Human Capital Management in the Wandering Context of Events – Challenges for the Managerial Staff

edited by Marzena Stor

Publishing House of Wroclaw University of Economics and Business

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PREFACE

This monograph is the result of cooperation between twenty researchers from eleven Polish universities who have made the effort to write a book on human capital management (HCM) in the wandering context.

The authors' interest in this topic was based on the conviction that actions focused on people employed in organizations are increasingly subject to unprecedented contextualization. One is dealing not only with a clear intensification of the impact of various contextual factors of the environment on the practice of human capital management in organizations (Pocztowski, 2019), but also with significant variability in terms of diversity and configuration of these factors (Farndale and Paauwe, 2018). This means that the context is perceived as a phenomenon of a dynamic nature (Zhang-Zhang, Rohlfer, and Varma, 2022), which is subject to transformation in shorter periods of time, sometimes even in less than a few days. HRM viewed through the VUCA lens (VUCA standing for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) has become the subject of interest (Jain, 2019). Moreover, the appearance of important events with a low degree of predictability as to their occurrence or predictable to some extent, although complicated, increases the sense of uncertainty in organizations, among their managerial staff and employees. For this reason, the context in which different stakeholders operate seems to be a wandering context of events that significantly dynamizes the adaptation processes in organizations, and requires the development of completely new, previously unknown solutions.

Over the past few years, we have been dealing with many contextual phenomena, conventionally called events in this monograph, whose scope and intensity do not remain insignificant for organizational practice and research. One can mention here, for example, processes occurring in the global economy, which result in the inclusion or disabling, or at least limiting the participation of national economies of individual countries and their enterprises in the global production and exchange process. Such events can occur even for political or economic reasons, including armed conflict, customs wars, introducing an international embargo, etc. (see Wijekoon et al., 2022). The factors associated with Industry 4.0 are also intensifying (Verma and Venkatesan, 2022). As a result, not only work processes, but also activities related to HCM in organizations are increasingly based on new technologies (Stor and Domaradzka, 2020; Piwowar-Sulej, 2020).

Other important contextual variables include an increase in expectations for raising ethical standards in organizations (Sharma, 2019), their social and ecological responsibility (Haromszeki, 2020), care for employees' well-being and the conditions in which work is performed (Molek-Winiarska, 2020). Against this background, the labor market is gaining particular importance. Its structure, and especially certain supply shortages, has focused organizations on the intensification of activities in the field of shaping employee engagement and satisfaction, and building their own brand as an employer of choice (Khan, Bharadwaj, Khatoon, and Jamal, 2021; Wojtaszczyk, 2012). Hence, the variety of human resources in organizations, and the effective methods of managing this variety (Rakowska, 2022) have become a particular subject of interest.

However, the most wandering context of events seems to be the pandemic context, which for legislative reasons and protection and safety of work often requires adaptation to new requirements in just one day. This affects changes in employees' affective commitment to the organization and their job-related well-being (Mihalache and Mihalache, 2022), employee work engagement (Pass and Ridgway, 2022), work and employment relations (Gavin, Poorhosseinzadeh, and Arrowsmith, 2022) and the HRM activities that the organizations need to implement in response (Cooke, Dickmann, and Parry, 2022). These are only selected examples of wandering contexts of events that both international and domestic organizations are dealing with, and which significantly determine the practices of human capital management.

Against the background of the above, the main goal of the monograph was to present empirical research findings and conceptual developments in selected HRM problems in various contexts. It should be also clarified that in this study, the terms human capital management and human resource management are used interchangeably. As for these contexts, the journey undertaken in this monograph begins with organizational contexts, then virtual and digital, followed by that of the pandemic, and finally ends in a context strongly focused on people. This is due to the adopted structure, divided into four parts, where each part consists of three chapters.

Part I refers in its title to the contextual effects of the type of organizations on HCM practices. The three types of organizations in this context are: multinational companies, the armed forces and universities. The authors present their empirical research findings on such issues as employee training, employee development, and competency management.

Part II is dedicated to HCM practices in the context of work virtualization and digitalization. Here the research results concentrate on the virtualization of social relations, the digitalization of employee learning and development, and on the advantages and disadvantages of artificial intelligence used in knowledge management.

Part III covers three types of HCM practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. One concerns the activities that shape employee job satisfaction. The second applies to managing staff development, while the third refers to the importance of the role and tasks of HR Business Partner in organizations. All the practices are described on the basis of research.

Part IV addresses the human side of business as a modern contextual factor for HCM practices. On the one hand, it is devoted to the empirical research findings regarding job security from the perspective of employees' interest, and the evaluation of the so-called Green HRM practices. On the other hand, it proposes a conceptual model of the relations between the social activity of an organization, and employee satisfaction and commitment.

With the exception of one theoretical chapter, all the others are structured in the same way, namely – an introduction is at the beginning of each them, followed by an explanation of the theoretical foundations for the main problem. In the following part, the authors describe the methodics applied in their empirical research, and then present the results of their research. Finally, a summary and final conclusions are formulated.

At this point, the concept of methodics used in this monograph should be explained. To do this, it is necessary to make a distinction between methodology and methodics. Namely, in most cases in which methodology as a word is used in English-language publications, whilst in Poland, where the authors of the monograph come from, the proper word would be methodics. In short, methodology is interpreted in Poland as a scientific discipline which comprises the study and analysis of scientific research methods, modes of analyses and evaluation of their cognitive value with connection to the principles associated with a branch of knowledge (e.g. within particular scientific disciplines). Methodics has much narrower meaning and refers to the set of means and activities undertaken to realize a concrete task or solve a particular problem (e.g. research conducted in a single project or presented in an article) (Stor, 2021, pp. 129-130). This is why in this monograph the authors use the term methodics, therefore in each chapter the empirical research methodics refers to particular research task and, hence, covers such elements as the research model, problem, questions, method, measures, types of data analyses and sample.

As the monograph is of a scientific and research nature, it is also dedicated to other researchers dealing with HRM issues as well as management students who would like to deepen their knowledge in this field and learn about the latest research. At the same time, the authors also hope that it may be interesting for management practitioners who are looking for inspiration to create effective solutions in their work with human capital.

Finally, on behalf of myself and other authors, we would like to wish our readers an interesting and stimulating read.

Marzena Stor

Part I

THE CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS OF THE ORGANIZATION'S TYPE ON HCM

Chapter 1

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT IN MNCs – A COMPARISON BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPE

Marzena Stor[a]

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1.1. Introduction

The business environment is constantly changing and this means that companies must invest in the development of employees and their competencies in order to function in newly emerging contexts. This is due to the fact that the adaptive and developmental capabilities of the organization depend on the adaptive and developmental efficacy of their employees. For this reason, two subfunctions of HRM, i.e. employee development (ED) and competency management (CM), are the subject of interest in this chapter. These are the types of personnel activities that seem to be of particular importance in the knowledge-based economy because they not only enable the achievement of intended performance results by organizations, but also determine their competitive position on the market.

These two HRM subfunctions and their relation with the financial results of the organization were considered in the context of multinational companies (MNCS). A review of literature in this area has led to the conclusion that when examining such relations, several basic variables should be taken into account. This concerns the variables that shape this context in a specific way in this kind of enterprises, and include the advancement of the HRM subfunction, its contribution level to the company's financial performance, the centralization of decisions at the level of headquarters (HQ), and the flows of knowledge & skills between the HQ and foreign subsidiaries (FSs).

The research in the range of the above-mentioned issues was conducted in various MNCs. Yet so far, not many of them were devoted exclusively to the MNCs created in Central Europe. Hence, **the goal of this chapter** is to identify the differences and

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similarities within the scope of ED and CM between local subsidiaries belonging to Central European MNCs, but located in Eastern and Western Europe. Therefore, at the outset, this chapter briefly reviews the literature on the variables describing ED and CM in MNCs. Next, the methodics of the empirical research is discussed and the results of this research presented. Finally, the last part is devoted to the formulation of the main conclusions.

1.2. Theoretical foundations for the variables describing ED & CM in MNCs

The relations between human resources management (HRM) and company performance have been the subject of research interest for several decades. Some researchers studied the overall relations of the HRM function with company performance (Boon, Den Hartog, and Lepak, 2019; Guest, Michie, Conway, and Sheehan, 2003; Katou and Budhwar, 2010; Kunasz and Zwiech, 2016; Stor, 2021, p. 125; Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, and Allen, 2005), while others were interested only in the selected HRM subfunctions. The general conclusion from these studies is that the appropriately selected HRM activities, tailored to the needs of both employees and organizations, can have a positive impact on the company's performance. This also applies to the two HRM subfunctions included in the title of this Chapter. The relations between employee development (ED) and the company's performance results (e.g. Ali, Bashir, and Mehreen, 2019; Garavan et al., 2021; Jacobs and Washington, 2003; Jangbahadur and Sharma, 2018; Kim, 2020; Moon and Choi, 2017; Selmer, Ebrahimi, and Mingtao, 2002), as well as the associations between competency management (CM) and the company's results (Ali et al., 2019; Hawi, Alkhodary, and Hashem, 2015; Kupczyk and Stor, 2017; Mendryk, 2016; Salman, Ganie, and Saleem, 2020; Stor and Haromszeki, 2021; Rakowska and Juana-Espinosa, 2021; Wojtczuk-Turek, 2014) were confirmed in various studies, including those with an emphasis on the financial performance of the organization (c.f. Farndale, Pai, Sparrow, and Scullion, 2014; Huselid, 1995; Malmström, Wincent, and Johansson, 2013; Salman et al., 2020; Stor and Haromszeki, 2021).

A single subfunction of HRM can be described by a variety of variables. Undoubtedly, the level of its advancement and its significance for the company's financial performance can be considered with such standard variables. It is worth noting that significance can be understood as a perceived contribution of a single HRM subfunction to the financial performance of a company and depends on its advancement level (Anzengruber, Goetz, Nold, and Woelfle, 2017; Becker, Huselid, and Ulrich, 2001; Malmström et al., 2013; Stor and Haromszeki, 2020). This means, therefore, that both ED and CM can be described by their advancement and contribution levels. At this point, one should mention that in this chapter, employee development is defined as activities that aim at preparing employees to perform work and take positions which are of higher responsibility. This involves providing the employee with knowledge and skills that may be used immediately on the job or at some time in the future. In the research presented in a further section, it also covers training activities which are meant to upgrade employees' skills and knowledge in order to increase their efficiency and/or effectiveness. Regarding competency management, this is understood here as a set of activities aimed at identifying, acquiring, developing and retaining in the organization such employee competencies that support the company performance and enable the implementation of its strategic goals (Stor, 2016).

Since ED and CM were considered in the context of MNCs, the literature review conducted in this area led to the conclusion that three other variables play important roles in the description of these HRM subfunctions, i.e. centralization of decisions at the headquarters' (HQ) level and the flows of knowledge & skills between the HQ and foreign subsidiaries (FSs) in two directions: from the HQ to FS and from FS to the HQ. The research to date has focused, among others, on the general interdependence of centralization and autonomy within management science, research and practice (Young, Tavares, 2004), the positive and negative impact of the HRM centralization on knowledge sharing contingent upon situational factors (Fenton-O'Creevy, Gooderham, and Nordhaug, 2008), and the control mechanism used by the headquarters (Maatman and Meijerink, 2017). Against this background, researchers were also interested in the transfer of HRM knowledge and the learning functions of this process (Tsang, 1999), including the transfer of knowledge in the field of individual HRM subfunctions (Minbaeva, 2005), multilevel knowledge sharing constructs (Minbaeva, Pedersen, Björkman, and Fey, 2014), the effects of horizontal and vertical outflows of FS' knowledge (Fernandes, Griffith, and Lages, 2014), the importance of HRM knowledge transfer to the achieved organizational outcomes (Poór, Juhász, Machová, Bencsik, and Bilan, 2018) and standardization practices in different countries (Edwards, Sánchez-Mangas, Jalette, Lavelle, and Minbaeva, 2016). The results of all these studies led to the conclusion that in the relation between the HQ and the FS, the centralization practices and the direction of knowledge flows may be similar in selected or even in all subfunctions of HRM. It can therefore be assumed that related subfunctions, such as ED and CM, can show significant similarities in this respect.

So far, little research has focused on the above-mentioned phenomena in MNCs established in Central and Eastern Europe (Farndale and Sanders, 2017, p. 1630), particularly those countries that between the end of the World War II in 1945 and the end of the Cold War in 1991 were called the 'Socialist Bloc' or the Soviet Block because they made up the group of socialist countries under the influence and control of the Soviet Union. In most cases, the research on MNCs included organizations from developed countries (mostly from the West), whose foreign direct investment (FDI) was located in less developed countries (e.g. Brewster, 2007; Morley, Heraty, and Michailova, 2009; Wilkinson and Wood, 2017), and at the same time did not take a holistic view of the variables indicated here as describing a given subfunction of HRM to study them together. Therefore, it can be said that this is a specific research gap.

1.3. The empirical research methodics

As a result of the theoretical findings, the **main goal of the empirical research** was to determine whether there are identifiable regularities that differentiate, or make ED and CM similar, in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. To reach this goal the following **research questions** were formulated:

1. What are the advancement levels of ED and CM and their individual components?
2. What are the contribution levels of ED and CM to the company's financial results?
3. What are the relations between the HQ and its FSs in terms of the knowledge & skills flows and the centralization levels of ED and CM?
4. What is the relation between the advancement levels of ED and CM and the company's financial results?
5. How are the above phenomena shaped in Eastern Europe and Western Europe?

The literature review also led to the formulation of the following **hypotheses**:

- **H$_1$**: There is a positive correlation between the advancement level of ED and CM.
- **H$_2$**: There is a positive correlation between the contribution level of ED and CM to the company's finacial results.
- **H$_3$**: There is a positive correlation between the centralization level of ED and CM.
- **H$_4$**: There is a positive correlation between the knowledge & skills transfer from the HQ to FS within ED and within CM.
- **H$_5$**: There is a positive correlation between the knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from FS within ED and within CM.
- **H$_6$**: The higher the advancement level of ED, the better the company's financial results.
- **H$_7$**: The higher the advancement level of CM, the better the company's financial results.

The research was conducted in 2018, as part of a larger research project financed by the National Science Center[1], on a sample of 185 MNCs headquartered in Poland and with a dominant share of Polish capital, of which 83 had their foreign subsidiaries in Eastern Europe and 102 in Western Europe. The demarcation line between Eastern and Western Europe runs in accordance with the division used in the past to determine the countries that formed the two parts, the so-called Capitalist Bloc and Socialist (or Soviet) Bloc in Europe.

The structure of the surveyed population was diversified in terms of the profile of economic activity according to the ECBA (European Classification of Business

[1] Project No 2016/23/B/HS4/00686, entitled *Human resources as a strategic competitive factor of companies realizing foreign direct investment*.

Activity), the period of operation on the market, the size measured by the number of employees and the ownership structure of the shares, or resources of the foreign entities that were under the control of the Polish parent company. The respondents were those with the best knowledge on both business and HRM issues, i.e. HR managers (20.5%), HR directors (35.5%), managing directors (42.5%) and business owners (1.5%). In order to identify the phenomena of a cause-and-effect nature, they made an assessment of specific phenomena in the context of the last three years. The survey was commissioned for the ICAN Institute (the former publisher of the Harvard Business Review Poland). The study was performed using the CATI and CAWI methods.

The following measures were used to the particular variables incorporated in the research questions and tested hypotheses:

- the advancement levels of ED and CM were calculated as means of their composing elements (6 in ED – see Figure 1.1, and 8 in CM – see Figure 1.2), which were evaluated by the respondents in comparison to the general trends based on the best worldwide practices on a five-degree scale (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2);
- the contribution levels of ED and CM to the company's financial performance were appraised on a five-degree scale (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2);
- the relations between the HQ and FS where determined on the basis of three dimensions: the centralization levels of ED and CM practiced by the HQ toward the FS, and the significance of knowledge & skills transfer within EPA and ED in two directions, i.e. (1) from the HQ to its FS, and (2) from a FS to its HQ; the respondents used two five-degree scales (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2);
- the financial results of FS were evaluated by the respondents in a benchmarking process, i.e. by comparing to the main competitors on the local market on the following scale: 1 – poor, 2 – below average, 3 – similar to others, 4 – above average, 5 – very good.

To analyze the collected data both descriptive and correlational statistical methods were used. Firstly, internal consistency within the questionnaires on ED and CM was checked. Cronbach's alpha, as a measure, was used and showed the questionnaires to attain good reliability, both for ED ($\alpha = 0.686$) and CM ($\alpha = 0.765$). All the items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted. Secondly, due to the relative lack of normality distributions of the tested variables, a non-parametric analysis was performed. To determine if there was a significant difference between the means of the two groups, the non-parametric Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test was used. The results confirmed the existence of such differences. Furthermore, in order to verify the interrelation between the variables under study, a series of correlation analyzes was made employing Spearman's method. All the calculations were performed using Statistica v. 13.3 – an advanced analytics software package with the level of significance set to alpha = .05.

1.4. The empirical research findings

The financial results of enterprises constituted the basic context for the research results. These results were reported as good, both the MNCs with FS in Eastern Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.72), and in Western Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.79). As presented in Table 1.1, the advancement level of ED was relatively high, although slightly higher in Western Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86) than in Eastern Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.76). Interestingly, in both regions the contribution level of ED to the company's financial results was evaluated as important, but in this case it was slightly more important in Eastern Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47) than in Western Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.32).

As for the relations between the HQs and FSs with the scope of ED, in the entire research sample they were rather based on the detailed policies, procedures and rules provided by the HQ to the FSs, however some more centralization practices are experienced in Eastern Europe ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 2.83, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 2.75). The knowledge & skills flows within ED were moderately important in both directions but in Eastern Europe, compared to Western Europe, the transfer from the HQs to FSs was appraised higher ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.59, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.35), and the transfer in the opposite direction lower ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.24, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.34).

Table 1.1. The mean values of the variables describing employee development (ED)

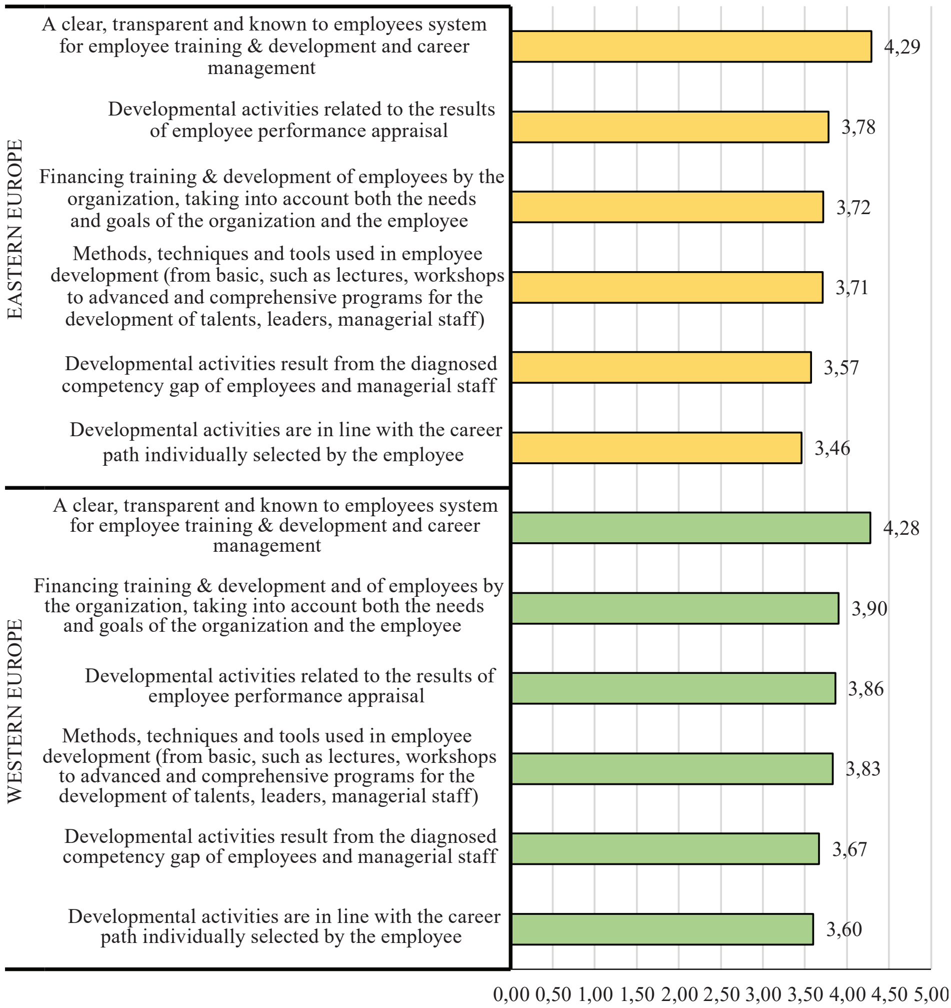
Variables	Eastern Europe $\bar{x}_{EE}$	Western Europe $\bar{x}_{WE}$
Advancement level of ED	3.76	3.86
Contribution level of ED	3.47	3.32
Centralization level of ED	2.83	2.75
Knowledge & skills transfer from the HQ to FS within ED	3.59	3.35
Knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from to FS within ED	3.24	3.34

Scales: advancement level → comparison to the general trends based on the best worldwide practices: 1 – very low, 2 – low, 3 – average, 4 – high, 5 – very high; contribution level (significance) to the company's performance results: 1 – not important, 2 – slightly important, 3 – important, 4 – very important, and 5 – of critical significance; centralization level: 1 – decentralization (each subsidiary has full autonomy), 2 – general guidelines and framework provided by the HQ, 3 – detailed policies, procedures and rules provided by the HQ, and 4 – centralization (centralized decision-making and tight control over realization); knowledge & skills transfer: 1 – not important, 2 – slightly important, 3 – moderately important, 4 – important, and 5 – very important.

Source: own research data.

Considering the composing elements of ED, in Eastern Europe their advancement levels were in the interval between $\bar{x}$ = 4.29 and $\bar{x}$ = 3.46, while in Western Europe between $\bar{x}$ = 4.28 and $\bar{x}$ = 3.60. In both regions first place was occupied by a system clear, transparent and known to employees system, used for employee training & development and career management ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 4.29, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 4.28). Two other places were taken by the same components, but in a reverse order. Developmental activities related to the results of employee performance appraisal come second in Eastern

Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.78) and third in Western Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86), whereas financing training and development of employees by the organization, taking into account both the needs and goals of the organization and the employee – came second in Western Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.90) and third in Eastern Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.72). The order of the other ED components was the same in both regions, although with slightly different mean values, as shown in Figure 1.1.



The evaluation scale for advancement level: comparison to the general trends based on the best worldwide practices: 1 – very low; 2 – low; 3 – average; 4 – high; 5 – very high.

Figure 1.1. The ranking of the mean values of the advancement levels of particular components of employee development (ED)

Source: own research data.

Regarding the advancement level of CM, similarly to ED it was relatively high, but again – slightly higher in Western Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.76) than in Eastern Europe ($\bar{x}$ = 3.66). However, as shown in Table 2, this time the contribution level of CM to the company's financial performance results was slightly more important in Western Europe ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.30, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.35).

The relations between the HQs and FSs with the scope of CM in the entire research sample were based on the detailed policies, procedures and rules provided by the HQ to the FSs, and similarly to ED – a slightly higher level of centralization was observed in Eastern Europe ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 2.65, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 2.59). Both directions of the knowledge & skills flows within CM were moderately important, but in Western Europe, compared to Eastern Europe, both the transfer from the HQs to FSs ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.33, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.49) and from the FSs to the HQs ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.11, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.25) were appraised somewhat higher.

