analysis of responses

Alternative	Detailed answer	Interpretation
A-19	This pandemic is a test of God, which must be treated with faith, prayer and wisdom and without resorting to exaggeration (in the way the authorities have done so far, in an exaggerated way, ruling by establishing fear).	6.3% of respondents are driven by subjective arguments and call into question the objectivity of the authorities, the compliance of the measures taken and the information provided by the relevant institutions
B-27	COVID -19 is a fabricated crisis, this virus being a common flu virus, which should not have been allowed to affect our personal and professional lives.	9% consider that they have the necessary balance to go through the crisis, without being too affected by the situation in question
C-46	It is a sensitive subject on which I have not yet been able to form an opinion. I am a person upset by this whole situation and still trying to adapt to the changes imposed in my life by the existence of this phenomenon.	15.3% is the percentage of undecided
D-62	The subject was so debated and publicized that I didn't care. I prefer to ignore everything and go on with my life as if it didn't exist.	20.7% are that category of respondents who have reached saturation, no longer want to get involved and have started to "ignore" this complex of events, facts and actions
E-4	This whole context scares me so much that I sometimes have panic attacks. I'm sure it affected my life in an unnatural way (both professional and private).	the personal and private lives of 1.3% are affected and the associated repercussions still persist
F-142	I prefer not to comment	Given the fact that such a large number -47.3% do not comment on this question, we can consider that only 158 respondents really expressed their opinion on this issue.

Source: Authors' own research

Next, we present an extract of the most relevant aspects revealed by the study:

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Pandemic management according to respondents, by country:

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid UK	38	12.7	12.7	12.7
SE	68	22.7	22.7	35.3
IT	5	1.7	1.7	37.0
DE	56	18.7	18.7	55.7
FR	5	1.7	1.7	57.3
BE	1	.3	.3	57.7
LU	4	1.3	1.3	59.0
NL	7	2.3	2.3	61.3
ES	1	.3	.3	61.7
AT	7	2.3	2.3	64.0
HU	3	1.0	1.0	65.0
RO	7	2.3	2.3	67.3
PT	11	3.7	3.7	71.0
toate	87	29.0	29.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: the author's own interpretation

Top 5 degree of trust in institutions in the context of COVID-19

Local level	Score	National level	Score	International level	Score
1. County Inspectorate for Emergency Situations	102	1. Department of Emergency Situations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs	81	1. World Health Organization	146
2. The town halls	42	2. Ministry of Health	57	2. International Society for Human Rights	27
3. County / municipal / city hospital	40	3. The Government of Romania	42	3. The O.M.S. from Russia	13
4. SMURD	25	4. The President of Romania	18	4. U.S. Centers for Disease Control	8
5. Institution of the Prefect	15	5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs	6	5. Profile institutions in the United Arab Emirates	3

Source: author's own research

When asked if they easily adapted their activity and even their way of life to the context of the current pandemic, the respondents made the following statements:

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Adapting respondents to the current epidemiological context

Source: author's own research

- 📖 52.3% of respondents express their opinions exclusively on the basis of sources from official channels, and the remaining 47.7% are more superficial, content with the news in the media (which does not always present purely informative situations, sometimes being leaked and political interpretations) and with the information conveyed by colleagues and friends (which can distort information about and judging things from a personal perspective).
- 📖 102 respondents stated that they no longer trust any international institution, 96 respondents stated that national institutions are overwhelmed by the situation in terms of COVID crisis management, and 61 that they do not trust any local institution in terms of regarding the management of the epidemiological situation. Interestingly, the degree of mistrust is declining from the international to the local level, which is somewhat surprising.
- 📖 It is gratifying that the respondents have mastered the notions of risk management, crisis management and emergency management and that they are aware of the work of institutions with responsibilities in the field of emergencies (which is normal, if we look at things in perspective that respondents are representatives of public institutions).
- 📖 Another conclusion that could be drawn from the analysis of the answers was that in 70.7% of organizations things are going a little better or much better, in 26% of organizations there is resistance to change and only in 3.3% of In some cases, respondents consider that things are going much worse or worse, which makes us optimistic from the perspective of implementing risk and crisis management, in terms of the involvement of top management in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of telework and work at home, regarding the component of information and communication technology, regarding the possibility of improving the relations between management and executive, from the perspective of managerial transparency and last but not least, regarding investments in protecting the health and safety of employees.
- 📖 The paradox is that, although respondents are generally dissatisfied with the work of national and international decision-makers, they are satisfied with the measures taken at organizational level. From this perspective, we must not lose sight of the fact that 34.3% of respondents are the very organizational decision-makers. Maybe that's why they consider the measures implemented very good, since the decisions were made by themselves.
- 📖 Another important conclusion of the study is that almost 80% of the respondents confirm that they are satisfied with the measures taken to protect the staff of the organization they belong to, in the epidemiological context in question.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS, PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS, RESEARCH LIMITS AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

A. FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This doctoral thesis presents the theoretical and applied framework, based on the study of the literature, the in-depth analysis of other previous studies conducted either by international or European bodies or by other researchers, as well as based on their own research approach.