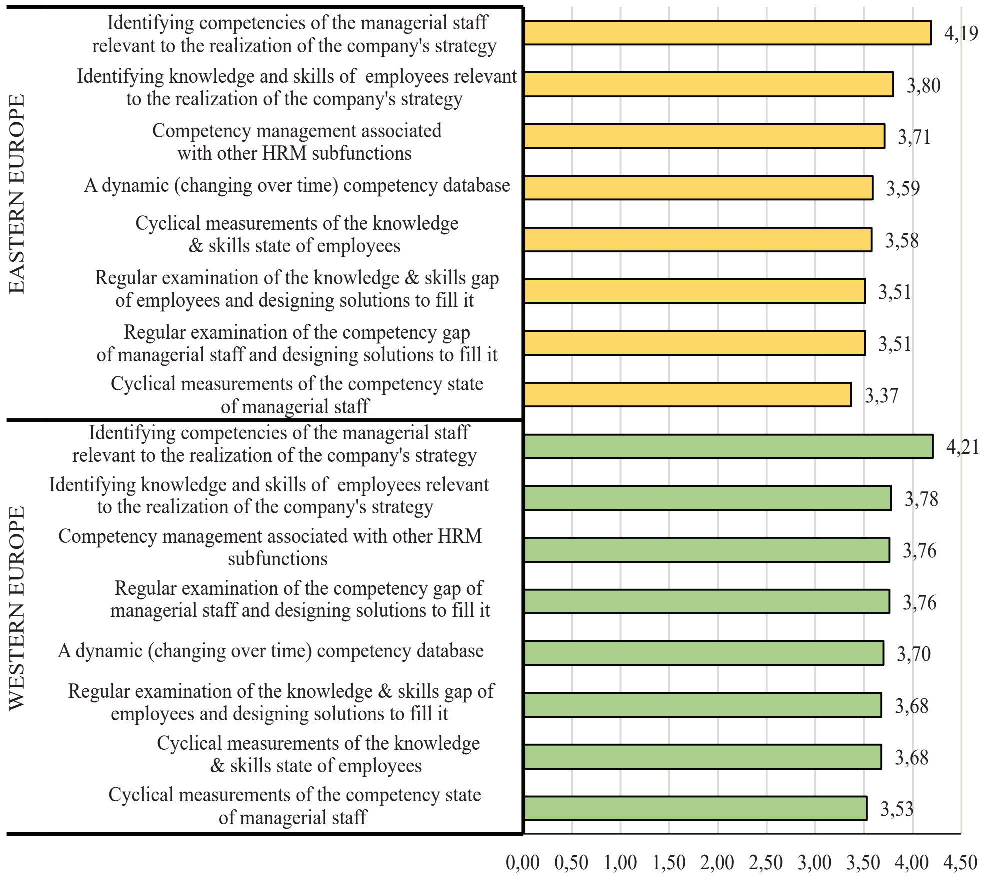
Table 1.2. The mean values of the variables describing competency management (CM)

Variables	Eastern Europe $\bar{x}_{EE}$	Western Europe $\bar{x}_{WE}$
Advancement level of CM	3.66	3.76
Contribution level of CM	3.30	3.35
Centralization level of CM	2.65	2.59
Knowledge & skills transfer from the HQ to FS within ED	3.33	3.49
Knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from to FS within ED	3.11	3.25

Scales: advancement level → comparison to the general trends based on the best worldwide practices: 1 – very low, 2 – low, 3 – average, 4 — high, 5 — very high; contribution level (significance) to the company's performance results: 1 – not important, 2 – slightly important, 3 – important, 4 – very important, and 5 – of critical significance; centralization level: 1 – decentralization (each subsidiary has full autonomy), 2 – general guidelines and framework provided by the HQ, 3 – detailed policies, procedures and rules provided by the HQ, and 4 – centralization (centralized decision-making and tight control over realization); knowledge & skills transfer: 1 – not important, 2 – slightly important, 3 – moderately important, 4 – important, and 5 – very important.

Source: own research data.

Moving on to the analysis of the composing elements of CM, it can be said that three types of activities were ranked in the same way. These were (in descending order): identifying relevant competencies of the managerial staff ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 4.19, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 4.21) and identifying knowledge & skills of employees relevant to the realization of the company's strategy ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.80, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.78) and competency management associated with other HRM subfunctions ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.71, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.76). Then, except for the sixth position occupied by regular examination of the knowledge & skills gap of employees and designing solutions to fill it ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.51, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.68) and the last position held by cyclical measurements of the competency state of managerial staff ($\bar{x}_{EE}$ = 3.37, $\bar{x}_{WE}$ = 3.53), all the other components of CM appeared in a different order in both regions as shown in Figure 1.2.



The evaluation scale for advancement level: comparison to the general trends based on the best worldwide practices: 1 – very low; 2 – low; 3 – average; 4 – high; 5 – very high.

Figure 1.2. The ranking of the mean values of the advancement levels of particular components of competency management (CM)

Source: own research data.

The associations between the selected variables describing ED and CM are depicted in Table 1.3. The results of a correlation test revealed that there was a positive correlation between the advancement level of ED and CM, in both Eastern ($r = .64$) and Western Europe ($r = .46$). There was also a positive correlation between the contribution level of ED and CM to the company's financial performance results in both of these regions (with $r = .26$ for EE and $r = .31$ for WE); all this leads to the confirmation of hypotheses $\mathbf{H_1}$ and $\mathbf{H_2}$.

Referring to the relations between the HQs and their FSs, another correlation test helped to assess them in three adopted dimensions. In the first one, a positive correlation between the centralization level of ED and CM was found in Eastern (r = .32) and Western Europe (r = .25), which confirms hypothesis $\mathbf{H_3}$. In the second one, a positive correlation between the knowledge & skills transfer from the HQ to FS within ED and within CM was identified, again both in Eastern (r = .22) and Western Europe (r = .28). This allowed to accept hypothesis $\mathbf{H_4}$. In third one, hypothesis $\mathbf{H_5}$ could only be partially accepted as a positive correlation between the knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from FS within ED and within CM was found in Eastern Europe (r = .41), but no statistically significant relations were identified in Western Europe.

Table 1.3. The correlation matrix of the variables describing employee development (ED) and competency management (CM)

Variable	Contribution level of CM	Centralization level of MC	Knowledge & skills transfer from the HQ to FS within CM	Knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from FS within CM	Advancement level of CM
Eastern Europe					
Contribution level of ED	**0.26***	0.05	**0.22***	0.20	0.00
Centralization level of ED	0.14	**0.32***	−0.03	0.12	0.14
Knowledge & skills transfer from the HQ to FS within ED	0.21	−0.11	**0.22***	**0.30***	0.12
Knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from FS within ED	−0.15	−0.23*	0,09	**0.41***	**0.40***
Advancement level of ED	**−0.32***	**−0.31***	−0.07	0.21	**0.64***
Western Europe					
Contribution level of ED	**0.31***	**0.25***	0.07	0.12	0.18
Centralization level of ED	−0.17	**0.25***	−0.17	0.00	0.10
Knowledge & skills transfer from the HQ to FS within ED	**0.32***	0.14	**0.28***	0.17	0.06
Knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from FS within ED	0.08	0.19	0.14	0.17	**0.37***
Advancement level of ED	0.16	0.11	0.13	**0.31***	**0.46***

* Spearman's r significant at $p < .05000$. / – correlation coefficient statistically significant for the tested hypotheses in Eastern Europe and Western Europe respectively.

Source: own research data.

In the final correlation test, attention was focused on the relations between the advancement levels of the two studied HRM subfunctions and the financial results of the companies. The outcomes of this test are presented in Table 1.4, and allow to confirm hypotheses $\mathbf{H}_6$ and $\mathbf{H}_7$ in full for the two regions; this is because two phenomena were identified. The first one was related to the simultaneous occurrence of a higher advancement level of ED with better financial results of the company, both in Eastern (r = .30) and Western Europe (r = .20), while the second one referred to the simultaneous occurrence of the higher advancement level of CM with better financial results of the company, and gains – both in Eastern (r = .34) and Western Europe (r = .20).

Table 1.4. The results of a correlation test for the advancement level of employee development (ED), competency management (CM) and the company's financial performance

Variable	Geographical regions	Company's financial results
The advancement level of ED	Eastern Europe	0.30*
	Western Europe	0.20*
The advancement level of CM	Eastern Europe	0.34*
	Western Europe	0.20*

* Spearman's r significant at $p < .05000$.

Source: own research data.

1.5. Final conclusions and research summary

The **main goal of the empirical research** was to determine whether there were identifiable regularities which differentiate or make ED and CM similar in Eastern Europe and Western Europe. To reach this goal, five variables describing each of these two HRM subfunctions were included in the study, i.e. the advancement level, the contribution level, the centralization level, the significance of knowledge & skills transfer from the HQs to FSs and the same transfer but in the opposite direction. Additionally, the relations between the advancement levels of ED and CM with the company's financial performance were analyzed. It appears that the research goal can be regarded as achieved, because the conducted research and the data analysis made it possible to juxtapose ED and CM due to the assessment of their similarities and differences.

To summarize, it can be concluded that in the analyzed period, MNCs and their FSs in both regions had good financial results. In this context the advancement levels of their ED and CM practices were relatively high, although slightly higher in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. The contribution levels of ED and CM to the company's financial performance results were important, however some differences were identified, namely the contribution level of ED appears to be slightly more important in Eastern Europe, whereas the contribution level of CM was somewhat more important in Western Europe.

Considering the composing elements of ED, except for two of them, i.e. developmental activities related to the results of employee performance appraisal which were ranked second in Eastern Europe and third in Western Europe, and financing training & development of employees by the organization, while taking into account both the needs and goals of the organization and the employee which were ranked second in Western Europe and third in Eastern Europe – the order of the other ED components was the same in both regions. This was slightly different in the case of CM, where half of the components were of the same rank in both regions, while the other half of the components were in different positions; neither in Eastern Europe nor in Western Europe were any of the ED and CM components rated as low or very low.

Referring to the relations between the HQs and their FSs, it can be said that both in terms of ED and CM they were based on rather detailed policies, procedures and rules provided by the HQ to the FSs in the entire research sample, however some more centralization practices were observed in Eastern Europe. Although the knowledge & skills flows in both directions within ED and CM were moderately important in both regions, some differences were identified. In Eastern Europe the transfer within ED from the HQs to FSs was appraised higher, whilst the transfer in the opposite direction lower than in Western Europe, whereas in Western Europe both the transfer within CM from the HQs to FSs and in the opposite direction were appraised slightly higher.

As for the relations between the all the variables describing ED and CM, the identified regularities common for Eastern and Western Europe were as follows:

- the higher the advancement level of ED, the higher the advancement level of CM,
- the higher the contribution level of ED to the company's financial results, the higher the contribution level of CM to the company's financial results as well,
- the higher the centralization level of ED, the higher the centralization level of CM,
- the more important the knowledge & skills transfer within ED from the HQ to FS, the more important the knowledge & skills transfer within CM from the HQ to FS.

In the scope of the variables describing ED and CM, one regularity was not shared by both regions. Namely, only in Eastern Europe a positive correlation was found between the knowledge & skills transfer to the HQ from FS within ED, and within CM. Hence, it can be said that in Eastern Europe the more important the knowledge & skills transfer within ED to the HQ from FS, the more important the knowledge & skills transfer within CM to the HQ from FS. As was said, such a phenomenon was not observed in Western Europe.

Finally, considering the relations between ED and CM with the company's financial performance, two regularities were common for Eastern and Western Europe. The first one was that the higher the advancement level of ED, the better the company's financial results. The second was that the higher the advancement level of CM, the better the company's financial performance results.

Thus, ultimately it can be concluded that the study allowed for the identification of the differences and similarities within the scope of ED and CM between Eastern and Western Europe, which means that **the goal set for this chapter** was achieved.

However, the conducted research has some limitations, for example, a research sample consisted of unequal number of organizations representing Eastern and Western Europe. Moreover, the sample covered only MNCs headquartered in Poland and with a dominant share of Polish capital (although intending to develop a perspective from Central Europe onto Eastern and Western Europe). This means that the research conclusions cannot be extended to all MNCs operating in Europe. In addition, the survey was not conducted in foreign subsidiaries, but only in the HQs of MNCs. The validity of this study may be also weakened by the fact that the measures used for the evaluation of the company's financial performance were based on subjective benchmarking instead of hard indicators, i.e. the respondents compared the financial results of their companies with those of their local competitors.

Yet, the value of the research findings seems to be unquestionable. On the one hand, they confirm the relations between ED and CM with the company's financial performance which were also identified by other researchers in numerous studies, while at the same time, they provide some knowledge on the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western Europe with regard to ED and CM practices. This was accompanied by a unique perspective: through the prism of the Central European MNCs, a comparison of the variables describing ED and CM in FSs located in Eastern and Western Europe was made, which also sheds some light on new, interesting regularities identified in this respect. This is important because most of the research to date, even if conducted on a larger number of MNCs, covered organizations in which the majority share of the capital belonged to MNCs from Western Europe or the USA. The additional value of the research results is the possibility of formulating practical recommendations that can support the managerial staff in answering the question of how to develop employees and manage their competencies in order to gain the expected financial results of the company. This is primarily about creating solutions useful in making decisions regarding, for example, the number and type of competency management components, their interrelations, as well as the relations between competency management and other subfunctions of HRM. This is essentially about creating solutions that are useful and effective in making decisions regarding, for example, the number and type of activities composing ED and CM, the relations between these activities, as well as interrelations between ED and CM themselves in conjunction with the company's financial performance.

Chapter 2

TRAINING AS A PROCESS IN CIVIL AND MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS – THE CONCEPT OF STANDARDIZATION FOR THE NEEDS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

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2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the subject of interest was competency management and employee development, which also included training. Both of these HRM subfunctions were considered in the context of MNCs. In this part of the monograph, attention is focused exclusively on training, but in the changed organizational context, namely from international organizations to military organizations. The basic premise for the discussion states that training is important for all types of organizations, including of course military.

The goal of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, the author's intention is to identify differences and similarities in the approach to the training process in two scientific disciplines, i.e. management & quality sciences, and military science, the latter being significantly determined by the legal regulations for the armed forces. Secondly, these comparative activities enabled the author to propose his own concept of the training process in the Polish Armed Forces[1] (PAF), which would standardize the approach to training in the doctrinal military documentation.

To achieve this double goal, the following content structure was adopted. The discussion is opened by a section dedicated to a review of literature covering Polish and foreign publications devoted to training processes and issues in civil and military and organizations. This provided certain theoretical foundations for an

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[1] In this chapter, the term 'the Polish Armed Forces' was used interchangeably with the 'Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland'.

interdisciplinary and processual perspective on training. Next the author presents a brief description of the research methodics used to develop his own theoretical concept of the training process in the Polish Armed Forces proposed in the next section. The final conclusions and research summary make up the last section.

2.2. Theoretical foundations for an interdisciplinary and processual approach to training

Training, along with recruitment, selection, employee appraisal and remuneration, is one of the most important elements of human resources management. Training is a basic tool for employee development, without which it would not only be impossible to improve the organization, but even its functioning (Garavan et al., 2021; Kunasz, 2008; Lendzion and Stankiewicz-Mróz, 2005, pp. 86-99). The way of understanding the role of training in an organization has been changing over time earlier it was treated as a necessary expense to prepare newly hired employees to perform their tasks, however nowadays an increasing importance of the constant development of competencies is observed (Jangbahadur and Sharma, 2018; Kupczyk and Stor, 2017), as well as motivating employees to develop and build the human capital of the company (Łaguna, 2019, p. 116; Stor and Haromszeki, 2020). Therefore, training is perceived as an investment that is expected to bring tangible benefits, and an element of staff development strategy and of increasing the competitiveness of the company. Moreover, the necessity of employee training stems from the needs of the labor market and the expectations of employers towards their employees (Rakowska and de Juana-Espinosa, 2021; Juchnowicz and Kinowska, 2019). It is worth adding that employee training 'fits in' with the idea of lifelong learning (Dębska, 2012, p. 23). As a result, training is supposed to enrich, shape, complement, extend, and deepen the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behavior of those being trained. Regardless of how training is defined, it plays an important role for both employees and organizations, regardless of the type or specificity of activity (Jarecki, Kunasz, Mazur-Wierzbicka, and Zwiech, 2010; Pietruszka-Ortyl, 2019, p. 22).

It should be noted that defining training is not simple, because it is the subject of interest for specialists representing various scientific disciplines. The research issues of training are by their nature interdisciplinary and can be placed at the crossroads of at least three fields of sciences: pedagogy (especially andragogy), psychology and management (Oleszak and Oleszak, 2016, p. 210).

In modern management publications, many definitions of training can be found, but probably the most complete one was given by Armstrong, who described training is a process of the purposeful enrichment of knowledge, skills and shaping of employee attitudes and behavior necessary from the point of view of the present and future needs of the organization and the employees themselves (Armstrong, 2000, p. 451). It should be noted that this definition is often quoted in management literature.

As indicated above, training can be perceived as a process. In the management literature one can find different approaches to this process, but usually training is presented as a four-stage process (Assen, 2021; Dessler, 2020 p. 277; Rae, 2004; Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, and Smith-Jentsch, 2012; Stredwick, 2005, p. 121); which entails:

1) identification and analysis of training needs,
2) definition of training goal/objectives,
3) implementation of training,
4) evaluation of training results.

This process is graphically represented in Figure 1. Each of its stages is equally important, none of them can be neglected or underestimated because only then will training be able to shape, stimulate, equip, extend, deepen, prepare, remind, update and also reconstruct the broadly understood qualifications of those being trained, responding to the current as well as the future needs of the employees and their organizations.

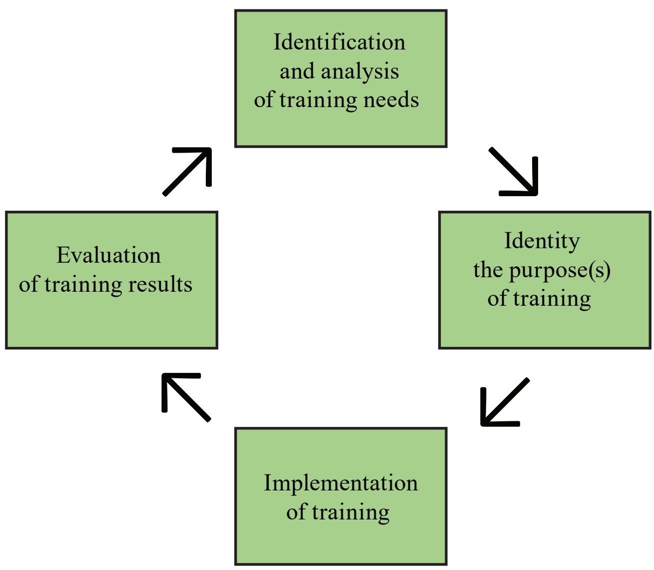

Figure 2.1. The training process (training cycle)

Source: own work based on (Assen, 2021; Dessler, 2020; Rae, 2004; Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, and Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

When considering the literature on training in military organizations, it can be said in general that, as in management literature, expenditure on training and related technologies is also treated in the category of return on investment (Schroeder--Strong, Schreiber, and Bennett, 2022). Some authors focus more on physical training considerations for optimizing performance in essential military tasks, whereas others emphasize the role of accruing stress coping techniques (Vaara et al., 2022), or ethics training to prepare for operations (Messervey, Peach, Dean, and Nelson, 2022). Interestingly, publications in the field of training in military organizations appear in journals devoted to psychology, including military psychology, sport, education, sociology and many others. This means that the interdisciplinary approach to training is not just a characteristic feature of management sciences, because a multi-perspective view of this issue is also seen in military science.

In summarizing this brief literature review, one can say that nowadays training is implemented in every type of organization, regardless of its size or form of ownership. Training is an important aspect of activity not only for business organizations, but is also important for the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, which is in the subject of interest in this chapter. One can even say that in peacetime, training is the basic form of activity of the PAF. However, to ensure the safety of the Republic of Poland, and thus support society, the training process must be properly prepared in the Armed Forces.

2.3. The research methodics used to develop a theoretical concept

As mentioned in the introductory section, two goals were set for this chapter. The indirect goal was to compare the approach to the training process in civilian organizations described in the military science and legal literature, with the approach in civilian organizations conceptualized in the literature in management & quality sciences. The ultimate goal was to propose the author's own concept of the training process in the Polish Armed Forces, which would standardize the approach to training in the doctrinal military documentation.

The preliminary literature review presented in the previous section led to the conclusion that military training as a process is rather a poorly recognized issue in the scientific literature, therefore the decision was made to conduct a more systematic review of literature to reach the established goals. The following databases were used to perform this: Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. The keyword criterion used was "the military training process". This keyword was used to search in titles; keywords and abstracts for publications created after the year 2000 in the discipline of management sciences.

To conduct the comparative part of the research, the author used the technique of researching the documentation (Mróz-Jagiełło and Wolanin, 2013, pp. 113-117) of the Polish Armed Forces, which is unclassified and available on the Internet. The following doctrinal and normative documents concerning training were analyzed:

- *Doctrine of training of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland* DD/7(A), Ref. 837/2010 and – henceforth called *Doctrine of training of the ARFP*;
- *Instruction on Training and Methodical Activity*, Ref. 816/2009 – henceforth called *Instruction of training of the ARFP*.

The documents were examined qualitatively, where the focus was on finding training processes – their definitions and stages. The results were used to perform a comparative analysis of the stages of training processes.

2.4. The comparative research findings

The results of the databases' search are presented in Table 2.1. A large number of results obtained in the Google Scholar search resulted from a not very extensive and only very general search system, while more detailed search results were obtained after narrowing the search term through quotation marks. The publications from the narrowed results relate to the implementation of simulators in the military training process (Bekesiene and Prūsevičius, 2020, pp. 114-124), the analysis of the evolution and importance of the military training process (Huluba, 2021, pp. 189-198), and the general issues devoted to military higher training management (Nicoară, 2011, pp. 123-148). In the quoted publications, the authors did not specify the different stages of training processes in the studied military organizations. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a cognitive gap related to training in the armed forces.

Table 2.1. Summary of search results for keywords in different search engines

Search keywords	Number of results obtained in each search engine		
	Scopus	Web of Science	Google Scholar
The military training process	69	112	22 800
"The military training process"	1	0	2

Source: own research data.

The analysis of the doctrinal and normative documents concerning training in the Polish Armed Forces led to the general conclusion that the training of troops is the primary area of activity and operation of the PAF in peacetime, carried out both in Poland and abroad. The training activity is usually conducted in the place of permanent location of the military unit, in training grounds and in training centers. According to the internal documentation of *Doctrine of training of the ARFP*, the essence of training of the armed forces is the continuous acquisition, broadening and consolidation of knowledge in order to achieve and maintain the ability to take action against military and non-military threats. Training in this sense is defined in two ways which are presented in Table 2.2. In turn, the second of the examined documents, i.e. *Instruction of training of the ARFP*, did not define training and its stages at all.

The first of the quoted definitions of the training process in the PAF indicates that training is a continuous process, similarly to the previously reviewed literature in the management & quality sciences. Moreover, this process is carried out at all levels of command. At this point, it is worth explaining that there are three levels of command in the Polish Armed Forces: tactical, operational, and strategic.

Table 2.2. Summary of training process definitions in the PAF

Definition found in the main content of the examined document
The training process is a set of consecutive activities including: programming, planning, organization, implementation of training, inspection and evaluation of training and progress. It has a continuous character, is organized and implemented at all levels of command
Definition found in the dictionary of examined document
The training process is a sequence of systematic activities carried out by commanders (trainers) and training subjects (trainees) enabling soldiers and military personnel to master the appropriate knowledge, skills and habits to perform the tasks of their positions in individual and team dimensions. The training process should provide an efficient, effective and economical approach to training by focusing on: the main tasks of units, appropriate operational capabilities for the implementation of these tasks and training objectives. The training process can be divided into consecutive elements: analysis of the tasks and the operational capabilities required to accomplish them, training preparation (programming, planning, organizing), training implementation, training evaluation and the generation of conclusions

Source: (Doctrine of training…, 2010, pp. 7, 47).

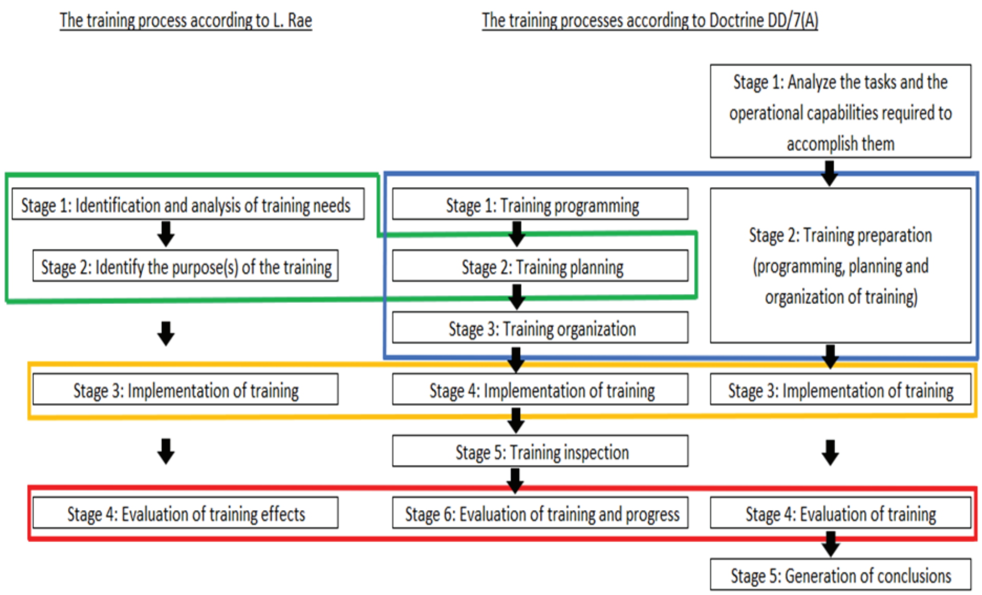

Figure 2.2. The comparison of the stages of training process in the management literature and the doctrinal and normative documents of the PAF

Source: own elaboration based on (Assen, 2021; Dessler, 2020; Doctrine of training…, 2010; Rae, 2004; Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, and Smith-Jentsch, 2012; Stredwick, 2005).

The second definition, on the other hand, draws attention to the need to train not only soldiers but also military personnel in general. Civilians employed in the army alongside soldiers, are an important group of the subjects of training. The necessity of training both groups is emphasized, and the obligation to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the training process is pointed out; this is due to the importance of the tasks that military units and their staff encounter.

In both of the presented definitions of training there is a notable indication of different stages of the training process, which are called a set of activities or elements. A graphic comparison of the stages of the training process developed on the basis of the literature review in the area of management with two different training processes resulting from the examined internal PAF documentation, is presented in Figure 2.2.

The figure shows by using different colors the stages of the training processes that: (1) are identical to each other, e.g. the training delivery stage (orange), or (2) are within the scope of other stages (e.g. green).

Training processes in the PAF differ from the four-stage proposal developed on the basis of the management literature (TP1). The first approach to the training process according to *Doctrine of training of the ARFP* consists of six stages, while the second approach (TP3) comprises five stages. Both of the presented approaches to the training process originate from the same examined documents. The first of the proposals (TP2) was included in the main content of the examined document, where the essence of training in the PAF is presented. The second proposal (TP3) comes from the definition found in the glossary of the examined document.

All the presented processes differ from each other mainly in the number of steps, their scope and sometimes their names. TP2 consists of additional training process steps related to TP1: (1) training programming, (2) training organization and (3) training inspection. In contrast, TP3 in relation to TP2 and TP1, does not include training inspection step, but is expanded to include the following: (1) an analysis of the tasks and the operational capabilities required to accomplish them, and (2) the generation of conclusions.

The studied processes contain the same or similar steps related to each other:

- stages 1 and 2 of TP1 are part of the scope of work carried in stage 2 of TP2;
- stages 1, 2 and 3 of TP2 are identical in scope to stage 2 of TP3;
- stage 3 of TP1 is the same as stages 4 of TP2 and 3 of TP3;
- stage 4 of TP1 is similar to stage 6 of TP2 and stage 4 of TP3.

This comparison was the starting point for the author's own proposal regarding the training process presented in the next section.

2.5. Final conclusions and research summary

In the PAF training, all stages from both training processes (TP2 and TP3) are implemented by different entities at all levels of command. Taking this fact into account, it was concluded that the existence of two slightly different approaches to the training process in one document, and thus in the whole PAF, is unnecessary.

Therefore, it is proposed to standardize the training process in the doctrinal documentation. Giving a uniform structure to the training process in terms of the stages that are carried out will allow for the improvement of training by, among others, increasing their quality and effectiveness, reducing costs (not only financial), and better control of the process. Therefore the author's own approach to the training process is proposed, which consolidates studied processes TP1, TP2 and TP3. This concept is presented in Figure 2.3.

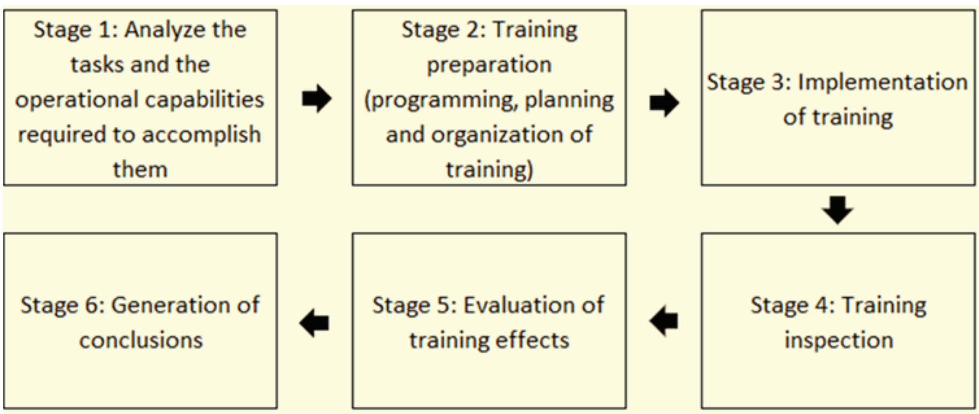

Figure 2.3. Proposal of the training process of the Polish Armed Forces

Source: own work.

The use of a single training process across the Polish Armed Forces will standardize the approach to training and its stages. It is difficult, in this situation, not to agree with the statement appearing at the end of the examined document of the *Doctrine of training of the ARFP,* that the training process of the armed forces should be constantly improved through the introduction of new solutions resulting from experience gained in this area (Doctrine of training..., 2010, p. 41).

To sum up, for practical and conceptual reasons, it is recommended to unify both the number of stages of the training process and their substantive content in the Polish Armed Forces. In this context, bearing in mind the author's research intentions, it should be considered that the goal of this chapter has been achieved. First of all, a concise review of literature enabled the identification of the differences and similarities in the approach to the training process in two scientific disciplines, i.e. management and quality sciences, and military sciences. It should be noted, however, that in the case of the latter, it was essentially based only on legal and doctrinal regulations for the armed forces, because there are not many scientific and research publications in this area. Secondly, the author proposed his own concept of the training process model in the Polish Armed Forces, which would standardize the approach to training in doctrinal military documentation.

Chapter 3

COMPETENCY MODEL OF THE RESEARCH AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF IN POLISH UNIVERSITIES – THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS

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3.1. Introduction

According to Browning et al. (Browning, Thompson, and Dawson, 2017), the science and higher education sector is a dynamic environment in which universities compete globally for resources, including high-quality staff. In a highly competitive research environment, staff competencies can be a relevant success factor as they usually have been the subject of research oriented towards an individual or organizational ability to express effective job performance in the context of expected real job proficiency (Cook, Wildschut, and Sander, 2017).

In 2011, the European Commission published a document entitled "Towards a European Framework for Researcher Careers" as a helpful categorization of research job characteristics, including the necessary and desirable competencies for each of the research career stages. The document was implemented to have a bridging function for the sector-specific, national and institutional frameworks, providing a common language to a wide variety of actors from across the research community worldwide. At the same time, it was assumed that these frameworks constitute a general background for the preparation of more detailed and context-specific solutions.

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According to Sew et al. (Sew, Yahya, and Tan, 2019), the catalysts for change from the traditional model of the university functioning into an entrepreneurial one, are the competencies of researchers. Moreover, taking into account the "active innovation" paradigm (Meissner and Shmatko, 2019), which states that individuals are the main drivers of innovation in organizations, such a transformation process might require implementing practices oriented on diagnosing and developing competencies which could be defined as key for research excellence. It should also be taken into consideration that for the effective functioning of a university, an important factor is the cooperation of all employees (academic and non-academic) based on effective management processes (Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, 2020).

In this context **the goal of this chapter** is to propose a competency model of the research and administrative support staff that could boost the process of transforming the traditional Polish universities into entrepreneurial academic entities. For this reason, the next section is devoted to the theoretical foundations for the competency model in the academic environment, in which the authors firstly present a review of literature on the general concept of competency, and then focus on the competencies from the academic and research perspective. The following section describes the empirical research methodics used in the project which resulted in the competency model of research and administrative support staff. Consequently, the next part of this chapter presents competencies included in the competency model, an example of a competency profile, and a way of assessing competency. The research summary and final conclusions make up the last section.

3.2. Theoretical foundations for the competency model in the academic environment

For over 30 years, the notions of competence and competency have been increasingly present in the area of HRM and replaced the concept of qualifications (Cook et al., 2017). During that time the concept of competency and competence has been used interchangeably in numerous publications.

According to Anzengruber et al. (Anzengruber, Goetz, Nold, and Woelfle, 2017), the term 'competence' refers to the general competence, the quality of an individual or a set of skills that allows one to perform in certain situations. Competency refers to a set of traits that influence one on certain actions, and a specific skill set of activities that one can use to measure, and demonstrate the universal competence. Competences have attracted a lot of research, however competencies usually have been focused on individual or organizational ability to express effective job performance in the context of expected real job proficiency (Cook et al., 2017). Competences are defined as the ability to do the work which means that individuals have the knowledge, skills and values required in jobs of today and tomorrow (Phuc and Matsuura, 2016). In such a context competences are defined as acquired personal skills demonstrated as one's ability to provide a consistently adequate, high level of performance in a specific job function (Numminen, Virtanen, Hafsteinsdóttir, and Leino-Kilpi, 2021), or performing and completing a certain task or a group of related tasks (Hensel, Meijers, van der Leeden, and Kessels, 2010; Savanevičienė, Stukaitė, and Šilingienė, 2008; Sew et al., 2019).

A certain distinction between competence and competency was also made by M. Stor, whose interpretation of competence (plural – competences) means the potential ability or potential capability to function in a given situation, while competency (plural – competencies) focuses on the actual performance in a situation (Stor, 2016, p. 165). Thus, competences make employees capable of fulfilling their job responsibilities, and their competencies make them perform their jobs as expected. In other words, competencies are determined by comparing where the employees are now with the established performance standards developed in the work environment according to their roles and setting based on standard (template) competences (Stor and Kupczyk, 2015). This means an employee needs competence before he or she can expect to achieve competency (Kupczyk and Stor, 2017). Consequently, competency means the skills, knowledge, personal characteristics, and behaviour needed to effectively perform a role (work) in the organization and help the business meet its goals in gaining and maintaining its competitive advantage. Therefore, competencies are related to the actual action or the results of this action obtained in a specific situation (Stor, 2016).

The nature of competencies shows that they have unique characteristics or qualities that are difficult to copy (Hensel et al., 2010). Additionally, individual competencies contain explicit knowledge, personal skills and experiences with individuals' results and judgement of organizational values which are obtained in their social context (Ubeda and Santos, 2007).

However, significant differences were observed in the effectiveness of managers using task, relations, and changing capabilities. Competencies depend on the organizational context and may be different at various levels of management. According to Anzengruber et al. (2017), at top management level there is a need for more strategic competencies, i.e. change-oriented, which become two to three times more important than at the lowest level. Task-oriented capabilities become significantly less important at the top level and more important at a lower level of management, whilst relations-oriented capabilities are important at all levels.

Many authors conclude that competencies are a multi-dimensional phenomenon that has been classified into two categories, hard and soft. Such a logical structure of competencies, including hard professional competencies which are determined by the area of organization performance, and soft competencies defined by the personal features of the employee, his or her behavior, are necessary for a good performance of the job (Savanevičienė et al., 2008). In the holistic approach professional competencies are also shaped by the context of work, work environment, and the employee's personality and motivation (Forsten-Astikainen and Heilmann, 2018).

This is why the construct of competency has to be perceived as more dynamic and multidimensional, which also includes the employee's personal behavior and ethical values (Forsten-Astikainen and Heilmann, 2018).

As far as academic competencies are concerned, the issue of the change of an academic role needs to be considered. The academic role has changed due to shifts in governmental and societal expectations and to changes in the way the scientific system operates (Kyvik, 2013). Individual behavior in a specific role is not only the product of external expectations about the role holder, but also the result of personal interests. The behavior should be regarded as a function of external expectations, the incentive and reward system, and individual preferences (Kyvik, 2013), giving the possibility of distinguishing competencies according to six tasks related to the role of an academic researcher (Kyvik, 2013):

1) networking,
2) collaboration,
3) managing research,
4) conducting research,
5) publishing research,
6) evaluation of research.

Academic skills can benefit from the internationalization of academic functions that bring new skills and practices, because of the enhanced research networks and the advancement of communication skills (Arokiasamy, Mansouri, Balaraman, and Kassim, 2017). According to Halilem (2010), at individual level entrepreneurial behaviour and skills are connected with gender, experience, status and productivity in research. There is also the important role of social capital and networking activities. Ciolan and Ciolan (2011) also mentioned the role of social networks in academic competencies and motivation development to participate in social learning networks and platforms, in order to contribute to knowledge sharing in communities of practitoners, built on a combination of communication channels.

According to Kyvik (2013), in academic work the proper balance must be constantly sought between contrasting tasks: applying for research funds and doing research; conducting scientific research and commercialization of the results; publishing scientific articles and the popularization of research; working in the laboratory and being available for networking activities and for evaluating other researchers; managing research projects and finding time for one's own research.

Meissner and Shmatko (2019) analyzed the link between researchers' skills and innovation culture, and found that the skills of researchers and the perceived skills value did not match – on the contrary, they created a significant gap. The authors argued that organizations need to be aware of researchers' competencies and develop them further, mainly by establishing and cultivating an organizational culture supportive to innovation and an exchange of a focus on management between individuals, and comparatively less on financial controlling and reporting. They assumed the rule of the "active innovation" paradigm which stresses the individual as the main driver of innovation in organizations.

Sew et al. (2019) suggested that the competencies of an individual researcher seemed to be a significant success booster of the formation of university-industry collaboration. This strengthened the idea that the researcher competencies of the knowledge market, social capital, and self-leadership constitute the heart of sustainable entrepreneurship which enables them to transform a traditional university into an entrepreneurial university. In order to fill the research gap mentioned by Meissner and Shmatko (2019), and aiming at factors which could boost that process of transformation, the authors conducted a research project which resulted in the model of competencies that could be helpful in this process.

3.3. The empirical research methodics

The main goal of the empirical research was to identify a set of competencies for the research staff and research administrative support employees of academia in Poland relevant for their research excellence. By distinguishing and describing the main processes in which the research and scientific and support staff participate, the authors also posed the main research question (MRQ): what competencies are important for both groups in order to realize these processes effectively? However, in order to answer this, three specific research questions were developed:

- Q1: Which of the staff competencies are essential to support research excellence at universities?
- Q2: Regarding research excellence conditions, which competencies are specific for the profiles of the research staff and research administrative support staff?
- Q3: How to map and evaluate competencies?

The study was carried out as part of the project entitled "Interdisciplinary Centre for Staff Development (ICSD) – a think tank for the development of key competencies of the Polish science and higher education sector", financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The project intended to develop a unique approach compatible with the concept of the research career development which so far has been operating in Europe (*Towards a European framework…*, 2011). The importance of this research is a potential factor contributing to the further development of HRM practices supporting research excellence in academia, through the targeted and systematic development of the key competencies of personnel involved in the implementation of research processes.

In order to strengthen the research potential of the higher education sector in Poland, universities eligible to participate in the first competition under the "Excellence Initiative – Research University", activities were undertaken aimed at developing a concept and model of key competencies for research and administrative staff in higher education.

On the theoretical competency-based approach, the authors emphasized the importance of competency in the modern world of organization and management. The competitive advantage of a company is achieved by identifying and developing its core competencies. The intended competency model is based on the idea that competency refers to behaviors that underpins efficiency and productivity (Bartram and Roe, 2012). According to this approach, competencies are understood in terms of how knowledge and skills are used for performance, and what knowledge and skills are applied for management (Savanevičienė et al., 2008).

To achieve the goal the authors analyzed the literature, and their own experience, and invited the participants for several meetings and workshops. Researchers and supporting staff from the Polish and foreign universities were invited to participate in the achievement of this goal.

The following outcomes were obtained in the process of competency identification:

- The practices in the field of key competencies development models for researchers and administrative support staff applied at Polish research universities and selected foreign universities of high international renown were compared (in particular, 23 universities forming the consortium of leading research universities in Europe called the League of European Research Universities).
- Experts in Poland and abroad were identified: (a) specialists in designing solutions in the area of diagnosis and analysis of the level of competencies; (b) representatives of research units with internationally recognized reputation, responsible for shaping the human resources development policy in the represented entities.
- Recommendations were formulated for the stage of own research, in particular the assumptions for the construction of a model of key competencies of research staff and administrative support staff of the science and higher education sector in Poland (in particular, taking into account the requirements set by the reform for research universities based on the assumptions of the program of the Ministry of Education and Science called "Excellence Initiative – Research University") and experts and entities – potential partners of ICSD in further stages of the project were identified (in terms of type: conferences, expert opinions, etc.).
- Twenty HEIs entitled to take part in the first competition within the "Initiative of Excellence – Research University", namely Warsaw University, Technical University of Gdańsk, AGH University of Science and Technology, Warsaw University of Technology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, University of Technology of Poznań, Jagiellonian University, Medical University of Gdańsk, Silesian University of Technology, The Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, University of Wrocław, Lodz University of Technology, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, University of Gdańsk, University of Lodz, Medical University of Bialystok, Poznan University of Medical Sciences, Medical University of Łódź, Pedagogical University of the National Education

Commission in Kraków, University of Life Sciences in Wrocław. Sixteen universities responded to the Rector's appeal and close cooperation was established with them through a number of workshop meetings on the Teams platform.

- As part of the cooperation with the above mentioned universities, workshops were held where our partners were asked to discuss the key processes of research excellence, the developed set of competencies, their definition and indicators as well as competency profiles for researchers and support staff. Within the framework of cooperation with foreign countries, discussions commenced with experts at the University of Valencia (Professor Jose Maria Peiro) and at KULeuven (Professor Martin Euwema), concerning the aim of the project and future cooperation and the procedure adopted and the results of the work on developing a competency model for researchers and support staff.

As a result of the tasks set out in the schedule, a description of four fundamental processes which form the basis for the adequate choice of competencies was developed. The process of preparing the description of the processes as a basis for research excellence was based on the results of discussions among internal experts in the US and on several webinars during which the participants (internal and external experts) discussed the subsequent phases of the process description.

Each of these processes was described by means of a process map distinguishing the key tasks, decisions, data used, studies and connections between these elements. Hence, maps of the four key processes for achieving research excellence were developed.

These maps take the form of graphical elaborations and provide the basis for further activities. In the course of the task, a range of necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes were assigned to each of the processes described earlier. The set of these aspects was then grouped (using the meta-plan method) into 36 competencies with distinguished areas of meaning (definitions).

The first webinar of the project consisted of two panels with four speakers. The event was attended by 49 people (researchers and administrative support staff). The first panel was a workshop for an internal reference team of the UŚ (University of Silesia in Katowice) consisting of NA staff (UŚ researchers with high research potential) and NNA staff (the so-called process experts), in total 21 experts were involved. The goal of the project was the identification of a set of key competencies of research and support staff based on mapping key processes for the development of research excellence, including:

a) acquisition of resources for research/art work:
b) conducting high quality research/art work
c) publishing research results
d) commercialization of research and development results.

The second panel, workshops for the external reference team of representatives of HEIs qualified for the participation in the first Call under the program "Excellence

Initiative – Research University”, involved 50 experts, including NA employees (researchers) and NNA employees indicated by the authorities of HEIs participating in the project; altogether 16 HEIs from the above mentioned target group responded positively. The aim of the project was the verification of the results obtained as an outcome of conducting the panel and webinar. The result was the identification and descriptions of key competencies in the model.

3.4. The empirical research findings

As mentioned in a previous section, by distinguishing and describing the main processes in which the research and scientific and support staff participate, the authors posed the main research question, namely what competencies are important for both groups in order to realize these processes effectively? The answer to this question requires the use of an appropriate competency model that allows to precisely indicate the key competencies for individual professional groups, along with the determination of the desired level.

As part of the preparatory work, based on the already described processes, a set of 36 competencies was distinguished that may be required from research and support staff in tasks related to the implementation of these processes. Table 3.1 present a list of these competencies divided into three categories:

a) basic – occurring in various tasks of the scientific – research and support staff;

b) research processes – occurring mainly in the tasks of the research staff;

c) support processes – occurring mainly in the tasks of the support staff.

This list of competencies also provides an answer to the first specific research question (Q1).

The large initial set of the competency models allows for its wide and flexible use. At the same time, it is important to choose the competencies that play a key role when considering specific representatives of the research and support staff.

Good practices from other organizations, including businesses, show that there should be relatively few such competencies, not more than nine. Guided by this assumption, it was also decided to distinguish more specific groups. For the research and development staff, a common distinction was adopted between the research levels from R1 to R4 which mean the following positions in universities:

- R1 – Assistant,
- R2 – Adjunct (Assistant Professor),
- R3 – Associate Professor,
- R4 – Professor.

Table 3.1. List of competencies

Basic	Research processes	Support processes
• Assertiveness • Building a relationship • Building teams • The pursuit of results • Digital • Design activity • Sharing knowledge and experience • Flexibility • Identification with the University • Innovation/creativity • Communicativeness • Analytical thinking • Organization of the work of other people • Organization of own work • Decision-making • Coping with stress • Professional development • Diligence • Cooperation • Influence • Risk management	• Shaping your own image • Market orientation • Strategic orientation/ long-term thinking • Writing texts • Scientific professionalism • Leadership (Scientific Leader) • Knowledge of the market and the publishing process	• Administration • Research project service • Research activity orientation • Obtaining funding • Professional professionalism • Finance management • Managing the commercialization process • Knowledge of the principles of financing research activities

Source: own elaboration.

For the support staff, after numerous consultations it was decided to distinguish two groups: 1) administrative and 2) researchers and experts. This means that a total of seven competency profiles consistent with the distinguished roles were developed. On this foundations there were distinguished such administrative support roles as:

- PA – clerk,
- E – expert.

According to the best practices from other organizations, it was decided that the competency profiles can be created using a method known as an expert panel, which is a meeting of up to a dozen representatives who perfectly know the characteristics of the work in a given role. These persons receive a full description of the competencies. During the meeting, each participant first independently selects the key competencies for a given role. These individual choices are then discussed with the group in such a way as to ultimately select up to nine key competencies by consensus. After agreeing on such a choice, the whole group determines the desired level for these competencies – again referring to the descriptions of competencies. The result of the work is the so-called competency profile presenting the scope of competencies that are key for a given role along with an indication of the desired level. Graphically, the competency profile can be presented using a radar chart. In Figure 3.1 presents such a profile for the research staff at R3 level. This is also the answer to the second specific research question (Q2).

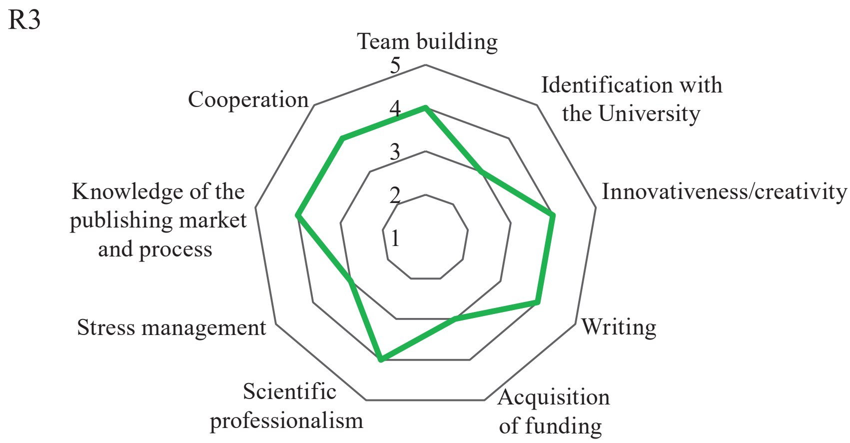

Figure 3.1. An example of the research scientist profile

Source: own elaboration.