Thus, we managed to draw a series of conclusions, in our opinion relevant, regarding the overall picture of the public organizational environment, regarding the complexity of the managerial act, as well as regarding the real possibilities of improving the management system of public institutions, by developing human capital, in order to align with European standards.

From this perspective, we emphasize that, as far as we are concerned, the organization is a very complex human universe, closely linked to the managerial phenomenon and evolving according to the progressive trends of society, as a result of new world realities, according to the demands imposed by the challenges launched in the context of the public-citizen organization interaction.

Although the visions of organizational design are different, the goal is the same: to achieve the set objectives, taking into account a number of performance criteria. For this desideratum to take shape and become a reality, it is not enough for the manager to possess extraordinary qualities, his disciples must follow him with professionalism, responsibility, creativity, loyalty and good faith. It is enough for a single team member to act against organizational goals or personal revenge against a colleague or even a leader and the organizational balance is affected and performance is hampered.

Another conclusion is that the manager must do everything he can to know the organization well enough to be aware of when to look like a mere observer, leaving employees autonomy to decide, create and innovate and when to intervene to reprint the harmony, the atmosphere of cordiality, extinguishing conflicts and "isolating" the people who provoke them.

A particularly relevant issue in terms of public organizations / institutions in Romania refers to communication management and public performance, both of which give rise to more or less visible links with the notion of the reputation of the public sector organization. In general, public organizations care a lot about their image, their public reputation, which is why, especially in recent years, they are struggling to escape the imprint of inefficiency, bureaucracy, waste, incompetence, rigidity or even corruption and crime.

Staff motivation is an art and not every manager or management system has the talent and tools needed to accomplish a perfect creation and to demonstrate their mastery. We agree with one of the specialists studied in the literature and consider that indeed, metaphorically speaking, a leader must be "a merchant of hope" and must strive to find the connectors between personal motivations and successful work that -he wants it in his organization.

As we mentioned in the paper, the manager's mission would have been much easier if all subordinates / colleagues were the same or at least similar, but how they differ from each other in personality, level of training, socio-cultural status, degree of intelligence, abilities, skills, pretensions, expectations, etc., the manager is put in a position to somehow bring human interactions to a common denominator, in order to satisfy the interests of the organization. In other words, the main managerial concern is similar to the biggest challenge: transforming the group into a real team, dedicated to maximizing the interest of the organization. The speed is given by the enthusiasm, loyalty and dedication of the employees, issues that can not only be bought with money, but must be earned.

We believe that special emphasis should be placed on the motivational component because individual excellence is inextricably linked to organizational performance, which is why management must be directly concerned with creating a favorable work environment, which is a stimulating factor for performance. Another challenge is to find the causes of poor employee performance (which may be: lack of motivation of the subordinate, incompetence, incompetence or inability, lack of resources, bad intentions or even inadequate managerial approach and

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inappropriate communication of tasks) and finding solutions to help employees perform by putting the "right person in the right place."

Another aspect that this paper confirms is that of the importance of lifelong learning, people need to update their knowledge and skills, both as individuals and as citizens and employees, because it would be unacceptable. that education should abruptly cease upon graduation or stable employment. Employees need to improve, adapt to current technologies, be up to date with the legislation and performance criteria of society, shaping their future in the context of globalization, without losing sight of ethics, morality and professional ethics.

In this regard, it is particularly important to adopt "smart learning" - a blended learning method that combines information presented in the classical style in educational programs with practical software, while learning foreign language software. Another result revealed by the studies and analyzes carried out, concerns the concept and the smart properties, both necessary to respond just in time to the expectations and needs of modern society, simultaneously with the changes that accompany the phenomenon of globalization.

Both studies and practice certainly lead to the need to improve the public management system, so that lifelong learning is no longer just an option, but an obligation. Undoubtedly, the right employees, who are constantly improving their skills and who have a good command of IT knowledge, are the key to success in any field of activity. However, from our point of view, unfortunately, investments in human capital do not guarantee the achievement of success and desirable performance.

Another topic addressed in the paper that is directly related to the ability of employees to dedicate themselves to and perform in the institution is to ensure a carefree standard of living or standard of living so that employees do not have other dominant. The "more is better" trend is accepted by most of us, which is why people assume that more money and more comfort will make them happier, without realizing that, at the same time, the level of expectations increases at the same time, which, in most cases, will bring them back to the brink of unhappiness. As a result, most people make disproportionate expenses, work against their time with their family, and sacrifice their health for a lasting happiness. However, the subjectivity that characterizes the quality of life will make each of us learn only from our own experiences.