For the R3 researcher role, nine competencies were identified as the most important. Their definitions are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Definitions of competencies

Competency	Definition
Team building	Creation, integration, and organization of activities of the team and strengthening the potential of individual team members as well as the potential of the whole team
Identification with the University	Acting in the best interest and according to the values of the university. The feeling of being responsible for one's place of work and shaping its positive image in the active way.
Innovativeness/ creativity	Creating and effective implementation of innovative ideas, solutions, and concepts
Writing	Efficient preparation and edition of texts connected with the person's professional activity
Acquisition of funding	Effective acquisition of funds for research and/or implementation activity
Scientific professionalism	Using the professional knowledge and experience in the research activity
Stress management	Effective functioning and ability to cope with stressful situations
Knowledge of the publishing market and process	Searching for and using the diverse opportunities in the scope of publishing and popularization of one's achievements
Cooperation	Establishing and maintaining effective cooperation with other people, based on partnership, in order to achieve the best possible results

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3.3. Observation scale for a selected competency

Name	Knowledge of the publishing market and process				
Seek out and take advantage of a variety of opportunities to publish and disseminate their own work					
Behaviour indicators	Competency levels				
	A – none v. low	B – basic	C – good	D – expert	E – exceptional
Knowledge of the University's publishing strategy	Does not know the University's publishing strategy	Knows the basic tenets of the University's publishing strategy	Knows the practical importance of the University's publishing strategy	Explains the University's publishing strategy and its challenges to others	Disseminates, promotes the University's strategy for publishing
Searching for access to publications	Is unable to find access to publishing	With the help of others, is able to find access to publications necessary for own activities	Is able to find access to publications appropriate to his/her own activity	Is able to find access to almost any publishing house	Is able to support others in finding access to almost any publishing house
Knowledge of the expectations/conditions/requirements/benefits of different publication venues	Is not familiar with the expectations, requirements and benefits associated with different publishing venues	Knows the basic expectations, requirements and benefits associated with various places of publication	Is well acquainted with the expectations, requirements and benefits associated with various places of publication	Is able to explain to others the expectations, requirements and benefits associated with different publication venues	Takes part in creating the conditions, requirements and expectations of the publication market; is invited to join editorial boards of recognized journals
Understanding of the contemporary information (media) market (identifying and reaching potential recipients of science through various forms)	Does not understand the principles of the contemporary information market	Learns the principles of the functioning of the contemporary information market (how to reach potential recipients of science through various forms)	Understands the principles of the functioning of the contemporary information market (knows how to reach potential recipients of science through various forms)	Actively reaches out to potential recipients of science through various forms of information	Builds a steady, strong presence in the media and information marketplace (including through social and traditional media)
Knowledge of databases with scientific articles	Is not familiar with science article databases	Knows basic databases with scientific articles	Knows the necessary databases with scientific articles for his/her own business	Is well versed in databases with scientific articles related to the scientific field, is able to advise others on the use of the databases	Disseminates knowledge of the use of databases with scientific articles and is able to train others in this field

Source: own elaboration.

Filipowicz (2019) proposed to describe each of the competencies in the form of an observation scale. It presents (in addition to the name and definition) behavioral indicators assigned to a given competency and their description at five levels of development. An example of such an observation scale is presented in Table 3.3. This is also the answer to the third specific research question (Q3).

According to the description in Table 3.3, the competency requirements regarding the seven distinguished roles were developed. The developed profiles can be successfully used as a starting point for assessing the potential and development needs of both research workers and support staff.

3.5. Final conclusions and research summary

To sum up the conducted study, one can say that it was possible to achieve its goal. As a result of the empirical research, the authors identified a set of competencies for the research staff and research administrative support employees of academia in Poland which are relevant for research excellence. The basic set is composed of 36 competencies divided into three main categories, basic, research processes and support processes. Both for the research staff and research support staff, the authors also proposed certain roles and competency levels, which resulted in examples of definitions of competencies and even a sample of a competency profile. Moreover, the study developed specific behavioral indicators for selected competencies. For this reason, it should be recognized that the goal of this chapter has also been achieved, namely the authors proposed a competency model of the research and administrative support staff that could boost the process of transforming traditional Polish universities into entrepreneurial academic entities.

Finally, one can conclude that competency studies have a viable future in developing research excellence of individual employees (research and administrative staff) as well as the whole university (ranking position). Competency profiles for the distinguished roles allow to prepare an assessment process for members of each of them, which is an extensive range of possible research on the competency potential of scientific and support staff. Individual universities may differentiate the scope of competencies in individual profiles, looking for their distinguishing features. This would make it possible to study the relation between the competencies of research and support staff and the achievements of many universities. The practical implication of the study is the possibility to use competency profiles to prepare and implement a measurable approach to different HRM subfunctions, such as recruitment & selection, staff training & development, talent management, competency management, career management and many more.

Part II

HCM IN THE CONTEXT OF WORK VIRTUALIZATION AND DIGITALIZATION

Chapter 4

VIRTUALIZATION OF SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE ORGANIZATION FROM THE EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVE

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4.1. Introduction

Social (interpersonal) relations in an organization, generally speaking, refer to employees' behavior as a manifestation of their attitudes towards each other. Interpersonal relations and the quality of them constitute a component of everyday life for every employee. These are connections between individuals or groups of people, expressed through different ways of sharing knowledge, information, thoughts, feeling, emotions, attitudes, values and beliefs, between two or more participants of the interaction. At work, this can be described as making use of one's personality, competencies and experience in creating and maintaining relationships with others. It is a complex process and the foundation of it is intrinsically connected with the fact that it is achieved through communication (Jakimiuk, 2015, pp. 55-63).

Remote work led to the virtualization of relations between employees. The phenomenon of virtualization of employees' relations is quite widely discussed in English literature, but to a much lesser extent in Polish publications (Brzegowy, 2021, pp. 133-243). In addition, many of them relate to the situation of virtual work that is planned and voluntary, whereas during the pandemic, a remote way of working was imposed on employees for reasons of social distancing, and was not pre-planned. From this perspective, relations between employees in the virtual world were in general not always voluntary.

This study, focusing on the development of interpersonal relations and employees' opinions about virtual relations between co-workers, can help to deepen understanding of this phenomenon and to detect certain patterns that could serve as

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a basis for improving remote work set-ups and relations between employees in the future. Most of the research conducted so far has focused on the costs and benefits of remote work, and on the problems that it involved (not only those related to social aspects of working). Nevertheless, some researchers pointed out certain aspects of remote work, such as the influence of isolation during remote work on physical and mental health, on relations and organizational coherence, which require special interest and further study. The presented review aimed to address these demands, as it is devoted exclusively to interpersonal relations – which makes it unique.

The goal of this chapter is to present the effects of virtual work on the formation of relations between people at their places of employment. To achieve this goal, the structure of this part of the monograph was shaped as follows. At the beginning, based on a review of literature, the authors constructed the theoretical assumption of employees' social needs in the virtualizing working environment. Next, they presented their own research results in this area, preceded by a description of the methodics of empirical research carried out. Finally, a concise summary of the research findings is accompanied by a presentation of the most important conclusions.

4.2. Theoretical foundations for the employees' social needs in virtualizing working relations

In both Polish and foreign literature, there are many references to remote work, especially to its positive and negative aspects (Dolot, 2020, pp. 35-43; Feitosa and Salas, 2020, p. 2; Hauziński, 2018, pp. 11-16; Oberländer and Bipp, 2022, pp. 1-9; Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, and Smith-Jentsch, 2012, p. 2; Sęczkowska, 2019, pp. 10-16; Yang, et al., 2022, p. 43; Zhang-Zhang, Rohlfer, and Varma, 2016, pp. 40--46). The literature review in this area leads to the conclusion that the problem of relations between employees is one of the issues addressed by both Polish and foreign authors.

It was also pointed out that in the contemporary world of work marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a clear increase in demand for digital communication and cooperation (Oberländer and Bipp, 2022, p. 2), and as a result, the competencies that are directly related to them have gained in importance. Competencies in the field of digital communication are defined as the ability to use appropriate channels of digital communication with the aim of communicating with co-workers, supervisors and business partners. Employees with high skills in digital communication proved capable of choosing the best means of (digital) communication and adequately transmit their message (Oberländer and Bipp, 2022, p. 2). Regarding competencies in the field of digital cooperation, they are defined as the ability to use media and digital programs for business cooperation, for instance with colleagues, supervisors, business partners and clients. Competencies in digital cooperation enable employees to interact with other people. Employees with high skills in digital cooperation can swiftly access important information and share it with other team members (Oberländer and Bipp, 2022, p. 1).

There are certain features of the virtual environment that could be indicated as positive for relations between employees in the context of remote work. Thanks to technologies such as ICT and IT, it is possible to maintain contact with other people, even if they reside in different places (a-spatiality). When it comes to the fact that communication does not need to happen in real time (a-synchronicity), it may contribute to giving employees the choice of when to consult a message and probably integrate it better (Hauziński, 2018, p. 9). Thanks to telecommunication technologies, such as videoconferencing, employees have the possibility to work anywhere in the world, to comfortably deliver the effects of their work and to exchange information in a timely fashion (Zhang, 2016, p. 40).

In view of the fact that virtual societies rely mainly on text, they are also free from stigmatization – since features such as race, sex, age and physical appearance are less important than in the real world (a-corporeity). Anonymousness (yielding the freedom of expression) and a-corporeity (meaning that in virtual societies, text, symbol and record have more importance, while gestures, clothing, facial expressions and tone of voice – less) may contribute to better relations between employees (Hauziński, 2018, p. 9). Additionally, when there is a strong connection between people, it is easier to share information (as there is a higher probability that they have common perspectives, that they trust each other, cooperate with each other and undertake efforts in order to make sure that the message they want to convey is properly understood) (Yang et al., 2022, p. 43).

Interpersonal processes may be reinforced when teams communicate through virtual media, provided that managers create the appropriate conditions for the employees in this respect, such as setting new standards, maintaining transparency in decision-making and enabling employees to participate in decision-making processes (Feitosa and Salas, 2020, p. 2). Based on literature studies one can also conclude that, in the majority of cases, the virtualization of social relations is perceived negatively, as disadvantageous for relations between employees as they do not have the possibility to meet in person and get to know each other, and do not talk about private matters. It is irrelevant who the person is, it is important how they do the work. Lack of comfortable social settings stifles the development of interpersonal competencies. Employees can be confronted with feelings of isolation and loneliness. In contacts between employees, barriers related to distance and time, hierarchy and cultural differences may gradually fade away. Virtual relations between employees make it difficult to create systems of reciprocal relations, to correct behavior and provide feedback, and it may favor e-mobbing and e-molestation (Hauziński, 2018, pp. 11-15).

In the virtual world, one can also observe the phenomenon of the digital social divide and informational exclusion. Age and generational differences as a determinant of professional effectiveness and general adaptability have noticeably gained in importance. Employee solidarity tends to disappear, just as master-disciple and senior-junior relationships, thus we are witnessing a decline of authority and role model figures. Personal relations between employees are becoming weaker, whereas autonomous communication within information networks is gaining in importance (M2M, the Internet of Things). The understanding of in-team relations is changing (Hauziński, 2018, p. 16). Furthermore, the concept of teleworking leads to a situation where employees' social needs do not get fulfilled, especially in the case of people for whom their workplace is the only place of social encounters (Zhang, 2016, p. 41).

A sense of isolation is another negative consequence of working in a remote office. The isolation of an employee in the workplace is usually a result of their conviction that they have no opportunity for interaction with co-workers, that they do not belong to the group and cannot obtain support or recognition from co-workers. Being part of the group is perceived by employees as the ultimate indicator of their integration into the organization and being successfully adapted. Physical and social isolation constitutes a source of stress and difficulties in contemporary organizations, and it is interrelated with the main function of a group, which is the socialization of an individual within the organization. Membership helps to find out certain norms that are necessary to understand organizational behavior and to diminish anxiety in times when an employee expects to require support. The sense of belonging contributes to improving employees' results and makes it easier to achieve objectives by leveraging support from co-workers and supervisors. Working away from a traditional office deprives employees of the opportunity to adapt to the organization. Those working in a virtual office lack training in their workplace, miss out on the informal ways of communicating values and loose the possibility to become accustomed with organizational culture, social clues and other information, which would otherwise allow to interpret the reality and interact with their co-workers (Zhang, 2016, p. 43).

The fact that remote work diminishes contacts with co-workers, which as a consequence leads to difficulties with the execution of assigned tasks, was also mentioned in (Dolot, 2020, p. 37). The author also stressed that working away from the company's office can trigger a sense of isolation, loneliness and alienation, mainly due to the impossibility to develop informal relations (Dolot, 2020, p. 37).

Over a period of working from home, co-workers are 'driven apart'. Such distancing between employees means that the possibilities of experiencing mutual support in other life situations also become limited, which further aggravates the stress. Diminished contact with supportive co-workers is a stumbling block of remote working, triggering negative experiences related to it (George, Atwater, Maneethai, and Madera, 2021, p. 6).

Other researchers also argue that social support considerably diminished during the period of imposed remote work. Such a decrease could have been caused by the difficulty to conduct informal conversation at work, while working from home. Compared to countless occasions on which employees meet in office buildings, while working from home they have to devote much more time and energy for intended informal discussions with colleagues (Oberländer and Bipp, 2022, p. 8).

Earlier research already demonstrated that a move from office work to virtual work has led to the non-fulfilment of the need for social bonding and lack of social support (Zhang, 2016, pp. 40-46). The outbreak of the pandemic forced employees to avoid meeting face to face, which undermined the importance of social support. Another explanation that could be provided, is fatigue with Cloud-based online video conferencing tools, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet being the most popular. Employees are exhausted by the number of programmed meetings and they think twice before starting another conversation in order to ask for social support (Oberländer and Bipp, 2022, p. 8).

The analysis of reports on remote working shows that, according to the employees, the biggest disadvantage of remote work consists in the lack of possibility to meet new people joining the company (over 57% of negative opinions) and in the affected quality of social life (for example no lunch together – 54% of negative opinions). Regarding analyses carried out by the Antal enterprise, 65% of respondents noted that: relations in the workplace became weaker, external and/or internal cooperation became more difficult (54%), cascade communication within the organization became less effective (32%) (*Aspekty pracy zdalnej…*, 2021, pp. 6-7). Staff working from home point out that communication is not transparent, that the flow of information is disturbed and that there are fewer opportunities to develop knowledge (*Jak wykorzystać szansę…*, 2020, p. 10).

The benefits and costs of working in a virtual environment are contextual by nature. They should be assessed differently in a situation of remote working that is undertaken voluntarily, as opposed to the period of the pandemic when it became a necessity. The analysis of this latest experiences (enforced remote work) can serve as a 'source of knowledge', which will shed more light on the relations between employees in virtual reality.

4.3. The empirical research methodics

The goal of the empirical research was to determine whether remote work changed in some significant way interpersonal relations between employees during the pandemic, and if so – in what way. It was a time when the remote way of working was imposed in many companies, and as a consequence relations between employees became virtualized.

The research questions presented to the respondents were as follows:

1. What do you pay attention to in your interpersonal relations at work?
2. Has remote work influenced and changed the relations between employees (in comparison to how they were before the pandemic, in a stationary work mode)?
3. If so, what kind of change was it (positive, negative) and what did it affect?

The study was conducted with the use of the descriptive research technique (written expression) with open-ended, non-directional questions (Lutyński, 1994, pp. 120--122). This particular research technique allows to refer to situations from employees' lives and for their subjective attitudes to be expressed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2000, p. 169; Lutyński, 1994, p. 126-128). The choice of this particular technique was directed by the fact that written expression (as opposed to direct interview) provides a sense of anonymousness, which increases the probability of gathering reliable information. At the same time, it allows for opinions to be spontaneously expressed, without suggesting what the subjects should write about or how.

In order to obtain answers to the research questions, the authors analyzed work provided by 165 respondents – students of extramural studies in the field of Management at the Department of Management Studies of the University of Lodz. The study was conducted in January 2022.

The students were asked to specify in what mode they worked (stationary or remotely) and to present situations from their professional life in the form of autobiographical description. The asked questions stimulated the respondents to share their observations and experiences.

The obtained answers were then coded and subjected to analysis. The first stage consisted in selecting from all the provided answers those whose authors declared not having worked remotely during the pandemic. Thus, in their descriptions they did not relate to relations in the virtual workplace; instead, they described relations between employees in traditional work conditions. The remaining pool was divided into those in which the respondents noticed a change in relations between employees during remote work (in comparison to relations from before the pandemic, in stationary work conditions), and those who did not. Lastly, descriptions stating that there was a change were divided based on whether the change was assessed as positive or negative.

In the process of carrying out the research, the authors endeavored to respect the rules of conducting qualitative studies (Czarniawska, 2018; Glinka and Czakon, 2021, pp. 173-200; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2014, pp. 9-17).

4.4. The empirical research findings

Out of the 165 participants that provided theirs contributions, over half were women (96, i.e. 58%). During the pandemic, one person in three did not do any remote work (53, 32% – 32 women and 21 men). Out of the 112 respondents (100%), who worked remotely:

- 48 (42%) – 31 women and 17 men – did not notice any change in relations between employees,
- 33 (29%) – 17 women and 16 men – evaluated perceived changes as positive,
- 31 (29%) – 16 women and 15 men described perceived changes as negative.

When referring to relations between employees, the terms most frequently used by the respondents (165) were: cooperation, colleagues' support, mutual help, sharing information with each other, communicating, direct contact, free expression of opinions, employees' attitude towards each other, solving problems together, sharing knowledge, good atmosphere.

One of the female respondents described relations between employees in the following way: "when someone has got a problem, they can always fall back on more experienced colleagues, who never refuse to provide thorough assistance, when someone in the team gets promoted or receives an award, they are congratulated on their success and nasty comments are avoided, we join forces, when someone has a good idea, they share it with the team and do not keep it for themselves as if they cared only for their own results, when someone makes a mistake, colleagues do not report that immediately to the manager, so that the person does not get into trouble, instead they try to help to remedy the situation" [k-13].

The 64 respondents who argued that the relations changed as a result of moving to the remote way of working considered that: cooperation (64) and mutual help, as well as colleagues' support (59-29 women and 30 men) were the most important indicators of relations between employees.

One of the female respondents described cooperative relations in the following way: "employees can freely express their opinions and ideas without being afraid of consequences, when a problem comes up, the team tries to resolve it together with full involvement of the manager. All that in a friendly and calm atmosphere. During remote work, the team is even more willing to help, to understand. There are meetings being organized, during which we can freely discuss problems, aware that we would get support" [k-77]. Others add that "nobody is putting obstacles in your way" [m-15]; "employees like and respect each other, are willing to help" [k-31].

Table 4.1. Examples of statements by respondents who assessed the changes in relations when working remotely as positive

Dimension of social relations	Statements provided by the respondents
Cooperation	"During the pandemic, employees started to support each other, help each other in adapting to a new situation" [k-84]
	"During remote work, employees started to pay more attention to cooperation, not just concentrate on themselves, but also on others" [k-100]
	"Every morning, we meet at Teams platform and discuss progress; we agree on a common strategy of sales, we monitor each other and give advice" [m-15]
Communication	"When we worked in the office, we were scattered on different floors, now the contact between employees has become easier, thanks to messaging systems. Rapid calls can be recorded and we can come back to them when necessary, which makes it significantly easier to share information" [k-31]
Support	"There is a big emphasis on supporting new team members for whom starting a job in a remote way of working represents a bigger challenge" [k-13]
Attitude towards each other	"Employees are nicer to each other, more tolerant" [k-9]

Source: own empirical research.

All respondents (33) who assessed perceived changes in relations as positive felt that after moving to remote working the spirit of cooperation strengthened. The majority claimed that communication between employees became more effective. Messaging systems such as Skype, MS Teams, Zoom, phones or smartphones made it easier to stay in contact. Nobody from this group of respondents mentioned a sense of isolation or loneliness. Examples of statements made by this group of respondents are presented in Table 4.1.

The respondents who assessed changes resulting from a "move to remote work" as negative (31-16 women and 15 men) mainly pointed out the following aspects: lesser frequency of contacts between employees, difficulties in communication, reduced cooperation, or even the emergence of competition, as well as tensions and conflicts. The statements presented below illustrate these views:

- "Before we used to talk more about ourselves and meet after work" [k-12].
- "Remote work loosens bonds. I am relying more on myself now than on advice from my colleagues" [m-35].
- "Cooperation between people is not so good, they communicate remotely, there is no real conversation, exchange of experience, mutual help" [k-117].
- "Over the last two years, the team changed, there are people that I have never met and this undermined the bonds and cooperation. I simply don't know them" [k-133].
- "Remote working made it more difficult to cooperate, we cannot meet" [m-42].
- "The quality and quantity of communication deteriorated, it was not possible to directly ask for advice" [m-76].
- "There is no integration, the company does not organize meetings thanks to which we used to have a sense of unity, there are no quarterly meetings where you would get all the information, communication deteriorated" [k-96].
- "Cooperation has lost part of its importance, it has become more competitive due to the lack of contact; if we stay closed at home, we are not able to get to know another person" [k-125].
- "Cooperation has become more problematic. It is difficult to fit into another person's availability, you need to call everyone individually, because everyone has a slightly different schedule" [k-140].
- "During remote work, the whole team drifted apart, no-one cares about any sort of interaction, assistance, cooperation" [k-160].
- "Employees really don't care about the image they have among others, employees do not have direct contact and don't need to worry about being accepted by co-workers; everyone relies more on themselves, people have become competitive" [k-141].
- "People are unnerved by the situation, they are anxious about their employment and tensions are there more often" [m-81].
- "Conflicts appeared between employees working in production and office workers, remote work has been abandoned" [k-111].

What seems to dominate in these statements is paying special attention to the weakening interpersonal ties, the decreasing level of social integration and the decreasing desire to cooperate, which are accompanied by lower interest in image and intensifying conflicts between employees.

4.5. Final conclusions and research summary

The authors are aware of the limitations of the adopted methodology of the empirical research, just to mention a small pool of subjects, the fact that respondents were mostly young people (up to 30 years of age), as well as the respondents' reluctance to share their experiences, and as a result, variance in the degree of detail in the provided descriptions, however this study has also significant cognitive values. At the same time, the authors were able to achieve the goal of this research, which was to determine whether remote work changed in some significant way interpersonal relations between employees during the period of pandemic, and if so – in what way. Finally, one can conclude that from the entire pool of respondents, 81 either did not notice any particular change while working remotely (48) or pointed out positive aspects of forming virtual relations (33). Negative aspects were indicated by 31 persons (approximately one-fifth of all the respondents). Differences of opinions were visible despite the fact that the group was homogenous in terms of age. According to the report *The voice of the European workforce 2020* (2021, p. 3), "traditional demographic data, such as age, is not a good indicator that would allow to predict what the employees actually think. Therefore, employers need to accept that employees are a complex group and require rules and actions that truly take into account their characteristics and needs."

All the above also entitles the authors to recognize that the goal adopted in this chapter was achieved, namely, based on the collected data it was shown that virtual work can significantly affect interpersonal relations in the workplace. It is worth noting that the considered context is very specific; the period of pandemic is a time when many organizations try new solutions in organizing work and learn to implement remote ways of working (Radziukiewicz, 2021, p. 423). Thus, this research confirmed what was already mentioned in the literature, i.e. that opinions on virtual relations in the workplace vary. Some people do not notice any differences in relations between employees, whether the work is done stationary or remote. Others claim that remote work has a positive influence on bonds between people at their workplace, whereas another group of respondents assess virtual relations negatively.

The research results also enabled the authors to formulate certain recommendations for business practitioners. Hence, if managers wish to make use of remote work, they ought to realize that employees' needs are diverse. They should also ensure that the relations between employees are formed and maintained, as they enable swift and effective communication and promote mutual trust and cooperation. It is important to define, communicate and respect the rules and procedures governing the course of work. The research results presented in this chapter and those referred to in the literature review (e.g. Oberländer and Bipp, 2022, p. 9) all indicate that it is particularly important to support employees working from home so that they do not feel isolated, to encourage them to maintain social contacts with other people at work. As long as employees do not have the opportunity to meet in the office, there will be a need to create other possibilities of entering into informal dialogues and contacts with colleagues at work. Managers should be aware of this and create social support systems, especially for those employees who already consider that the social support is insufficient. This is crucial in view of the fact that the virtual work environment has become more and more common, and in all probability remote work from home will remain in place after the pandemic has ended. In the study *Decoding Global Ways of Working* (Strack et al., 2021, p. 8), as much as 89% of the respondents were convinced that at least part of the work will continue to be done remotely, and 24% that it will be so totally.

According to the authors of this chapter, it would be interesting to conduct further research on work set-ups that involve new technologies, on the problems that may arise with regard to the virtualization of relations, and on the question of the humanization of work in the virtual environment. It is important to continue such research after the end of the current pandemic, which forced implementing certain solutions in order to deliver work. Further research will help to determine the long-term consequences of working remotely and of work in the virtual environment.

Chapter 5

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF EMPLOYEE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ORGANIZATION

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5.1. Introduction

New technologies currently have an impact on almost all spheres of the functioning of individuals – how people rest, learn, travel, and how they build and maintain relations with others. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these also translate into the style and manner of work as well as the competencies sought in the labor market; they also often change the organizational culture of companies and affect the well-being of their employees. The global effect of the spread of digital technologies is the complete transformation of social, economic and political systems. Enterprises have always evolved along with technological advances, hence with the exponential acceleration of inventiveness, organizations are in a way forced to constantly adapt to new solutions that affect how, where, by whom and why work is provided.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees have learnt to use new technologies when working from home, and in different time zones, and thus developed completely new skills. The world of work is no longer defined by the location of the people employed in it. Employees can connect and cooperate by simply clicking the icon of a given app on a computer or smartphone. This is a manifestation of the next step in the evolution of work. Technological acceleration under the influence of the pandemic experiences was also indicated by the results of a study carried out by Forbes (2020), in which as many as 97% of managing directors surveyed confirmed that the pandemic significantly accelerated the technological revolution in the companies they manage, and 79% admitted that it also increased budgets for digitization and technology development in the organization. Technologies in the workplace are not only innovations tested in R&D departments. Modern solutions

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can be used at every stage of the employment cycle – from recruitment, through competency development, building commitment, motivating, appraisal, satisfaction and commitment study, to internal communication.

The pandemic, and the resultant accelerated technological progress also significantly redefined the area of learning and development (L&D) in organizations. In this context **the goal of this chapter** is to characterize and highlight the role of selected digital technologies used in employee development processes in contemporary organizations. The chapter is of an overview character, and the study is devoted to the analysis of the issue of digitalization of employee development processes in an organization. The author used qualitative methods based on a critical analysis of the literature on the subject, reports, and industry articles. The chapter presents the transformation process in the area of learning and development and shows the main differences between digital and traditional L&D. The negative impact of the excess of digital tools and educational materials on the effectiveness of the learning process is also emphasized.

5.2. The overview of a new context for employee learning and development

As described in the previous section, the pandemic and technological progress contributed to the redefinition of the learning and development area (L&D) in organizations. Expectations change, developmental forms evolve, new tools and training needs emerge. This change mainly consists of the need for a quick shift towards the use of digital learning, for which the demand has increased radically, both on the part of stakeholders and the learners themselves (Mikołajczyk, 2021). In the last two years, e-learning has become the main training format in most companies. According to the data provided in the Fosway (2020) report, one can observe a five-fold increase in the use of virtual classrooms for high-value development programs such as leadership development. The use of virtual classes for coaching and mentoring also increased nineteen times, with as much as a 400% increase observed in the case of using virtual classes for conducting external training. In another study (Fosway, 2021), only 2% of the respondents – L&D participants in organizations stated that organizations would return to traditional training formats once the pandemic was over. The development of human capital with the use of digital technologies is currently becoming the most appropriate response to ongoing changes – for many companies, it is also simply a necessity just not to go out of the market. This is because of the growing pressure to increase the competitiveness of enterprises and the need for innovation. The flattening of organizational structures usually results in: a greater number of teams, dispersed work, virtual and hybrid structures, higher employee turnover and the evolution of the management method, the essence of which is the rejection of the approach based mainly on issuing orders and controlling employees. Companies have increasingly realized that in order to meet challenges, they must rely on employees who proactively take matters into their own hands, have autonomy, and expand their competencies. Figure 5.1 shows the current use of digital technologies in an organization.

According to Blanchard's Annual Survey Assessing L&D Trends (2022), which was attended by 800 HRD representatives from organizations around the world, employees are overloaded, tired, and "too busy" to participate in various forms of development. Online training programs are seen as less engaging compared to face-to-face initiatives. About 25% of employees did not receive any for their development from L&D departments in the past year. During the pandemic, companies shifted their focus from employee development to other issues, and employees realized they needed to adopt an "all-hands-on-deck" approach – often at the expense of personal development. The results of the Cedefop study of European companies also confirmed that a more stable and predictable economic environment positively influences decision-making about learning in the workplace (Kankaraš, 2021).

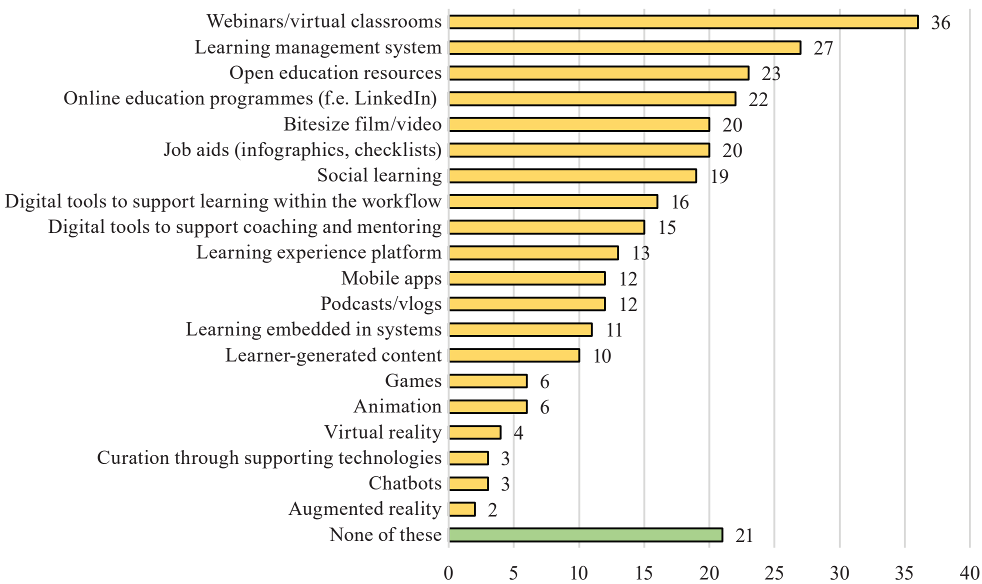

Figure 5.1. Current use of digital technologies within employer organizations (% of organizations, $N = 1.217$)

Source: own work based on (Crowley and Overton, 2021).

In Poland, despite the pandemic, employers have invested in the development of staff (PARP, 2021a). In recent years, the number of employers with a separate budget for development activities has increased from 35% to 42%. The most popular methods of supporting the development of employees' competencies were: briefings, coaching, mentoring, and job shadowing. It has also definitely accelerated the digitalization of development services. The possibility of developing competencies through remote training was used primarily by white-collar employees, and 42% of them declared that they had participated in this form of training for professional purposes. In 2020, the highest number of employees – in the education sector (59%), the specialist services sector (43%), and the health and social care sector (33%) – participated in online work-related training. This is quite an upward trend, especially in the context that the perception by managers of the value of learning in the workplace and the level of demand for skills are among the key factors determining the scope of learning opportunities.

Learning in the workplace has also been found to be the most important predictor of employee well-being (Kankaraš, 2021). According to the results of the research described in the report "Youth in the labor market 2021" (PWC, Well.hr, and Absolvent Consulting, 2021), almost 50% of the respondents considered that it would be difficult for them to accept the lack of development opportunities in the organization. It is also worth noting that as many as 70% of employees declared that they would consider changing the workplace if the employer did not invest in their skills development (Microsoft, 2020). Moreover, according to the respondents, employee training should currently be a less time-consuming process, preferably offered during work and in small segments, as well as be efficient and adapted directly to the current duties of the given employee.

5.3. Transformation of learning and development in the organization

Forward-looking organizations limit traditional development activities conducted in training rooms and create so-called skill academies/capability academies (often online), and the participating employees develop their competencies in the flow of work, combining independent and group project-based learning (Palmer, 2022). These "skill academies" reduce costs and make learning more accessible and effective (Dörner and Rundel, 2021). Encouraging learning at work and raising qualifications is of key importance for the long-term building of an organization's competitive advantage, and the key to success is the wise investment in digital HRD. Table 5.1 shows the stages of corporate learning and development evolution over the last decade.

Nowadays, new digital tools supporting the acquisition of knowledge are important in the process of employee development, such as: artificial intelligence (AI) which actively supports the L&D department, adaptive learning, microlearning and virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR). The use of artificial intelligence in the L&D department of a successfully digitized company makes it possible to analyze the employee's work and select appropriate development forms that can ultimately increase his/her productivity (Trenerry et al., 2021). The use of the aforementioned

Table 5.1. The evolution of corporate learning and development

			LXP Arrives	Zoom, Teams, Viva	
	e-Learning & Blended	**Talent-Driven Learning**	**Digital Learning**	**Learning in Flow of Work**	**Capability Academies**
Formats	Course Catalogue Online University	Learning Path Career Trick	Video, Self-Authored Mobile, YouTube	Microlearning Creator Economy Intelligent Skills Systems	Capability Academies (often online)
Philosophy	Instructional Design Kirkpatrick	Blended Learning Social Learning	70-20-10 Taxonomies	Learning Experience	
Users	Self-Study Online Learning	Career-Focused Lots of Topics	Learning on Demand Embedded Learning	Everyone, All the Time, Everywhere	
Systems	LMS as e-Learning Platform	LMS as Talent Platform	LMS as Experience Platform	Many Systems, LXP, LMS, Mobility, Skills, Integrated	
	1998-2002	2005-2012	2012-2019	2022	2022+

Source: own work based on (The Josh Bersin Company, 2022).

tools is conducive to the personalization of the learning process – it enables the adjustment of training materials to the profile, preferences, and individual needs of employees; this is guaranteed by the functionalities appearing in most new generation e-learning platforms (the so-called Learning Experience Platform/Learning Engagement Platform). LXP platforms (e.g. EdCast, Degreed, LinkedIn Learning Hub) provide users with access to learning libraries, including internal and external catalogues of courses, videos, podcasts, blogs, articles, "knowledge pills", microlearning simulations, and quizzes. AI adaptive-learning algorithms analyze both the individual preferences of the user and his/her increase in knowledge. In addition, there are also AI-powered tools used to create development content, such as Synthesia, Frase and Jasper.

Digitalization, in the context of L&D, not only means something fundamentally different than simply developing an employee using technologies that overlap with an already existing range; it is more about the development processes being closer to the needs of employees and able to be implemented in the course of work, in various ways that could not be applied in the traditional understanding of L&D. When designing online modules or micro-training segments, one should focus on the minimum amount of content needed to achieve the goal. The message should be short, concentrated on a partial skill/topic, available online, and easily reproducible on a variety of devices. This involves a fundamental redesign of the way employees experience development activities within the organization and their greater personalization. L&D digitalization means user orientation at every level and designing development activities taking into account the user experience (UX). Table 5.2 presents the key differences between traditional and digital L&D in the organization.

Table 5.2. The main differences between traditional and digital L&D

Digital L&D	Traditional L&D
User (employee)-centric	Content(program)-centric
Focused on performance (the work)	Focused on learning
Performance Consulting explores friction in the work and across different parties	Training Needs Analysis looks for common problems to be aggregated and solved with training
Solutions (predominantly digital resources and conversations) developed with the client	Solutions (predominantly courses and programs) developed with subject matter experts (SMEs)
Minimum Viable Product (MVP) (or prototype) made available to the client very quickly to be tested and to collect data	Solutions developed before being piloted
MVP iterated constantly, based on user feedback, to increase its value over time	The program delivered consistently across departments and geographies
Solutions provide continuous value and support to users	Solutions are generally 'one and done' experiences
Performance improvement is the measure of success	Attendance, completion, assessment, and satisfaction are key measures of success

Source: own work based on (*The L&D Disruption Playbook…,* 2019).

Employees work in a hybrid manner, therefore organizing traditional training is now becoming a big challenge. A solution that is increasingly indicated by various organizations is the mixing of various forms of online development (LinkedIn Learning, 2021), e.g. Virtual Instructor-Led Training with user self-paced asynchronous learning. However, it should always be remembered that introducing too many new tools may carry a certain risk related to the difficulty in focusing the learner and result in so-called "distracted learning" (Schmidt, 2020). Artificial intelligence and virtual training are currently not able to replace everything that employees have used so far in development projects. The human being is still an indispensable element of the training processes – the trainer, supervisor and colleagues. The effective digitalization of development processes also requires appropriate organizational conditions. Organizations need leaders who understand the functionalities of these solutions and promote them among employees to ensure the effectiveness of the digitized L&D processes. In the near future, almost all jobs will require digital skills on the part of workers (Digital Poland and CIONET, 2022). Digital readiness means a high level of general competencies related not only to technology, but also cognitive alertness, adaptability and a culture of teamwork in all areas of the company. A balanced learning ecosystem, open to the needs and feedback of employees, is one of the key elements in bridging the gap in digital competencies.

5.4. Selected digital technologies used in employee development

The digitalization of the L&D area in the organization concerns not only remote work, but also the use of bots, various mobile applications, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality in development activities. In recent years, the technology has matured to such an extent that almost everyone can use it via mobile devices, including cloud solutions. At the same time, the e-learning market has matured and is ready to adopt AI solutions (Clark, 2020). Figure 5.2 presents selected technologies used in employee learning and development.

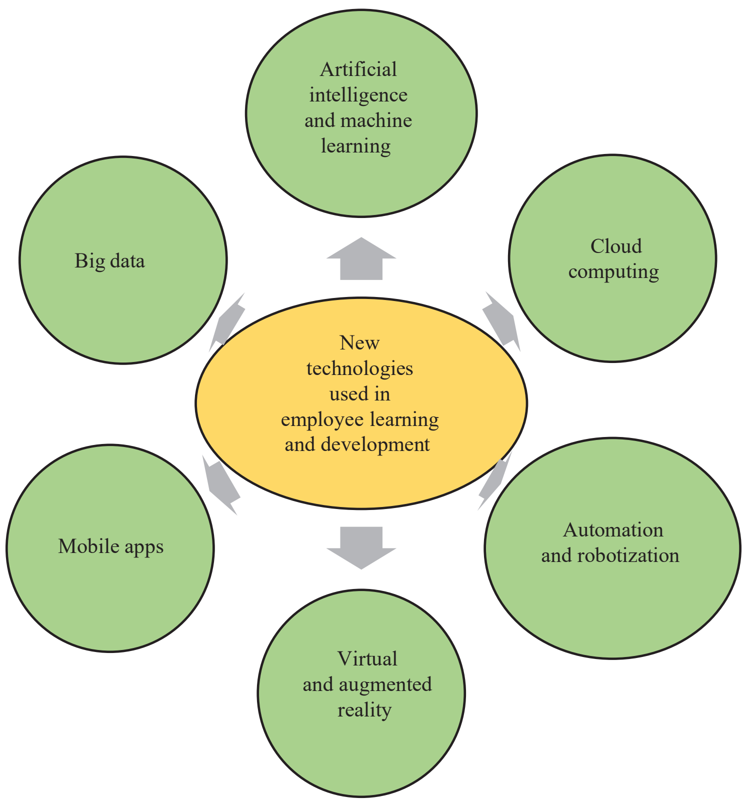

Figure 5.2. Selected technologies used in employee learning and development

Source: own work based on literature review.

One of the examples of apps is coaching with the use of artificial intelligence (Bersin, 2021). One can download coaching and development apps that help set goals and monitor progress, as well as provide development tools and manage practice in dealing with clients (e.g. Wysa, Rocky, Woebot, and Driven). Conversational chatbots that use advanced machine learning while talking to the user are also available in this type of app. Thanks to the use of AI, the conversation becomes more detailed – the bot refers to the user's previous answers, gives advice and carefully constructs questions. In addition, it is also possible to complete diagnostic tests, learn about other knowledge resources selected in accordance with the development goals of a given user, or perform exercises in mindfulness, yoga and meditation. Sometimes these apps use therapeutic techniques, e.g. CBT, as well as support the user through additional functions by providing them with the possibility of using the advice of a "reach coach" – a qualified psychologist who will guide the user through advanced coaching sessions in accordance with his or her needs. An interesting solution in this area is also the slightly more advanced AIDA coaching system, developed by Saffron Interactive (2021), offering video-coach support using AI (other such AI-enabled coaching platforms include BetterUp, CoachHub and Torch). The users of this system record their responses, and also save or respond to the multiple-choice options that the coach shows them in the video (AI VideoBot). The coach then responds to the user with short, conversational clips. In this way, the learner conducts a conversation, and the AI coach, if necessary, provides input data, information and directs him/her to other resources in the system, such as e-learning courses, articles, and websites.

Another example of digital L&D is the use of various mobile apps that enable employees to develop specific skills, and the actions recommended to the employees are adapted to their current predispositions. There are many solutions of this type, both in the free and commercial options. After installing a specific app on a smartphone, the employee can start using it in accordance with the previously set purpose. For example, the Bunch app is dedicated to the development of leadership skills. When using the app, the personal leadership trainer learns more about the user by analyzing the result of the diagnostic test and gives advice according to his or her leadership style and defined goals. The app provides useful tips from the best leadership coaches in the world to motivate to become a better leader. In the Deepstash app, the users receive a daily dose of knowledge in the field of science selected by them in the form of small cards – "knowledge pills" condensing the content of books, articles, movies or podcasts. All the content that the users collect in the app, also from other users, builds their knowledge library. Thanks to apps such as Habit Tracker, Loop and Habitica, the users can work on their habits and long-term goals. They can add daily, weekly and monthly goals and track their progress, and are free to choose the names, colors and icons of habits; in the Habitica app, they can shape their habits in the form of a game.

Thanks to the constant development of virtual and augmented reality, depending on the skills to be developed by the employees, immersive simulations can be created so that users can experience and perform specific activities, instead of watching or listening about them. Propagators of the use of VR and AR in training unanimously agree that the future of employee training is not an e-learning platform, but an engaging educational platform, the so-called Immersive Learning Platform, which is an experience-based training methodology that uses Virtual Reality (VR) to simulate real-world scenarios and train employees in a safe and engaging environment. It combines the sense of VR presence with advanced learning theory, data science, and spatial design to improve efficiency and user engagement. Work efficiency in a virtual environment is close to the performance indicator in a real environment. By using VR to immerse employees in real work situations, Immersive Learning enables the use of proven behavioral learning best practices. This helps to increase learners' engagement, preparation, knowledge retention and confidence. Delivered via a cloud-based platform, Immersive Learning delivers these enterprise-wide benefits (Strivr, 2020).

The report published by PwC (2020) presents the results of a study comparing the effectiveness of training in soft skills conducted in a stationary form (in a training room), e-learning, and with the use of virtual reality. The study was conducted in a group of new managers in the United States who received the same training in one of the three possible modalities. After comparing the results, it was found that the participants of the training using VR completed them four times faster than in the training room and 1.5 times faster than during e-learning. Moreover, they felt almost four times more emotionally attached to the content than the classroom trainees and more than twice as much as the e-learning recipients, were four times more focused during the training than their e-learning colleagues, and almost 275% more confident in using the acquired skills after completing the training. Although the results of the study clearly show the advantages of using VR in training, the innovative technology by itself, without substantive development and maintaining other elements of the learning process, will not completely replace the other methods, both traditional and digital. Only when combined with other elements of the development process, this can become a breakthrough in the field of competence development.

Currently, there are many proposals for immersive simulations for employees. The VR simulator prepared by Talespin, developed with employees in the HR industry in mind, allows managers to practice the process of dismissing employees in a virtual environment. The company has prepared a number of scenarios as part of the Virtual Human project, in which the recruiter must inform the virtual employee that his/her employer is terminating the contract. The behavior of the dismissed virtual employee depends on how the person responsible for the interview handles the whole situation. Mursion Inc. has created a virtual reality environment in which developing professionals can practice and improve a variety of complex interpersonal skills. The VR simulator enables employees to test their communication skills through the app using a combination of artificial and human intelligence (live actors) to adapt interactive scenarios in real-time. The simulation covers everything from leadership development, customer service, performance reviews, training in diversity and integration to conflict resolution in the office.

With the progressive development of VR and AR and the spread of remote work, programs enabling virtual meetings are becoming more and more popular (e.g. AltspaceVR, Wonda VR, vSpatial, Virbela). Collaboration in virtual reality is becoming desirable on the enterprise market, and international companies are looking for the possibility of using these devices in various areas – from employee training to project workshops. As one of the most popular apps, the virtual reality set can be used to organize conferences, seminars, congresses and workshops, replacing videoconferences or webinars – based solely on the image and sound transmitted live from a computer camera and smartphone. To be able to participate in such a meeting, one must first generate one's avatar, and then employ it to take and using the VR goggles, computer or smartphone and the appropriate app, to participate in the planned meeting. The sense of the presence of the participants is one of the main advantages of virtual reality meeting systems compared to typical videoconferences. Even though avatars look at each other and not at real people, the latter have eye contact with the interlocutor. The devices can be different for all the participants, this does not affect the process and the display of the application.

Virtual meeting software allows users to collaborate in a variety of virtual spaces. The office does not have to be in a business facility, but it can be either an old castle, an island or a production unit. This technology is being developed dynamically and is intensively tested by organizations that work mainly in distributed teams. In some apps, an additional functionality, especially useful in project teams and industrial companies, is the ability to create and edit 3D models.

5.5. Final conclusions and overview summary

Along with the digitalization of content and development methods, the market of development systems is also evolving rapidly. The tasks of L&D teams in organizations that are moving from the role of administrator and creator of training content are also changing, smoothly moving towards being a partner and business advisor. The new role requires new competencies that can certainly be built online, using virtual reality and artificial intelligence, applying the best available educational methods on the market. For a long time, L&D departments were responsible for creating and managing the training process. Currently, when it is no longer necessary to recreate many educational resources because they are available on the market, and their management is taken over by the employees themselves with the support of AI, the main task of L&D departments should be to constantly research skills and competence gaps, creating the appropriate conditions for employees to learn during their work and development, as well as indicating appropriate directions or development materials. In addition, what dominates, is a simplification understood as shortening, simplifying the developmental forms – in accordance with easy and agile access to educational content, guaranteeing quick results in the work environment.

Today it is difficult to imagine the development of specialists and training without the use of technology. Employee retention is fostered by digital transformation, which allows for the effective and quick cultivation and updating of employees' skills and knowledge. Moreover, digital transformation solutions cover all the basic training functions, from implementation to self-education, and can be used independently (LXP and AI), or as a necessary addition to traditional employee training that can enhance their experience (mobile technologies, VR, AR). What is needed now is an approach to employee development that takes into account both the dynamic nature of the workplace, technological progress, and the equally dynamic potential of people to rediscover themselves.

The potential of AI in development activities has not yet been fully exploited, even in a minimal way, nevertheless the change can take place by leaps and bounds. As soon as the necessary conditions are met (which requires, among others, building sufficiently large databases, and miniaturization of hardware), overnight it may become possible to implement development projects with a virtual trainer, coach or mentor who will know the strengths and the weaknesses of their student/subordinate, as well as precisely plan optimal development and career paths. Personalized support available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or an 'invisible' learning assistant who can regularly involve employees in the development or a virtual tester of their skills and knowledge, is still the future and burdened with many limitations, because everything a chatbot 'knows' comes from the data it has been fed. Human beings are most often responsible for the production of content that is the basis for teaching AI, thus it is their mistakes, bias, worries and traumas that result in the formation of stereotypical, discriminatory data, which the algorithm later repeats – despite the lack of its own emotions.

L&D departments may face another challenge related to the digitalization of development processes in order to implement them in the so-called metaverse, whose vision was outlined at the end of 2021 by the head of Meta (formerly Facebook), M. Zuckerberg. The metaverse can be seen as a further combination of the digital and physical world. It includes elements of immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), as well as software platforms, virtual collaboration tools, and other digital experiences. It is, in a way, a new version of the Internet built out of a huge number of three-dimensional virtual spaces connected with each other and permanently existing, focused on a social connection – spaces in which people interact with each other, but also create their content (DelSignore, 2021). Today, one can only guess what final shape the metaverse will take, however, to be able to create it, modern hardware is needed, i.e. equipment necessary to be able to access it (including VR goggles, AR glasses and haptic gloves, etc.). The second condition for the emergence of a new Internet is a more modern infrastructure that will allow to maintain a constant and stable connection between millions of people in real time, which also requires enormous computing power. Time will tell whether in the metaverse, apart from buying, selling, creating and consuming digital goods, there will also be space for innovative development activities.

Naturally, one of the most important elements of the digital transformation in a company is training new employees, and providing constant professional support with the use of modern technologies to those already employed. A better approach to employee training also increases employee engagement, making them more willing to listen to digital transformation plans as digital transformation is based on digital adoption – then employees make full use of all new digital tools and applications. It is clear that workers who undergo interactive, on-demand e-training to use these tools will learn skills faster and more efficiently than those who receive unattractive analogue passive guidance. It also seems important to see these modern technologies as elements of cooperation and process improvement, and not as replacing people in the organization. In developmental processes, the excess of digital educational tools and materials has the opposite effect – people do not learn (Cain, Leonard, Gabrieli, and Finn, 2016; May and Elder, 2018; Uncapher, Thieu, and Wagner, 2016). In this case, less is more. Close and positive contact with another person is one of the basic human needs. In a digitized reality, authentic relations matter the most.

Finally, one can say that the goal of this chapter has been achieved. The author characterized and highlighted the role of selected digital technologies used in employee development processes in modern organizations, presenting the transformation process in the field of learning and development, and showing the main differences between digital and traditional L&D. Moreover, future trends related to the technological support of employee learning and development, as well as the expectations toward the HRM department services in this scope, have also been outlined.