Ideally, we could consider that when the standard of living reaches the level of a person's expectations, he has achieved the level of well-being he has desired, but we do not know its "price". Sometimes the price is falling on the slopes of illegality, immorality and corruption. Incredibly, however, contemporaneity comes to confirm through its actions Plato's theory that "human greed is the source of corruption and it erodes the moral values of the community and its common goals."

Therefore, European public management faces many challenges in order to eliminate the many acts of bad faith committed, to the detriment of the rights of other natural or legal persons, as the case may be, in order to obtain sources of profit or personal advantages / benefits. At this juncture, the biggest managerial challenge is related to the predictability and prevention of these complex phenomena, especially since the Romanian institutions seek to align with the standards imposed by the European Union, an objective that includes compliance with the European principle "zero tolerance for fraud and corruption".

Corruption is a complex phenomenon that all countries of the world are currently facing, and which, unfortunately, is no stranger to Romania. The studies and research we have referred to in this paper come to confirm, once again, that the phenomenon of corruption is very complex and generates irregularities throughout society, affecting its optimal functioning.

At the same time, we believe that there is a need for a real reform and clean-up of the system, because the fight against corruption will only be successful when the institutions are strong and the civil servants are well enough paid. Another conclusion highlighted by our analysis is that increasing the transparency of funding for political parties and public institutions (people need to know in great detail how parties and public institutions manage budgets, assets and performance). In addition, we emphasize the need for a functioning justice system that is able to detect and penalize acts of corruption and that is not itself "corruptible".

All the above mentioned aspects are part of the external organizational environment, the public organization being categorically influenced by the political environment (last minute political

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decisions strategically affecting the organizations), by the legal-legislative environment (ensuring the transposition of legal provisions in internal working instructions and procedures) and the economic environment (for example, the carefully speculated economic boom can give rise to a unique organizational performance boom in the existence of an organization, and economic crises can bury organizations that are unable to reinvent themselves).

Next, we discuss another very relevant conclusion in the context of the studied and in-depth topic, in the sense that there can be no organizational/state success or performance, outside the boundaries of competitiveness. Thus, through a pertinent analysis in terms of competitiveness, answers can be outlined about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and benefits, but also the road to success or organizational failure due to ignoring threats.

According to the 2020 Competitiveness Report, it was concluded that the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic reaffirmed the need to go beyond simply ensuring basic access to education and health, and identifying opportunities to become safety nets in moments of instability and crisis.

Both through the study of the literature and through in-depth analyzes of national, European and international statistics (integrating our case study as an auxiliary tool), we demonstrated that the link between human capitalization, human capital improvement, performance and competitiveness it is an absolutely indisputable and current one. At the same time, successful managers, who obviously have the skills (born or built) of leaders, have understood that human capital performance and competitiveness cannot exist in the absence of a leader who knows how to inspire, motivate and imprint enthusiasm in his organization. Knowing how to achieve performance, strategic and competitive thinking is a strong point.

In this context, we emphasize that from the case study conducted in this paper, it emerged that competitiveness should be considered a "must have" and not an "untouchable luxury".

Certainly competitiveness is complementary to equal opportunities and social inclusion, and all this cannot be achieved without a satisfactory level of training, education, health and social protection of the population, in balance with the technological transformations imposed by the phenomenon of globalization. Trends are real challenges. Society needs to keep up with: technological evolution, eco-technology, biotechnology, eco-innovation, the digital revolution and robotics.

Although many world leaders have said that the pandemic has restored the international order, being in some respects a threat to humanity, the studies have shown that global solidarity has been regained, which is no small feat. Even if the situation generated by COVID required ad-hoc adaptations overnight, one thing is certain: all concerns had a central element: the human factor.

From a managerial point of view, the current epidemiological context has drawn attention to the following aspect: there is no complete and responsible managerial act, ignoring performance and risk.

Communication management, talent management, time management, and performance management must be harmonized in a logical manner, and risk management must be backed up, step by step. No matter how "smart" a manager may be, he cannot eliminate 100% of the risks. The COVID pandemic was an unpredictable risk, which is why it imposed a new organization, a new organizational discipline, based on rigidity and authoritarianism, being declared a major risk impossible to treat with flexibility and indulgence. The managerial act was all the more difficult as the leader could no longer appeal to the creativity of the employees, to their emotional intelligence, to the application of the old incentives. Nothing that once worked could suddenly be taken into account, the shock generated by the global health crisis being irreversible.