Chapter 6

BENEFITS AND THREATS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SUPPORTED WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ALGORITHMS FROM THE END USER'S PERSPECTIVE

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6.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, the subject of interest were virtualization and digitalization of the work environment in various forms. Two of the issues raised were artificial intelligence and the importance of knowledge in modern organizations. In this chapter, attention was focused on their combination from the management perspective. The basic reason is that the creation and development of solutions aimed at the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI), and in particular knowledge management (KM) processes, is the main and dynamically developing trend in various sectors of the economy (Landeta Echeberria, 2022; Osuszek, Stanek, and Twardowski, 2016). Based on the bibliometric analysis carried out in 2021, it was also proved that there is a link between digital innovation and knowledge management systems (Di Vaio, Palladino, Pezzi, and Kalisz, 2021). Therefore, many scientists representing various disciplines conduct research aimed at analyzing individual aspects of the above-mentioned phenomenon. One of the key problems of this trend is the social consequences of the widespread use of AI in KM.

In connection with the above, **the goal of this chapter** was to present the benefits and threats of knowledge management supported with artificial intelligence algorithms from the end user's perspective. The intention of indirect research was also to determine whether the representatives of Generation Z, referred to as the digital generation, are aware of the risks associated with the new technological developments. To reach the goal and realize the subsidiary research intention, this chapter was constructed in the following way. Firstly, the author discussed

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certain theoretical foundations for the concept of Generation Z and AI solutions in knowledge management adopted in the study. The next section describes the empirical methodics of research performed by the author. Then the most important research findings were presented and final conclusions formulated. At this point, it is worth mentioning that on the basis of the results obtained on the selected AI-aided knowledge management tools, the key importance of simplicity, intuitiveness and usability of solutions in the opinion of end-users was identified. There were also noted gaps in users' knowledge concerning the consequences of cyber-attacks on personal security, important from the point of view of the security management of knowledge management systems. Hence, this chapter should be of interest to entities involved in the protection of data being assets of employees and organizations.

6.2. Theoretical foundations for the concept of Generation Z and AI solutions in knowledge management

As signaled in the title of this section, the subject of the considerations was first Generation Z, followed by discussion of the problems related to knowledge management.

According to numerous studies (see Table 6.1), Generation Z, i.e. people born after 1995, can be considered a digital generation with the competencies necessary to use the latest achievements in knowledge management. The indicated features are observed in this generation, regardless of the education and economic sector in which its members operate, e.g. similar results were obtained from the military sector (Kupczyk, Rupa, Gross-Gołacka, and Mańkowska, 2021).

Table 6.1. Features of Generation Z from the perspective of the labor market

Most of Generation Z:	Torocsik, Szucs, Kehl (2014)	Williams (2015)	Lyons, Lavelle, Smith (2017)	Dolot (2018)	Bateh (2018)
• have knowledge of foreign languages			X	X	
• have knowledge of computer programs supporting professional tasks		X	X	X	
• prefer telework			X		
• switch between the virtual and real world, which they perceive as complementary	X	X		X	X
• source and check the information they need in the Internet		X		X	X
• quickly share information or express opinions mostly via a variety of communication devices or social media (also anonymously)	X	X		X	X
• thanks to apps support multitasking				X	

Source: own work based on (Bateh, 2018; Dolot, 2018; Lyons, Lavelle, and Smith, 2017; Torocsik, Szucs, and Kehl, 2014; Williams, 2015).

Naturally, there are also critical studies pointing to a large group of the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) within Generation Z, characterized by the lack of involvement in the two main areas of social life, namely education and work. It is worth noting, however, that the NEET subgroup rate their competencies in the use of the Internet highest (but they use it mostly for entertainment and spending free time), and at their the lowest level their professional qualifications (Czainska, 2019; Wiśniewska, Wiśniewski, and Szydło, 2019).

Regarding people oriented at education and employment, it is worth mentioning that the digital competencies of this generation are in line with the knowledge management strategy of most contemporary organizations, especially strategies integrating solutions based on human knowledge with artificial intelligence algorithms (Abualoush, Bataineh, and Alrowwad, 2018; Al Mansoori, Salloum, and Shaalan, 2021; Balcerzyk, 2021; Batko, 2021; Liebowitz, 2001; Osuszek and Stanek, 2021).

In connection with the subject of this study, it was assumed that knowledge is an organized set of information along with the rules for interpreting it, based on the sequence:

signs (+ syntax) give data (+ context) give information (+ structure) give knowledge.

It should be remembered that the transition from data to knowledge is not abrupt and continuous (Jemielniak and Koźmiński, 2012). Therefore, the focus was on the process approach to knowledge management (Karadsheh, Mansour, Alhawari, Azar, and El-Bathy, 2009; Liebowitz, 1999), in which four main synthetic problem areas related to the circulation of knowledge in the organization were distinguished, namely (Wyrozębski, 2014):

1) identifying and locating knowledge, i.e. identifying the organization's needs in terms of knowledge and indicating the sources of their satisfaction;
2) knowledge gathering, i.e. all activities aimed at acquiring, evaluating, processing, preparing for transfer, storing and securing knowledge;
3) knowledge transfer, i.e. action taken to deliver the right knowledge at the right time and in the right place;
4) the use of knowledge, i.e. the application of knowledge to solve the problem situation.

A strategic knowledge management perspective was also adopted, which relates to the processes and the infrastructures organizations use to attain, create and share knowledge for strategy formulation and strategic decisions process (Ferreira, Mueller, and Papa, 2018; Zack, 2002).

As regards the use of AI solutions in knowledge management, the focus was primarily on research by Liebowitz (2001), which indicated the following application areas:

1) knowledge capture and representation, by applying knowledge acquisition techniques, i.e. interviewing, protocol analysis, simulation, personal construct theory, card sorting, data/text mining approaches, etc.;

2) knowledge repositories – knowledge taxonomy, knowledge mapping;

3) knowledge transfer (sharing) – intelligent agents, data mining and knowledge discovery techniques, online communities, etc.

Generally, it can be said that knowledge management uses AI tools to capture, filter, represent and apply knowledge. Additionally, AI solutions provide apps for selecting, analyzing and classifying text, automatic inference and visualization to facilitate decision making, and processing human input data (e.g. handwriting and voice recognition). Artificial intelligence helps, above all, to overcome the problems associated with the huge amounts of data that need to be sorted, processed, analyzed, etc. (Dalkir, 2013).

6.3. The empirical research methodics

In connection with the above considerations and assumptions, **the main goal of the empirical research** was to identify the advantages and disadvantages of selected knowledge management tools from the end-user point of view distinguished on the basis of a demographic feature.

When designing the study, three main research questions were formulated, namely:

1. What advantages and disadvantages of AI-assisted knowledge management do end-users from Generation Z indicate?
2. In what areas of knowledge management does Gen Z identify the advantages and disadvantages of AI support?
3. In what areas of the knowledge management process are the advantages and disadvantages unnoticed by the end-users?

The indirect research intention was also to determine whether Generation Z, which is referred to as the digital generation, is aware of the risks associated with the above-mentioned solutions.

In the preparation stage of the study, it was assumed that the elements of content analysis and coding of answers to open-ended questions would be used in the research process. This assumption was due to the fact that researchers were not interested in the statistical distribution of responses to predefined concepts. However, it was crucial to identify and explore the implicit knowledge from particular kind of data broadly interpreted. Thus, the initial assumption of the analysis comes from the concept of a ‘mental lexicon’, according to which the meaning associated with a given word reflects the process of categorizing the surrounding reality (Emmorey and Fromkin, 1988; Taft, 2013). The collected statements were subjected to content analysis, which allowed for the categorization of the answers in accordance with the developed coding keys. Then the following thematic sets (clusters) were distinguished:

a) subject of influence,

b) qualitative features,

c) phases of the knowledge management process (identification, collection, transfer, use).

The obtained values were statistically analyzed with the use of standardization and factor analysis. In order to receive texts for analysis, 166 respondents were invited to cooperate. The respondents had to meet the criteria of age (20-25) and education (none could have a technical and IT education). They were divided into teams of a maximum of four. The task of each team was to analyze any tool they used to manage their knowledge (e.g. databases, web browsers, intranet solutions, etc.) and then identify the advantages and disadvantages of these solutions. As a result, 46 projects were received, of which 81 statements qualified for analysis (repeated statements were eliminated from the research material).

The projects were developed in the period from April to June 2021. The language of the study was Polish. Formal verification was carried out in June 2021. The actual research was conducted from October to December 2021.

6.4. The empirical research findings

The data analysis began with the identification of who/what the identified advantages, disadvantages, benefits and threats were related to, i.e. research in terms of the subject of impact (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2. The subject of impact

	Advantages (in %)	Disadvantages (in %)
People	21	10
Data	41	17
Information	7	0
Knowledge	3	0

Source: own research.

Mostly, the respondents pointed to the advantages related to "data" (41% of the responses). There was no indication of defects in "information" and "knowledge"; this probably means that the respondents did not see threats related to, for example, the loss of information and knowledge, but perceived the loss of "data". This is not just of semantic relevance. This result shows that the respondents' awareness of the relation between, for example, loss of data and loss of knowledge was still low. It is also important to note that the respondents perceived very little of the relationship between the phenomena occurring in the digital world and the resulting threats and benefits for themselves. Permanent surveillance was the only field where the respondents clearly indicated “the threat to humans”.

The purpose of the second analysis was to identify the qualitative characteristics that the respondents attributed to solutions used in knowledge management with the use of artificial intelligence (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3. The qualitative characteristics

	Advantages (in %)	Disadvantages (in %)
Efficiency, effectiveness	12	5
Environmental friendliness (eco)	2	0
Speed	25	0
Convenience	10	0
Ease	17	0
Accuracy, precision	8	7
Permanence	3	7
Objectivism	2	3

Source: own research.

Table 6.4. Classification in terms of the phases of the knowledge management process

Factor	Advantages (in %)	Disadvantages (in %)
PHASE: ACQUISITION		
Acquiring	8	2
Searching	5	1
PHASE: PROCESSING		
Cost	1	0
Comparing, sorting, cataloging, segregation	4	1
Copying	2	1
Modifying	2	1
Processing	9	2
PHASE: STORAGE		
Carriers	4	0
Infrastructure	8	3
Maintenance	4	4
Cost	6	0
Storage	6	0
PHASE: PROTECTION & SECURITY		
Security	5	8
Theft	1	2
Loss	1	3
Making public	1	3

Source: own research.

By applying the principles of content analysis, the adjectives used in the statements by the respondents were systematized. As indicated in Table 15, most of the quality characteristics are related to advantages, in particular emphasizing "speed" (25%) and "ease" (17%). This was confirmed by the findings used, for example, when designing apps, according to which the end user expects, above all, the intuitiveness of the solution (translated into "ease") and a short system response time ("speed"). The above features are also related to such functions as: convenience, accessibility (in terms of time and scope), and location (accessibility in the geographical sense).

The key analysis concerned the classification of indications in terms of the phases of the knowledge management process. The division was adopted in accordance with Wyrozębski (2014), who distinguished the following components of the above-mentioned process: identification, collection (including: acquisition, processing, storage, protection and security), transfer and use as presented in Table 6.4.

The study did not address the explanation of the reasons for the statements made by the respondents, so it can only be assumed that since none of them had any technical and IT education, no indications resulted of the risks and disadvantages related to the costs of processing and storage, while stressing many benefits of this range. Particularly noteworthy was the "processing" function (9%), which, with the matrix reading of the results combined with the features of "convenience", "ease", "speed", provided another field of significance.

It is worth noting that the dominant number of statements concerned the storage phase (28% in the case of advantages) and securing and protection (16% defects).

6.5. Final conclusions and research summary

Referring to the results of the study presented above, it can be concluded that the goal of the empirical research has been realized. The research allowed to confirm the fact that from the point of view of the end user, there are both advantages and disadvantages of the selected AI-aided knowledge management tools. The most important advantages are ease and speed, i.e. features that improve the pace of task implementation, with an uncomplicated form of use. The second important and identified issue concerns the security sphere, as the awareness of end-users of the relations between data incidents and personal and organizational security needs to be increased (e.g. the consequences of a customer data loss by a bank). The third problem is related to the economic side of knowledge management, namely: the correct estimation of losses, expenditures and expected profits; the lack of technical/IT knowledge on the part of strategic and financial analysts may result in underestimating or overestimating the expected effects of implementing AI solutions to knowledge management systems in the organization. Therefore, the above research findings allow to admit that the goal of this chapter has also been achieved. The author presented the benefits and threats related to knowledge management supported by artificial intelligence algorithms from the perspective of end users.

Finally, it is necessary to add that the study was a pilot study. Both the size of the respondent group as well as the scope and methods of obtaining lexical material will be expanded in the further research. Nevertheless, it is visible that the discussed topic is extremely important from the point of view of strategic knowledge management in an organization, as well as designing appropriate systems for individual clients.

Part III

HCM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Chapter 7

JOB SATISFACTION AMONG TEACHERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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7.1. Introduction

COVID-19 is a global health problem that continues to affect millions of people (Donley, 2021). The pandemic hit Europe in the first months of 2020, severely affecting the mental health of many people (Kumar and Nayar, 2021). European governments, in response to the epidemiological crisis, recommended first social isolation and then lockdown at home. Suddenly, a large proportion of European workers switched to remote work. As was mentioned in the previous chapters of this monograph, many workers have been forced to work from home, and many have faced challenges due to some fundamental problems, such as lack of living space or housing, and also working in the presence of their family (Kniffin et al., 2021).

The pandemic has also significantly disrupted educational systems, not only in Europe. Such problems affected over 1.5 billion students worldwide (Shahzad, Hassan, Aremu, Hussain, and Lodhi, 2021). In education, many countries decided to completely close schools and move to distance learning to reduce COVID-19 transmission (Donley, 2021; Obrad and Circa, 2021). There is no doubt that teachers are one of the professional groups most affected by the new reality. The closure of the schools enforced a radical change in the teaching model, moving to online classes. Teachers had to drastically alter the way they work. On an individual level, not all of them had the same resources or were equally trained to face the challenge. Some teachers had previous experience of working remotely, others did not. Some of them were good at new technologies (perhaps younger teachers), while others had more difficulties with it (Mahmood, Ariza-Montes, Saleem, and Han, 2021).

The level of the competency and readiness of teachers for e-learning further exacerbated this problem. The challenge of teachers qualifications was a key issue in the context of a satisfactory learning strategy during the pandemic. The literature

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points to other problems related to online learning. Ferri et al. (Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo, 2020) discussed technological (e.g. lack of access to the Internet), pedagogical (e.g. no computer skills) and social (e.g. lack of interaction with students) challenges. Moreover, Yusuf (2020) noted that teachers must also take into account changes in students' attitudes and behavior. During distance learning, students can be less focused, may not have access to all the necessary learning tools and materials, or simply not attend online classes. Obligatory e-learning can also aggravate pre--existing disproportions in learning progress caused by socio-economic inequalities. During online education, financial resources can determine whether students will be able to use computers, other mobile devices, and the Internet (Thomas and Rogers, 2020). In addition, Omodan (2020) suggested that while technology and the Internet appear to be globally available, there are still areas where access to technology is limited, such as in rural locations. Although many teachers were forced to learn online after the outbreak of the pandemic, the acceptability of this form of education is still marginal. Face-to-face learning is still the most preferred method (Fute, Oubibi, Sun, Zhou, and Xiao, 2022). Introducing new teaching strategies has always caused physical and mental implications among teachers due to their relatively high reluctance to make changes (Yılmaz and Kılıçoğlu, 2013). In addition, the physical change of the workplace, social environment and the lack of skills necessary to use technological tools are other challenges faced by teachers during the pandemic (Poncet et al., 2007). The entire COVID-19 situation has affected not only the professional, but also private lives of teachers. Their stress levels increased and their quality of life decreased, which further affected their working lives and productivity in the long run (Fute et al., 2022).

The literature emphasizes that physical, social and psychological changes in the workplace can have a strong influence on job satisfaction (Papavasileiou, Lyons, Shaw, and Georgiou, 2017). Therefore, it is worth reassessing the level of teacher satisfaction with all the changes that have occurred in education during the pandemic.

Hence, **the goal of this chapter** is to juxtapose the results of the study on the job satisfaction level of teachers in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic with the results of research conducted in this area in other countries. Before this comparison was made, the author first explained the theoretical assumptions of the concept of job satisfaction, and discussed the methodics of her own empirical research to present the findings in the next step. Finally, the most important conclusions were formulated.

7.2. Theoretical foundations for the concept of job satisfaction

Work is an integral part of everyone's life. It has a huge influence on people's behaviour, attitude and lifestyle. The type of work performed, its conditions, as well as numerous internal conditions determine the level of perceived job satisfaction. Satisfaction, as a rule, is associated with a feeling of happiness and contentment, and identified as a positive attitude of the employee towards the organization, colleagues and the work itself. According to Spector, job satisfaction means how much people like or dislike their jobs. According to this author, job satisfaction can be treated as a single general feeling or as a set of attitudes regarding various aspects of this work (Spector, 1997).

Locke defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job and job experience (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). Job satisfaction is a mental state determined by how well an individual believes his or her job-related needs are being met (Evans, 1997). Adenuga added that job satisfaction reflects the level of compatibility between employees' expectations of the job and the rewards that the job provides (Adenuga, 2015).

In turn, Hirschfeld (2000) explained that job satisfaction relates to the extent to which people like their job. Job satisfaction can be defined as an emotional state, which is the result of the evaluation of one's own work and the experience related to it (Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction is related to employee’s satisfaction not only with the work itself, but also with the broader organizational context related to the job.

Job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon driven by a variety of factors that has been extensively researched in the literature. Locke (1976) summarized them in several dimensions: the work itself, pay, promotions, recognition, working conditions, benefits, supervision and co-workers.

The concept of the “work itself” is referred to by Robbins et al. (Robbins, Odendaal, and Roodt, 2003, p. 77) as the extent to which the job provides the individual with stimulating tasks, opportunities for learning, personal growth, and the chance to be responsible and accountable for the results. Pay, according to the same author, applies to the amount of remuneration the employee received for a specific job (Robbins et al., 2003).

Satisfaction with promotion (Friday and Friday, 2003), regards employees' opinions toward the organization's promotion policies and processes. Employees who are promoted have more opportunities for personal development, greater responsibility, and a higher social position (Bajpai and Srivastava, 2004). Working conditions include ambient temperature, lighting, ventilation, hygiene, noise, working hours, and resources. The employee would prefer to work in conditions that allow him or her to be more physically comfortable and convenient. The absence of such working conditions can have a negative impact on a worker's mental and physical well-being (Parvin and Kabir, 2011).

As mentioned above, supervision is another factor affecting satisfaction. Research shows that people will be more satisfied with their job if they enjoy working with their supervisors (Aamondt, 2004). Yet another factor that determines job satisfaction is the degree to which co-workers are friendly, competent, and supportive. According to various research, employees will be more satisfied at work if their co-workers are more supportive (Aamondt, 2004; Robbins, 2005).

It should be added that a sense of justice also has a significant impact on the level of job satisfaction. Workers feel some sense of justice for all of the aspects that contribute to job satisfaction (Sypniewska, 2014). Employees who feel fairly treated show a higher level of satisfaction (Aamondt, 2004).

Job satisfaction, according to (Armstrong, 2006), can be improved by focusing on internal motivators such as responsibility, achievement, and recognition. Management's objective should be to decide how to delegate responsibilities in diverse ways so that their employees have the space and freedom to use their skills and abilities.

Other variables directly related to the employee, are the demographic characteristics. The first of these individual factors is age; job satisfaction increases with age and is higher for older workers who have worked longer. Older and more experienced employees often have better competencies, additionally, they are often trusted by their superiors and colleagues. They are also generally assessed better, which contributes as well as to a higher level of their job satisfaction (Al-Ajmi, 2001).

Gender is the next factor analyzed by many authors. The results regarding the influence of gender on job satisfaction are ambiguous. Peccei and Lee (2005) found no significant impact of gender diversity on job satisfaction of employees. Some researchers indicated that women are more satisfied than men (Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2007). For women, however, working conditions are of great importance, as they allow, for example, to combine their work with family needs (Loscocco, 1990).

There is also a strong link between tenure and job satisfaction. Employees with more years of work experience are happier than those with fewer years of work experience (Okpara, 2004). Loscocco (1990) also indicated in his research that married employees are more satisfied with their jobs than single employees. More and more researchers also focus on the relations between other internal factors and job satisfaction, which include emotional intelligence (Jorfi, Bin Yacco, and Shah, 2012) and personality traits (Steel, Schmidt, Bosco, and Uggerslev, 2019).

Despite the numerous factors that may determine job satisfaction, researchers agree that it positively influences many important phenomena in the work environment. It has a positive effect on organizational commitment (Amos, Acquah, Antwi, and Adzifome, 2015; Ngadiman and Ratmawati, 2013), commitment to the company's goals (Latif et al., 2013) and organizational citizenship behavior (Rahman, Shahrazad, Sulaiman, Nasir, and Omar, 2014). Importantly, job satisfaction is negatively correlated with the intention to leave the company (Wang and Zhang, 2010) and absenteeism (Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction had also a positive effect on life satisfaction (Bachtiar, Sudibjo, and Bernarto, 2018).

The above-mentioned consequences of having satisfied employees show the importance of this phenomenon. It is therefore worthwhile to constantly conduct research on this subject, especially when the work environment is undergoing such large and sudden changes as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.3. Empirical research methodics

The goal of the empirical research was to assess the general level of satisfaction of primary school teachers in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter was designed to examine this level among male and female teachers of secondary schools.

The empirical research was conducted from January 2021 to March 2021. A structured questionnaire was used to conduct a quantitative investigation. The participants were informed that taking part in the study was completely voluntary, and there was no monetary compensation for taking part in this study. The respondents were kept anonymous. The majority of the surveys were conducted online, with respondents receiving an email with a link to the survey website. The respondents provided their answers directly online.

To measure job satisfaction, in line with Judge, Bono and Locke (Judge et al., 2000), a shortened five-item version of the Brayfield and Rothe (1951) scale was used, an example being “I find real enjoyment at work”. The responses were on a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with a coefficient alpha of .82. The sample was composed of 303 employees of six secondary schools in Poland. The structure of the research sample is shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. The structure of a research sample

Characteristics		Number	%
Gender	women	227	74.9
	men	76	25.1
Age	under 30	23	7.6
	31-40	85	28.1
	41-50	111	36.6
	51-60	84	27.7
Teaching experience (years)	under 5	19	6.3
	5-15	78	25.7
	15-25	102	33.7
	25-35	61	20.1
	over 35	43	14.2

Source: own research.

This study used SPSS for data analysis purposes. For descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation (SD) was used, and the Mann–Whitney *U* tests were applied to compare the groups (Field, 2013).

7.4. Empirical research findings

The data in Table 7.2 reveals that in general, the teachers' level of job satisfaction was high (M = 5.02; SD = 1.07). The teachers rated each of the aspects that were asked about relatively highly. The lowest mean was obtained by the answer concerning the statement : "Each day at work seems like it will never end" – 4.66(R), while the highest," I consider my job to be rather unpleasant" – 5.42(R). However, the median of all the analyzed responses was above 5, which can be considered a high result.

Table 7.2. Descriptive statistics for the overall job satisfaction and its items

Components	Mean	Median	SD
OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION	5.02	5.2	1.07
I find real enjoyment at work	5.03	5.0	1.37
I feel fairly satisfied with my present job	5.13	5.0	1.29
Most days I am enthusiastic about my work	4.88	5.0	1.42
Each day at work seem like it will never end (R)	4.66	5.0	1.48
I consider my job to be rather unpleasant (R)	5.42	6.0	1.41

Source: own research.

When analyzing the respondents' answers in terms of gender, it can be observed that both male and female teachers assessed their level of satisfaction at a similarly high level. The data is presented in Figure 7.1.

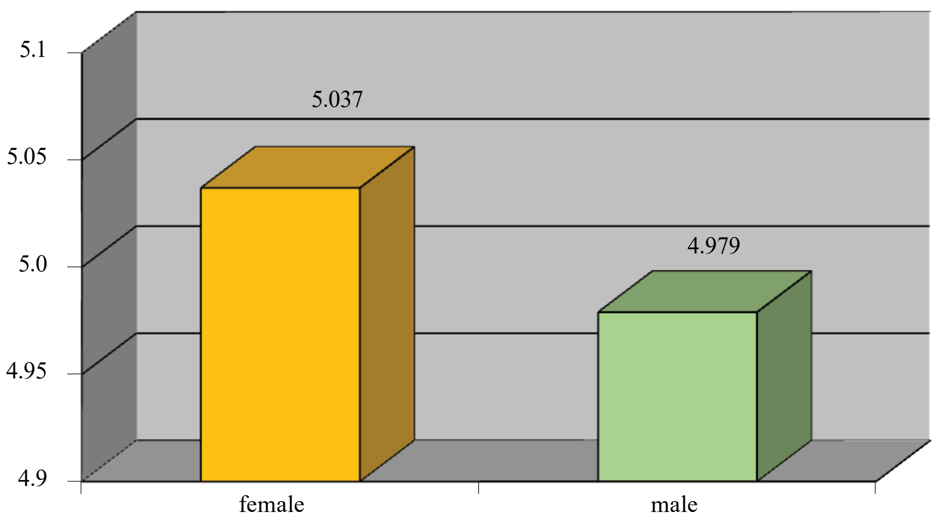

Figure 7.1. Mean score of job satisfaction for male and female teachers

Source: own research.

The data are very close, there were no significant differences between the two groups of respondents as was also confirmed by Mann-Whitney *U* tests. Table 7.3 presents the results.

Table 7.3. Mann-Whitney test of overall job satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction			
Comparing group	Mann-Whitney *U*	Z	Asymp sig. (2-tailed)
Group 1 – female Group 2 – male	8511.000	−0.174	0.862

Source: own research.

As shown in Table 7.3, Mann-Whitney $U = 8511.000$, $z = -0.174$, and $p = 0.862 > 0.05$. Thus, there was no significant difference in the overall job satisfaction among male and female teachers during COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the chapter presents the average level of satisfaction of the respondents broken down by age (Figure 7.2) and teaching experience (Figure 7.3).

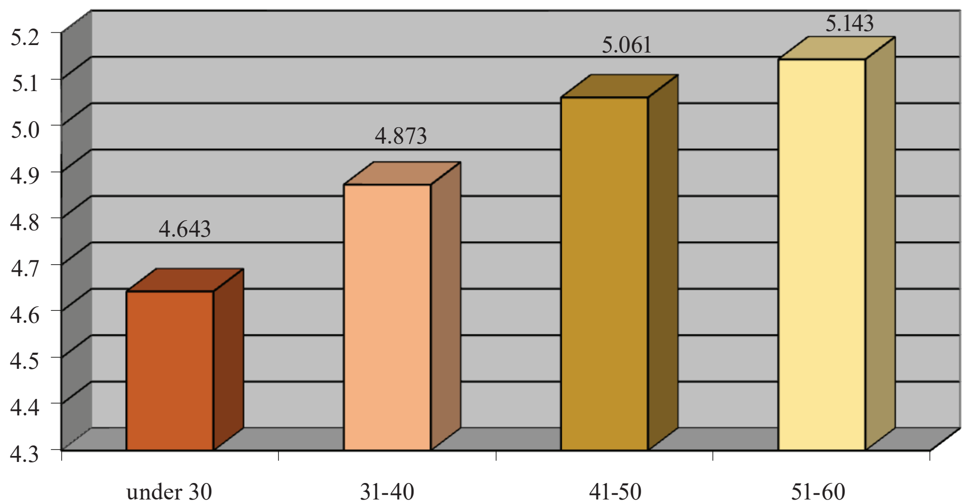

Figure 7.2. Mean score of job satisfaction in terms of the age of the respondents

Source: own research.

The results show that the level of job satisfaction was higher for older workers and lowest for the youngest. These results would not be surprising if not for the fact that the respondents were surveyed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Older workers might appear to be less satisfied, if only because of the sudden need to use advanced technology to conduct online classes, which is always easier for the younger generation. However, the results did not confirm this relation.

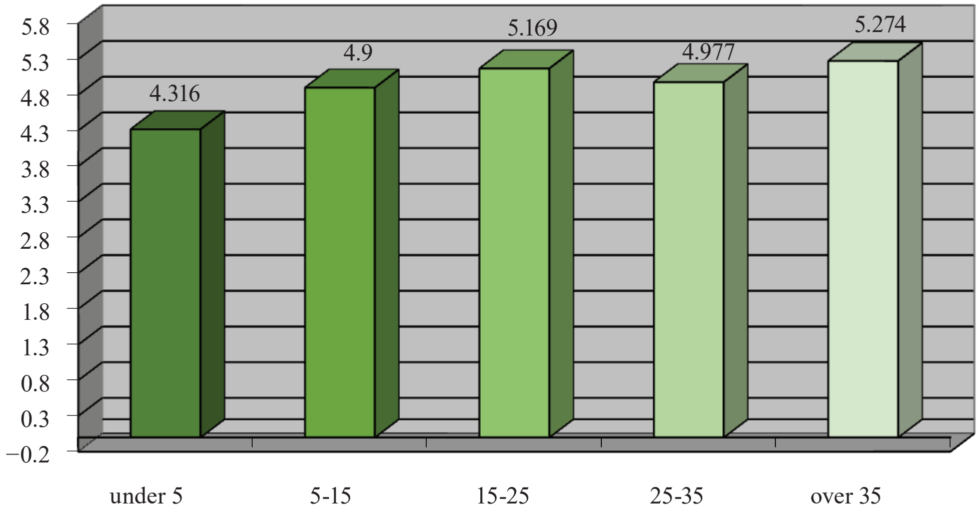

Figure 7.3. Mean score of job satisfaction in terms of teaching experience of the respondents

Source: own research.

The results presented in Figure 7.3 also confirmed that people with longer teaching experience also achieved higher levels of satisfaction during the pandemic. Although the differences here were not as significant as in the case of the age of the respondents, the lowest average was obtained by teachers working in school for less than five years.

7.5. Final conclusions and research summary

When addressing the final conclusions, it should first be noted that the goal of the empirical research has been achieved, namely the goal was to assess the general level of satisfaction of primary and secondary school teachers in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, contrary to expectations, the level of satisfaction of the surveyed primary school teachers was quite high considering such a large change in working conditions. Total job satisfaction was rated 5.02 on average. All of the five items received a rating above 4.6 on a scale from 1 to 7. This result can be considered relatively high, especially since the median of responses in each case was at least 5. When analyzing the results in terms of the respondents' demographic data, it should be emphasized that that the level of satisfaction increased along with the age of teachers. Those over 50 were the most satisfied, and those under 30 the least satisfied. The situation was similar in the case of teaching experience. Teachers with the longer experience were the most satisfied. It is also worth mentioning the results in terms of gender; no significant difference in the overall job satisfaction among male and female teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic was found. This was confirmed by the Mann-Whitney U test.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the results on this topic are not clear-cut. Most of the research conducted indicated a relatively low level of teacher satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research among Indian private school teachers showed that teachers were dissatisfied with their job during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chanana, 2021). In addition, Sheikh (2020) study revealed that younger teachers had a high chance of becoming depressed due to the need to combine family and work responsibilities due to online work. Additionally, the satisfaction level of the teachers was also reported to be lower in online teaching in (Suganya and Sankareshwari, 2020).

However, there are studies that show a fairly high level of teacher satisfaction during online education. Research conducted with over 2800 kindergarten, primary, and secondary school teachers in China showed that their job satisfaction during the pandemic was satisfactory (Fute, Oubibi, Sun, Zhou, and Xiao, 2022). Similar levels of satisfaction were shown, for example, in the study by Succar et al. (Succar, Beaver, and Lee, 2022).

Such a large discrepancy in research can only emphasize how important, and still pending this topic is. A necessary direction of the author's research must be predictors of job satisfaction. It is worth considering the reasons for this level of satisfaction of the surveyed primary school teachers.

Finally, in the context of the presented research findings, one can say that the goal of this chapter has been attained. The author juxtaposed the results of the study on the job satisfaction level of teachers in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic with the results of research conducted in this area in other countries.

Summarizing, it should be said that the COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis and then quickly expanded to the economic, social life, and education sector of the global world (Thu, Ngoc, Hai, and Tuan, 2020). All enterprises and public organizations should be aware that only satisfied and committed employees are the key to success in these difficult times.

Chapter 8

MANAGING STAFF DEVELOPMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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8.1. Introduction

This chapter continues with the issues related to employee development, which here is interchangeably called staff development. In previous parts of the monograph, the authors addressed this in the context of various geographical regions, different types of organizations, virtualization and digitalization of the work environment, although some pandemic conditions were also considered. In this chapter, however, the basic context is the COVID-19 pandemic.

As mentioned, earlier, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic changed the reality of functioning of all organizations around the globe. Uncertainty, closed borders, and fear of being infected made businesses introduce new activities. Providing employees with the necessary safety precautions, keeping the staff together, and the reorganization of work became a problem. The crisis caused by COVID-19 and the changes it triggered, led to the evolvement of the forms of development. Referring to Chapters 5 and 6, one can repeat that part of business activity was moved online, changing the configuration of the organization systems and distant working (McGuire, Germain, and Reynolds, 2021, p. 27). This meant a change of both communication and distant control. Leaders started searching for integrated solutions making distant work easier and serving to build the teams' identity. Thanks to this, it was possible to understand the targets the employees had to meet as well as efficient communication and knowledge sharing.

It was also essential to take care of the employees' well psychophysical and psychosocial condition. Working from home for extended periods of time not

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only resulted in longer working days but also disrupted family relationships, leading to numerous tensions. This was particularly true for employees who had previously been mobile, but whose situation forced them to stay at home, hence the boundaries between work and family needed to be renegotiated and reorganized (Caligiuri, De Cieri, Minbaeva, Verbeke, and Zimmermann, 2020, p. 701).

It is also worth noting that the pandemic exposed gaps in competencies at both individual and team levels. Sus and Sylwestrzak (2021, p. 501) underline such problems as inability to adapt to change, innovation and creativity, lack of courage to act in a new situation, mental strength and resilience, self-organization of work, proactivity, lack of competency to manage a team remotely, the ability to learn quickly and IT skills. The COVID-19 pandemic therefore created an urgent need to implement new or activate proven employee development solutions. Knowledge of new technologies and the ability to use Internet tools proved to be indispensable. Competencies such as creativity, adaptation to change, and emotional intelligence have also gained in importance. In order to meet the expectations of their employees, and thus maintain their position on the market in this difficult environment, companies focused on adapting appropriate development practices.

In light of the above, the goal of this chapter was twofold. Firstly, the authors' intention was to juxtapose the practices within the scope of employee development in businesses in Poland in two periods of time, i.e. before and during the pandemic. Secondly, the authors wanted to identify the competencies which are particularly desirable in the work environment strongly affected by the pandemic.

For this reason, the theoretical foundations for the contextual influence of the pandemic on employee development and required competencies is the subject of interest in the next section. In the further part, the methodical assumptions of their own empirical research are discussed and the results presented. Finally, a concise summary was made and the most important conclusions formulated.

8.2. Theoretical foundations for the contextual influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on employee development and requirements regarding competencies

Talented workers are vital assets in any modern society. They underpin the transition from an economy based on land, labor and capital, to that based on information and knowledge. They are crucial in determining the answers to today's great challenges, such as climate change, food and energy security (Boulton, 2011). Only companies that base their strategy on the talents of their employees are able to build a competitive advantage without the need for a time-consuming and relatively expensive process of bridging competency gaps, which is why it is so important to diagnose the strengths of the employee and use them in action (Wachowiak, 2007, pp. 147-148).

Therefore, gaining and maintaining a position in the market depends on the ability to attract and keep the best employees and to benefit from their potential, and this forces the companies to apply development activities. The role of the organization has long ceased to be limited only to providing employees with job security. In order to ensure the loyalty, trust and commitment of employees, the companies need to take into account the needs of their staff and meet their expectations. By implementing various workforce competency improvement solutions, organizations can ensure that they have a skilled workforce that understands its key strategic issues. Among the activities that improve employee competencies, Ulrich and Lake (1990) indicated: helping to solve business problems in task forces, participating in the implementation of new systems, inclusion in key decision making and conflict resolution.

Employee development as a process involves learning on the part of all individuals in the organization, including line managers, professionals, and executives, and can be delivered through a variety of approaches, including on- and off-the-job training programs, seminars, job rotations, self-study materials, and mentoring (Jacobs and Washington, 2003, p. 344). To be beneficial, employee development research should seek to better understand the conditions under which employee development programs function in organizations (Jacobs and Washington, 2003, p. 351). The need for continuous professional development is emphasized in both individual and organizational dimensions. The former is important in terms of the interests of the individual and the role he or she plays or wants to play in the chosen social arrangements. In a broader context, the professional development of the individual is interpreted from the perspective of the development of the whole organization, whose interests may determine the career path of the individual (Wach-Kąkolewicz, 2008, p. 57). To ensure that it has competent employees in key positions, an organization must understand the basis on which employees make career decisions. It should take into account the personal interests of the individual, family considerations, preferred lifestyle, be aware of the career problems of its employees. Thus, an optimal model of career management in an enterprise should take into account actions on the part of the organization, the individual, and their mutual alignment (Jarosik-Michalak, 2018, p. 126).

The transition from inefficient and bureaucratic enterprises to profitable and market-competitive organizations forces the consistent implementation of many important changes, including the treatment of training and improvement as an investment that brings tangible benefits (Belina, 2017, p. 128). The process of knowledge development as a result of training requires the organization to use this knowledge and create conditions for sharing it (Olkowicz, 2013, p. 412). This is because knowledge can constitute the development of the organization and be the basis for the implementation of innovative solutions. Enterprises trying to create a unique product offer must demonstrate better recognition and satisfaction of market needs than their competitors, and this requires higher level competencies in various spheres of the enterprise and at various levels (Penc-Pietrzak, 2011, p. 33). Particular attention should be paid to those that will be required in the future in connection with the development of smart technologies and the creation of virtual and culturally diverse teams.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic further emphasized the role of competencies in business operations. Akkermans, Richardson and Kraimer (2020, p. 1) perceive the pandemic as a "career shock". There was a risk that it would have a disruptive effect on employees, as many linked it to job loss, job insecurity, as well as reduced pay. However, many employees saw in this difficult situation for themselves opportunities to develop their own potential, to reveal their talents. This was not a surprise, as it is known that one of the basic conditions affecting the quality of the professional development of an employee is his or her own activity and awareness of constant pursuit of their own development potential (Plewka, 2016, p. 29).

The solution, often the only possible one, implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic was to go into remote mode. This activity during the pandemic was and is necessary because it limits contact with other people, and thus the transmission of the virus. This form of work became not so much a benefit as a necessity or an opportunity to reduce the risk of infection. At the same time, the conditions of remote work have changed significantly (Dolot, 2020, p. 36). It is worth noting that the idea of remote work appeared much earlier, but it was in the lockdown period that its advantages and importance were recognized. The advantages of this solution include the possibility of adapting the work to the personal needs of the employee and saving time, even if it is associated with travel to and from work. Remote working can also contribute to generating savings for the employer and reducing environmental degradation (Dolot, 2020, p. 42).

Although social isolation protects the worker it is important to be aware that it can pose mental health risks. Research has shown that difficulties in home relationships, lack of privacy and being overwhelmed by daily responsibilities were among the most important predictors of depressive and anxiety symptoms among employees during the separation caused by COVID-19 (Gambin et al., 2021, p. 8). Therefore, it has become essential to implement practices that help eliminate stress, such as webinars on coping with mental stress and tutorials that provide all the information needed to complete work activities (De Cieri, Shea, Cooper, and Oldenburg, 2019).

Another challenge that arose with the pandemic was ensuring good quality of information to perform the tasks, and that IT was supported in obtaining the right tools and information. The transition to remote working has significantly reduced verbal communication between employees and managers. Asynchronous virtual communication is most effective for gathering information during regular face-to--face meetings. Meetings (or video conferencing if the situation arises) are reserved for problem-solving and complex decision-making tasks that require synchronous interactions (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). Among the benefits of networked communication are the blurring of cultural differences in behavior, the absence of linguistic misunderstandings, electronic traces of decisions made, and time savings in face-to-face meetings (Caligiuri et al., 2020, p. 703).

It should be emphasized that the pandemic itself, despite the difficult conditions, can become an opportunity to develop competencies and develop new ways to motivate employees in crisis situations. Managers and HRM practitioners must go beyond traditional training methods and develop programs tailored not only to the new realities that include physical distance, but also to employees who will be able to act to keep the organization at a high level (Hamouche, 2021, p. 7). Moreover, COVID-19 has given employers the opportunity to develop the autonomy of their employees, enhance their digital skills and broaden their perspectives to develop their competencies (Hamouche, 2021, p. 10). Building their own resources to ensure competitiveness should enable to focus on expanding and improving employees' personal skill sets (Hite and McDonald, 2020, p. 9).

Managing an enterprise in times of the COVID-19 pandemic is a process aimed not only at preventing an impending crisis, but mainly at reducing the impact of the crisis on the organization's resources and value, taking control of its course, minimizing losses and restoring a state of stability (Dereń and Skonieczny, 2021, p. 364). The crisis caused by the pandemic should be a catalyst for changes that enable the organization to grow, and prepare it for future unexpected events. Companies now have new tools and processes in place to develop personnel in ways that were not possible or acceptable prior to the pandemic. While it is still ongoing, and it is unclear when it will be safe to meet again at work, it is reasonable to use the ground gained from the current acceptance of new online technologies to develop staff and provide employees with the highest quality job offers (Zuo and Juvé, 2020, p. 106).

8.3. The empirical research methodics

Due to the insufficiency of empirical knowledge about employee development management during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need to carry out cognitive research on a group of business entities in Poland, concerning the use of selected methods and tools to enable employees to improve their competencies.

The main goal of the empirical research was to determine whether the practices in the scope of employee development during the pandemic were significantly different from those in the pre-pandemic period and whether it was accompanied by any specific expectations as to the competencies of employees particularly important during the pandemic.

The following detailed goals were also formulated in the research process:

1. To assess the frequency of use of development activities before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. To identify the competencies desired in the organizations under remote working conditions.

3. To analyze the changes necessitated by COVID-19 in the area of the human resources function.

The sample selection was intentional and included companies from different industries. For research purposes, the authors applied the technique of collecting information indirectly with the use of a measurement tool in the form of a questionnaire. The respondents were employees of human resources departments, responsible for developmental activities in the organization. The research was anonymous and participation was voluntary. Twenty-seven entities participated in the survey, which was conducted over a two-month period from February to March 2022.

In selecting the companies for the research, the authors referred to the available statistical data on the structure of business organizations in Poland, which show that small and medium-sized enterprises constitute 99.8% of all businesses in Poland. Large enterprises employing more than 249 people account for 0.2 of the total number. According to the Report on the State of the Sector of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Poland in 2021, medium-sized enterprises employed 1.58 million employees, while large enterprises employed 3.26 million employees, representing 15.8% and 32.6% of the total number of employees in the enterprise sector, respectively. The subject of the analysis presented in this chapter are medium-sized (29.6%) and large (70.4%) enterprises.

Table 8.1. The structure of the research sample

Branch of industry	Number of businesses	Percentage
Trade	6	22.2
Construction	4	14.9
Administration	3	11.1
Rail transport	3	11.1
Medicine	2	7.4
Pharmaceuticals	2	7.4
Electro-energy	2	7.4
Gastronomy	2	7.4
Ceramics	1	3.7
Imports	1	3.7
Forestry	1	3.7
Size of business	**Number of businesses**	**Percentage**
Large	19	70.4
Medium	8	29.6

Source: own research.

The purposive selection of respondents was made to ensure reaching the employees of HR departments working in medium and large enterprises, which allows to find and analyze the best and inspiring practices in the area of development activities of these enterprises. In the study, the largest number were those operating in trade (22.2%), construction (14.9%), administration (11.1%). and rail transport (11.1%). The structure of the surveyed enterprises is shown in Table 8.1.

To achieve the research goals, the literature analysis was conducted, a research tool was developed, and further empirical analyses were performed. Data were collected using an online survey questionnaire placed on a specialized web portal designed to conduct research. The questionnaire contained nine questions prepared on the basis of literature in the area of human resources development and was addressed to employees of HR departments of enterprises in Poland, and included questions using a 5-point Likert scale, open questions and multiple choice questions.

8.4. The empirical research findings

Based on the analysis of the research results obtained, it can be concluded that most of the developmental activities have moved to the Internet. In addition, it was found that activities implemented before the pandemic, to a lesser extent, and those after the outbreak of the pandemic, have gained in importance. These included on-the-job training, online training, video-conferencing coaching, blended-learning training, podcasts, online focus groups, and webinars. The different types of development activities are shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2. Types of developmental activities in the companies before and during the pandemic

Type of employee development activities	Results before the pandemic (in %)	Results in the pandemic (in %)
On-the-job training	85	89
Online training	71	86
Video-conferencing coaching	63	70
Blended learning	45	67
Podcasts	45	52
Focus groups	52	71
Webinars	49	71

Sources: own research.

It follows from the above that companies have been forced to suspend onsite training, hence the increased demand for online development activities. These form of training can take place in two ways: asynchronous, where the employee does not have a specific time of training, can adjust the time of the course to his or her needs, learn at his or her own pace, and repeat selected lessons of the training. This form allows a lot of freedom, because an employee decides how much time he or she spends on learning, but requires discipline and commitment. Synchronous training can take place in real time, the participants connect with the trainer and are supervised by him or her, and they can share their knowledge and together solve emerging problems. This form is similar to traditional teaching, however, there is no need to be in the classroom, the training takes place on specific days and it is possible for the whole team to work together. On-the-job training was used before and after the outbreak of the pandemic, as evidenced by the high awareness of the companies participating in the study that the action plan created in this way of employee development should take into account the principle of three categories of activities and maintain the proportions between them: on-the-job 70% (i.e. solving real problems, learning through experience, participation in project teams), received feedback 20%, training 10%. Each of these forms, to varying degrees, helps in bridging the competency gaps.

Yet not all of the indicated actions after the outbreak of the pandemic contributed to the increase in activities in the area, because feedback, secondment of an employee, and financial support for employees in external education, according to the surveyed companies remained unchanged both before and after the outbreak of the pandemic. This is evidenced by the fact that companies coped well despite the crisis with the development of employees by supporting their learning in higher education, courses, training and conferences, as well as motivating employees to effective work through feedback. There may be many methods of receiving feedback for an employee, nevertheless it is important to focus on giving praise, pointing out elements to be improved and motivating to action by supporting and encouraging to improve badly functioning areas. Giving feedback in the right way increases the motivation of employees, and thus builds their commitment and allows for the greater identification of employees with the company. The study showed that employees are aware that feedback and information on career paths should be received from their immediate superiors. The companies participating in the study are aware of the impact of the existing development activities such as feedback, which is one of the most important areas affecting employee development.

As part of the study, the method of recruitment during the pandemic was also analyzed. The obtained results indicate that enterprises still use landline calls, have not abandoned the use of traditional forms of employee sourcing and want to continue to do so. Online interviews have remained popular among the companies and are also used today, as evidenced by a number of benefits such as time optimization for both candidates and recruiters, and the possibility to verify certain professional skills such as language. Naturally, there are also some disadvantages which include experiencing more stress in front of the camera than during a face-to-face meeting, as well as the lack of opportunity to check skills, for example technical. Before the final choice of form of recruitment is very important to take into account the type of position and the range of necessary competencies that a ‘perfect’ employee should have and decide whether one is able to verify the required skills during online recruitment.

In connection with the pandemic, in addition to changes in the forms of recruitment and other development activities undertaken both before and after its outbreak, the range of desired competencies among employees was analyzed. Acquiring a specific profile of employees is related to the company's belief that gaining a competitive advantage and survival in today's turbulent market is rooted, in addition to the organization itself, in talented and competent employees.

The crisis caused by the pandemic has shown that companies need new competencies as new challenges have emerged. The highlighted competencies are presented in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3. The ranking of the competencies required from employees after the outbreak of the pandemic

Desirable competencies during the pandemic	Results (in %)
Responsibility	89
Ethical behavior	89
Creativity	88
Analytical thinking	86
Ability to critically assess the situation	85
Expertise	83
Adaptability	83
Sharing knowledge	85
Work culture	82
Dealing with stress	82
Computer skills	48
Ability to manage the staff on-line	41
Knowledge of new technologies	40
Ability to work in virtual teams	37

Source: own research.

The most important competencies included: responsibility, ethical conduct, creativity, analytical thinking, ability to critically assess the situation, expertise, adaptation to change, sharing knowledge, work culture, and dealing with stress; the following competencies were rated lower: communicator skills, ability to manage employees online, knowledge of new technologies and ability to work in virtual teams.

It can be concluded that not all the companies felt the need to move to remote management. Perhaps it was considered that remote working reduces job satisfaction and weakens the organization. It is possible to say that these companies managed the change effectively. The pandemic introduced turbulence into the existing and applied HR tools, including management, motivation and communication. The companies participating in the study worked on a rotational basis, which is confirmed by the results as almost half of the companies increased their work on such a system after the outbreak of the pandemic. In addition, in order to improve communication processes, additional communicators were implemented to transfer information between employees; there was also a change in the process of work organization thus increasing autonomy among employees and the changes in the process of adaptation of employees. In order to increase employee commitment, companies have implemented numerous changes in the existing safety procedures and increased non-wage material motivation tools.