Each employee / individual became an actor on the stage of the state of emergency and, later, on that of the state of alert, in the context of the new rule of social distancing, adapting us without the right to reply with telework. Managers and subalterns alike have been silent witnesses to the decisions of top politicians, trying to save the situation and lead things back to normalcy.

And this time, the benefits and advantages of innovation and technology have been undeniable, which is why, following the model of national and European leaders, each organization has formulated its own digital transformation strategy. However, the analysis shows that beyond all these advantages, human talent, intuition, emotional intelligence, tenacity,

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perseverance, creativity, empathy and solidarity can certainly not be replaced by any machine, no matter how perfect. This could be considered, which is why we consider that the human factor must remain at the center of the concerns of the management system.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the associated global social shock put pressure on all organizations, even the strongest ones, revealing their vulnerabilities and fragility. It is a crucial moment in which we can talk, more than ever, about "quality leadership", in the context in which today's managers have accepted and assumed multiple responsibilities and which, perhaps, have exceeded the limits of their professional training, not least ori.

B. RESEARCH LIMITS AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

- ♥ One of the limitations of the research is related to the formulation of the questions, some of the notions presented not being found in the questionnaires, because we considered them much too pretentious and unused in practice, in the current managerial activity. At the same time, a number of issues addressed in the questionnaire are not found in the literature, given that, to date, we have not been able to identify statistical benchmarks at European level to distinguish between selected and analyzed countries.
- ♥ Also regarding the wording of the questions, there was no control key (except in a few situations) so as to make sure that the respondents understood the approach of the topic, in the intended sense. In some questions, connecting the answers given, I found that one answer from one category could cancel another from another category, because the respondent simply contradicted himself in the answers.
- ♥ Another limitation of the research is the difficulty of collecting data directly from respondents in European Union countries. We reconfigured the route, both in terms of the selected countries and in terms of the number of questionnaires in order to rely on in the analysis of the answers.
- ♥ Even in the case of data collection through questionnaires applied in our country, the situation was a complicated one, in the sense that in order to obtain 300 questionnaires, approximately 800 e-mails were sent to institutions, which means approximately only 37.5% of e-mails received the expected feedback, the difference of 62.5% being classified as rejections.
- ♥ Another impediment to the research would be the short time in which the observation was conducted and the questionnaire-type research method. We believe that, for more conclusive and realistic answers, the interviews would have helped more, in the sense that the subjects would have also received helpful questions or clarifying information, all of which contribute to the formulation of much more detailed answers.
- ♥ It is also important to mention the inability of the researcher to be convinced, in the case of certain questions, of the calculated percentages without drawing very conclusive results.
- ♥ Another limitation of the research is, in our opinion, the fact that we cannot guarantee the seriousness of the respondents, not being sure that they actually ticked the answers according to personal conversations, without superficiality or without fear that bosses might check their questionnaires and could be reprimanded in certain situations (the questionnaires are sent to the official addresses of the institutions and are distributed according to the decision of the top manager).
- ♥ At the same time, we consider that another limitation of the research is the small number of respondents, which calls into question the validity of the results of the study (except for the last study conducted on 300 respondents).
- ♥ Another obstacle, in our opinion, is that we cannot use the same respondents for a further study (for example on creativity and innovation in the context of measures of isolation and social distancing; or on changing human / organizational behavior in the context of the pandemic; or finding the post-pandemic organizational balance, etc.), to ensure the coherence and continuity of the analysis.
- ♥ From this perspective, we conclude with a proposal aimed at supporting doctoral students, who, for the realization of research papers such as comparative analyzes between different states, are in great need of institutional support from universities where they attend doctoral

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school courses, namely: partnerships between them and their counterparts in the respective countries (including the nomination of responsible persons for each university/research field) in order to cooperate for the realization of these types of studies (proposal that would benefit all actors involved, cooperation in this field facilitating the work of PhD students and giving them the opportunity to make truly remarkable discoveries, not just simple findings and comparisons of statistical data).

C. RESEARCH ETHICS

We mention the fact that throughout the doctoral research we followed the recommendations of academic ethics. After starting the research, we took a number of ethical steps to ensure that all respondents included in the investigation had the theoretical knowledge and / or practical experience or were part of the target group to participate in the research.

Respondents were assured that their identity would not be disclosed and that participation in the research would not affect their professional activity in any way. At the same time, the legal requirements regarding the analysis of the research and the discussion of the results related to it were observed, in the sense that there was no comment related to a specific respondent who took part in the studies presented in the thesis.

In other words, we also mention that all documents, observation sheets, questionnaires and other evidence, which show the veracity of the research and analysis presented, are kept by the doctoral student, with respect for confidentiality (if the situation required it).

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