Further analysis of the company survey indicates that the least important factor introduced after the outbreak of the pandemic was the lack of interest in the well-being, the psychological support tools for employees and the lack of increased training. This may indicate the lack of resources for the further training of employees, or perhaps another reason being that it is not easy to keep employees who are busy, tired, stressed and uncertain of tomorrow in front of the screens of e-learning courses.

Another aspect addressed in the research was the question of how companies collect information about the needs and expectations in the development of their employees during the pandemic. The results show that companies collected information during performance appraisal interviews, conversations with direct supervisors, during informal meetings, giving feedback or during interviews with HR staff. In connection with the fact that most information about needs and expectations was received by direct superiors (82%), it can be concluded that despite numerous changes in the organization of work, such as the introduced job rotation, managers took care to provide the space for open conversations with their employees. This required more attention, openness, trust, and energy, thanks to which the employees were provided with psychological comfort. Thus they could also better understand the new tasks and their roles in this difficult period, and the companies did not have to create new units offering psychological support to their employees.

Considering the last issue of what safety measures were introduced during the pandemic, the respondents rated highest the provision of disinfectants, the organization of vaccinations, and the establishment of a unit responsible for the observance of procedures in connection with the pandemic, as well as the transfer of some activities online and rotational work.

8.5. Final conclusions and research summary

To sum up the discussion conducted in this chapter, it can be said that the activities taken by organizations in the area of staff development were aimed at acquiring, using and maintaining human capital as a major source of competitive advantage and is one of the greatest challenges for managers in this century. The pandemic and the accompanying period of lockdown have forced the adaptation of possible solutions to the needs of organizations and the creation of opportunities for the competency development of employees. That is why the main goal of the authors' empirical research was to determine whether the practices in the scope of employee development during the pandemic were significantly different from those in the pre--pandemic period, and whether it was accompanied by any specific expectations as to the competencies of employees, particularly important during the pandemic. In the authors' opinion, this goal was achieved, namely the most important activities were identified within the framework of employee development, which included: on-the-job training, on-line training, coaching, coaching in the form of video conversation, webinars, podcasts, online thematic groups, blended learning training, e-books, mentoring, internal recruitment, job rotation, managerial consulting, employee secondment, promotion, employee adaptation, psychological contract, financial support for employees as part of external education, application of the work life balance concept, flexible working hours, appraisal interviews, psychological support, equipment for the workplace, and feedback.

The conducted research clearly shows that the new reality forced a significant number of companies to modify their existing activities related to staff development. For some companies, the development area was a great challenge, for others an excellent opportunity, and for yet others a great threat, as companies were forced to liquidate budgets, reduce staff or terminate contracts with companies which provided existing training services. A key element of the new strategy was for employees to quickly adapt to the change and leverage its potential to increase revenue. In connection with the new situation on the market, it became necessary to develop new competencies in employees, which would facilitate adaptation to the new reality, and for companies to implement new forms of development, as well as new tools, which have not been used in practice so far.

Hence, all these results confirm that the goal of the chapter has been achieved. On the one hand, the study juxtaposed the practices within the scope of employee development in businesses in Poland in two periods of time, i.e. before and during the pandemic, while the other identified the competencies which are particularly desirable in the work environment strongly affected by the pandemic.

Finally, one can also say that the pandemic has demonstrated that companies have adapted to the changes, and understood that in order to survive in such a turbulent market they must reform their processes, including in the area of employee development. Additionally, it is clear that the continuous development of new technologies and the resulting jump into a new virtual reality, together with artificial intelligence, will force companies to develop on an even larger scale. The approach to the development of employees will become even more important, so it is vital that modern technology permanently enters the area of employee development, and bringing full satisfaction to both employees and those supporting development processes in organizations.

The authors of this chapter believe that their diagnosis of the current situation will enable companies to pay special attention to issues concerning employee development in the unstable environment of the organization. Moreover, thanks to the empirical research findings, the managers and practitioners of HR management can gain important and useful knowledge which will help them better understand the main challenges and opportunities arising from the pandemic and adjust their development plans to the needs of their employees and the organization.

Chapter 9

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE AND TASKS OF HR BUSINESS PARTNERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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9.1. Introduction

This chapter continues with the thread of the pandemic, which has already been addressed in previous chapters. Therefore, at the beginning it should be emphasized again that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought colossal changes in the way work is organized in companies all around the world. As a result, HR departments were burdened with additional responsibilities in several areas. New procedures for the health and sanitary safety of workers have been implemented, including protective measures, social distancing, and vaccinations. Office work had to be reorganized, taking into account the restrictions implemented by governments.

Moreover, there was a big shift towards remote work, which necessitated organizing ergonomic places to work at home, implementing new communication methods, and providing training for employees – namely all the topics discussed in the previous chapters. Consequently, new models of the so-called hybrid organization have been created to meet the challenges of coordinating employees both in offices and those working online.

In addition, more and more attention was being paid to the physical and psychological well-being of employees and new actions were taken in this area. The form of recruitment and onboarding of employees was changed, transferring many activities to the online sphere. There were changes implemented in development processes: enterprises abandoned traditional courses organized in classrooms but instead took advantage of the benefits of e-learning, as one of the methods mentioned in Chapter 5.

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The changes observable in the roles and responsibilities of HR departments can be attributed also to the positions of HR Business Partners. Hence, **the goal of this chapter** is to juxtapose the meaning of role and tasks of HR Business Partner in companies in two periods of time, i.e. before and during the pandemic. In order to reach this goal the author conducted her own empirical research presented later. The presentation of the research results is preceded by an explanation regarding the adopted theoretical assumptions in the field of the HR Business Partner roles and tasks, and by the description of the empirical research methodics. The research summary and final conclusions make up the last section.

9.2. Theoretical foundations for the HR Business Partner concept

The concept of HR Business Partner (HR BP) in the classic approach was proposed by Ulrich in 1997, who considered a strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert and employee advocate as the main roles of a person representing the HR function in an organization (Ulrich, 1997). In the following years, this concept was refined and expanded by, among others, the addition of a new leadership function (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2005). Finally, Ulrich proposed the model with eight different roles (Ulrich, Kryscynski, Ulrich, Brockbank, and Slade, 2015) as shown below:

- a strategic positioner,
- a credible activist,
- a human capital curator,
- an analytic designer and interpreter,
- a culture and change champion,
- a technology and media navigator,
- a total rewards steward,
- a compliance manager,
- a paradox navigator.

Further changes were proposed by Timms, suggesting the need to transform the thinking about the HR BP position towards performing such roles as: relationship builder, trustee, trainer, agent provocateur, and catalyst for innovation (Timms, 2018).

According to Cewińska (2013), HR BP offers support in organizations in three areas: a strategic partner within the framework of internal services (Corporate Center, Self-Service), Shared Service centers, and centers of specialization (Center of Excellence). HR BP knows and understands the business of the company and is a partner for internal clients, becoming a kind of “face of HR for business” and “face of business for HR”, and thus constitutes a bridge between these two areas in organizations (Kawka, 2010). Being a strategic partner, operations manager, emergency advisor and employee mediator as the main task areas of HR

BP, emphasizing that the work of HR BP is heterogeneous and complex, and the package of tasks includes areas from strategic consulting, to solving individual employee problems (Gołembski, 2013). Ultimately, HR BP work includes building and analyzing human potential in an organization, planning long-term employment levels and development paths, and using and sharing available knowledge to ensure best practices in human resources management (Stosik, Głowicki, and Zarecka, 2011).

It follows from the above that the concept of HR BP is still at the stage of shaping and changing, which makes it difficult to agree on the scope of the definition for this concept. Nevertheless, it functions in organizations, although in practice its tasks are understood differently, and depend on the particular company's needs. For instance, research based on job offers published in Poland showed that employers are looking for people with very different competencies for this position. HR BPs are seen as staffing experts or HR managers, and only some of job offers mentioned tasks with reference to strategy (Piwowar-Sulej, 2017). Generally, social and personal competencies play a crucial role in the successful performance of HR BP (Staszkiewicz, 2021).

Many organizations struggle with the effective implementation of HR BP functions, thus they use the oldest simple classic Ulrich model. In order to effectively respond to external challenges and provide added value to investors, they must first consolidate HR BP's position within the company (Chudzińska, 2018). Important factors to consider are: the company's business strategy, organizational culture and the location of HR in the organizational structure, as they have the greatest impact on the shape and role of HR BP in organizations (Kopertyńska and Dernowska, 2021). Furthermore, national culture may have influence on the above-mentioned areas, which was proved in research where differences had been found in the design of the HR BP models between the UK and Germany (Wach, Wehner, and Kabst, 2021).

The impact of the COVID pandemic on HR BP activities is not yet scientifically recognized. A literature review with the use of well-known databases, i.e. ProQuest, Ebsco, JSTOR, Scopus provided minor results. The importance of business partnering is mentioned in research as one of the future HR processes required from contemporary HR managers (Schultz, 2021). The evolution of the role of HR Business Partner was shown in the case study of a clothing company operating in Poland (Rosiński, Pieczka, and Stańczyk, 2021).

The articles in fact concern more broadly the role or tasks of HR departments in response to the challenges created by a turbulent environment. Firstly, it was underlined that HR plays a central role during the pandemic facing challenges such as: balancing multiple stakeholders needs, and tensions between strategic and operational roles (Collings, McMackin, Nyberg, and Wright, 2021). Many authors described the negative impact of COVID-19 on physical and mental well-being

(Davidsen and Petersen, 2021), self-rated health (Tušl, Brauchli, Kerksieck, and Bauer, 2021) and relations at work (Juchnowicz and Kinowska, 2021). Employees were worried about losing their jobs, concerned for their own health and the health of family members, felt difficulties in maintaining work-life balance and had a sense of uncertainty about the future. They also believed that mental health training programs would be able to help them reduce their stress levels and support their sense of well-being (Gigi and Pavithra, 2020). Thus, HR departments were involved in providing support in the work-life balance and well-being.

A lot of attention was also paid to remote work, which at first was enforced during the pandemic and then for some organizations stayed as "the new normal". In fact, nowadays employers create possibilities of hybrid work which is a combination (in many different forms) of traditional and online work (Yang, Kim, and Hong, 2021). It should be stated that hybrid work has many advantages and disadvantages both for employees and employers (Fan and Moen, 2021). Nevertheless, it is increasingly stated that it will become the most popular model on the job-market (Moglia, Hopkins, and Bardoel, 2021), which results in the necessity to design a hybrid office (Fayard, Weeks, and Khan, 2021).

In conclusion, it can be stated that there is a research gap regarding the tasks, responsibilities and importance of the HR BP position during the COVID-19 pandemic, and probable changes caused by its impact. The results of the research presented in this article contribute to filling the gap.

9.3. The empirical research methodics

The main goal of the empirical research was to determine whether the meaning of role and tasks of HR Business Partner in companies during the pandemic were significantly different from those in the pre-pandemic period.

The research questions were constructed as follows:

- What was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HR BP's activities and responsibilities?
- What was the change in priorities on the HR BP position when comparing the period before and during the pandemic?
- What are the main roles of HR BP in the crisis situation caused by COVID-19?

The quantitative study with the use of the author's questionnaire and CATI interview was carried out in October-November 2020. Nonprobability sampling was used to select the respondents, thus it is not allowed to transfer statistical data to the entire population, but probable trends occurring in a given community may be discussed.

Taking into consideration the fact that Polish small enterprises are still mostly unaware of the proposition value and possible services of HR BP (Matuska and Niedzielski, 2018), hence do not usually have such position in their structures, the research focused on large organizations only. The final research sample included

102 companies operating in Poland, representing 10 different industries; almost one--third of them represented industry (31%), about one tenth sales (12%), and services (10%). All the companies employed 250 or more employees, of which 64% employed up to 500 people.

The CATI interview was conducted with the representative sample groups from the selected organizations who worked as HR department managers (66%), or held positions of HR specialists (34%). Detailed descriptions of the respondents characteristics is presented in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1. Profile of the respondents

Organizations' profile	
Industry	– banking – 9% – construction – 5% – energy – 7% – pharmaceuticals and health care – 9% – finance and insurance – 9% – industry – 31% – sales – 12% – services – 10% – high-tech – 1% – transport and logistics – 8%
Employment	– 250-500 employees – 64% – 501-1000 employees – 32% – 1001-2000 employees – 4%
Representatives' profile	
Position in the structure	– director/manager of HR department – 66% – HR specialist – 34%
Experience in a given organization	– 1-5 years of experience – 28% – 6-10 years of experience – 66% – over 10 years of experience – 6%

Source: own study.

9.4. Empirical research findings

In order to answer the first research question of what was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HR BP's activities and responsibilities, the respondents were asked about the overall impact of the pandemic on the activities carried out in the HR Business Partner position. For 80% companies, this impact was felt (with 15% selecting "definitely yes" and 66% "rather yes"), while only 5% said they had not felt such impact, and 14% marked the answer "hard to say". The respondents were then asked how the pandemic affected particular HR BP activities. The answers are presented in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the HR BP position (in %)*

Type of impact	Yes, we have felt the impact in this area	No, we have not felt the impact in this area
The scope of HR Business Partner activities has increased	40	60
The scope of responsibilities in this position has increased	63	37
There is a growing understanding of the importance of the existence of the HR BP position	43	57
The scope of HR Business Partner activities has decreased	0	100
Responsibilities have been reduced	0	100

* The respondents could select several answers.

Source: own study.

The results show that the pandemic had the greatest impact on increasing the scope of responsibilities in the position of HR Business Partner. This impact was felt by 63% of the surveyed organizations, while in 40% of the organizations, it was perceived as increasing the scope of HR Business Partner activities. Importantly, due to the emergence of new conditions in the environment, the need to act under the pressure of economic conditions which were deteriorating due to the pandemic, the understanding of the importance of having such a position, has increased in 43% of organizations.

For the second research question, which was to identify the change in priorities on the HR BP position comparing the time before and during the pandemic, the respondents were asked to set priorities to particular processes of HR BP activity in these two periods of time. The pool of processes included:

- supporting the management board,
- building relations with employees,
- implementing changes,
- conducting strategic projects,
- HR analytics.

The results presented in Figure 9.1 show that before the pandemic, building relations with employees was an important area of HR BP activities: 40% respondents indicated it as the first priority and 18% as the second priority. Nevertheless, it should be also mentioned that for 18% it was the last priority. Furthermore, implementing changes seemed to be an important process for organizations as 30% perceived it as the first priority, and 18% as the second one. However, one-third of the respondents considered it as the last priority. HR analytics was seen usually as the second (42%) or third (30%) priority. As far as the support of the Board is considered, it should be emphasized that there is a very diverse approach to this area (almost one-third considered it as the last priority) which seems to be quite different from what transpires from the literature and the discussed models. The last process – conducting strategic projects – was indicated as the least important activity of HR BP (with 47% as the fourth priority and 24% as the fifth).

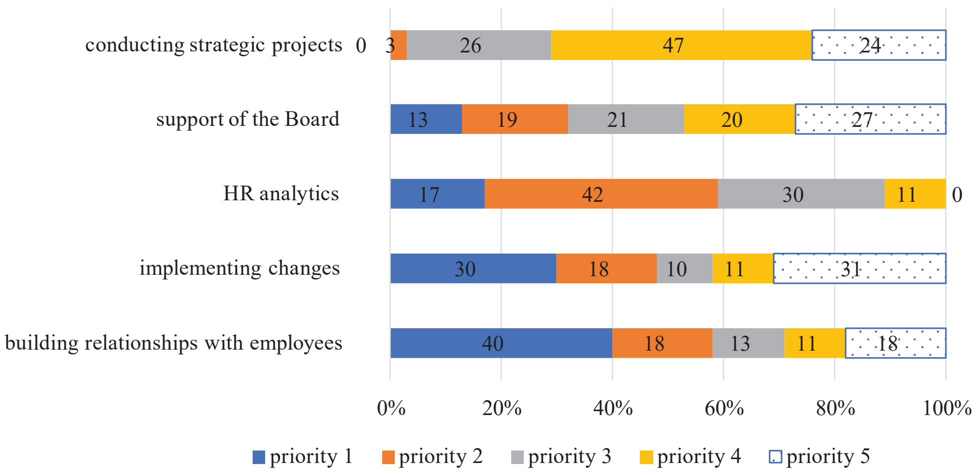

Figure 9.1. HR BP priorities before the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: own study.

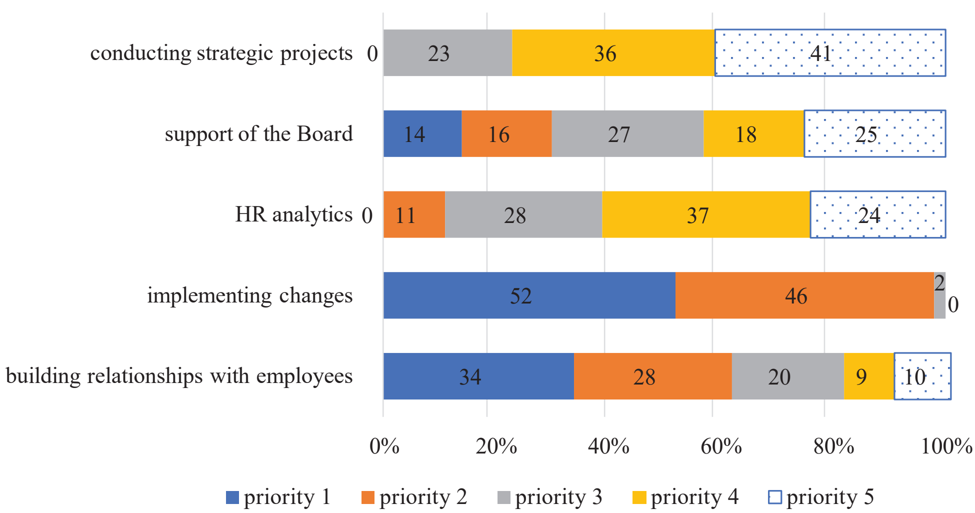

Figure 9.2. HR BP priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: own study.

As a result of the pandemic, there has been a change in HR BP priorities (see Figure 9.2). First place was definitely taken by implementing changes, indicated as the first priority by 52% of the respondents, and the second priority by 46%. The process of building relationships with employees dropped to the second place, but was still important for organizations (34% indicated it as the first priority, and 28% as the second priority). Third place was taken by support of the Board with 14% of indications as being the first priority, and 16% as the second priority. Finally, HR analytics was in fourth place, and conducting strategic projects was seen as the last priority.

The third research question concerned the main roles of HR BP in the crisis situation caused by COVID-19. The detailed answers are presented in Figure 9.3.

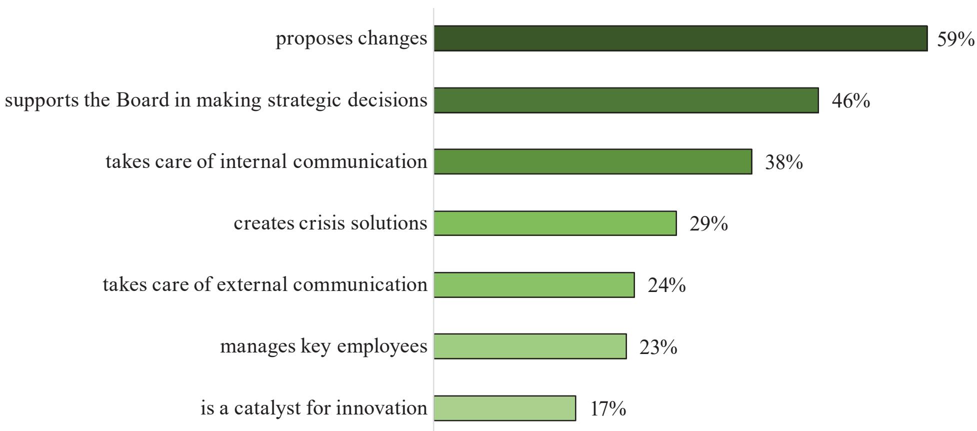

Figure 9.3. The role of HR BP in the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: own study.

The most important role for 59% of the respondents was proposing changes; next chosen (46%) was the support of the management board in making strategic decisions which is somewhat contrary to the previous question, in which the support of the board was ranked lower in the priorities. Taking care of internal communication was ranked third (38%), which seems understandable in the era of the pandemic. The relatively low position of the task concerning the creation of crisis solutions is somewhat surprising, yet the research shows that HR BPs participate in such processes only in every third organization.

9.5. Final conclusions and research summary

In light of the empirical research findings presented in the previous section, it can be confirmed that the goal has been achieved. One can conclude that the vast majority of companies have felt the impact of the pandemic on the activities carried out in the HR Business Partner function. Taking into account the literature studies which indicate a diverse approach to the role and tasks of the person employed in this position, it can be concluded that this impact is difficult to generalize.

A recurring area in the respondents' answers was the introduction or proposal of changes, which were inevitable for almost all companies in the pandemic year 2020. Another important area was building relationships with employees and taking care of internal communication. In particular, distrust and resistance may arise when implement changes, hence proper care of these areas can be helpful in achieving strategic goals and supporting the organization in overcoming a crisis situation. However, the results do not support the Ulrich model with the strategic partner function in first place, but they are rather in compliance with Timms' roles of relationships builder and trustee.

Finally, referring to the goal of this chapter, one can also conclude that it has been attained, as the author managed to juxtapose the meaning of role and tasks of HR Business Partner in companies in two periods of time, i.e. before and during the pandemic. In short, the pandemic has increased the responsibility regarding HR Business Partners. In many companies, the understanding of the importance of the existence of such a position has increased. The role of HR Business Partner in the aspect of introducing changes has been strengthened, yet it still remains important to build relations with employees. In a crisis situation, HR BP, in addition to introducing changes, supports the management board in making strategic decisions and takes care of internal communication.

The presented research findings contribute to filling part of the research gap. The proposed areas for further analyses are: verification of the competencies necessary for the effective implementation of the HR Business Partner function (both in a situation of economic prosperity and taking into account the crisis), and extending research on tasks carried out as HR Business Partner – depending on the structure of the company and industry – onto a larger number of organizations, as well as verification of the changes in priorities in coming years.

Part IV

THE HUMAN SIDE OF BUSINESS AS A MODERN CONTEXTUAL FACTOR FOR HCM

Chapter 10

JOB SECURITY – FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EMPLOYEE INTERESTS

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10.1. Introduction

The application aspects of the solutions postulated in the literature, related to giving importance to knowledge about reality, increase the utility of the theory. This is particularly reflected in *business economics* (Gruszecki, 2002, pp. 43-44), which is largely characterized by its approach to respecting the interests of employers and employees.

It has been stated in the literature for some time that employees are the primary group of stakeholders (Stuart, 2002, p. 28). Therefore, their role in the creation and survival of the enterprise is critical. This is evidenced in particular by monitoring the extent to which employees identify with changes in the enterprise's identity while ensuring that their needs are met (Stuart, 2002, p. 28). However, this requires knowing their interests and treating them in a way they would like to be treated. This prevents the sense of exclusion and fosters belonging to the community. It also involves experiencing social support in problematic, difficult, stressful, and critical situations (Sęk and Cieślak, 2004, p. 18).

The interests of employees are differentiated depending on several factors such as the current legal regulations in a given country (especially labor law), the situation on the labor market, cultural and demographic conditions, including the so-called generational changes, and the preferred approach of employers to people and their work, etc.

Employee interests are related to a wide range of issues. It is a popular thesis in management theory that a person must feel physical and mental comfort to engage in work actively and creatively. With this in mind, it is increasingly frequently stated that for people taking up work, a particularly important interest, in addition to the amount and structure of income obtained for performing tasks in the enterprise, is

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also – and sometimes even primarily – a sense of job security. It is worth pointing out that the concept of job security is perceived in the literature in a complex and insufficiently unambiguous way. For example, it is linked to, among other things, ensuring safe and healthy working conditions, but also to the sense of stable employment.

In this context, **the goal of this chapter** is to support the thesis that that job security should be considered as an important interest of employees. To attain this goal the content of this part of the monograph is structured in the following way. First, the author discusses the theoretical foundations for providing job security and its importance to employee interests, because of the conducted empirical research in this area, and thus the adopted research methodics are addressed before its presentation. The most important results of the empirical research are described next. Finally, a concise summary of these research findings and key conclusions are made.

10.2. Theoretical foundations for job security and its importance for employee interests

The term 'employee interests' is not clearly defined in the literature. The interests are most often described as the manifestation of advantages[1] and expectations of employees in relation to the performed work. It is noted that employees, who have their expectations, strive to achieve them, and if this does not happen, they eventually look to work for another employer (*Employees expectations…*, 2021). The explorations of the interests of employees are conducted in a rather scattered way; they concern, for example, economic and professional aspects. The problems of interests viewed as employee expectations were addressed in reference to the research on motivation to work (Lobanova, 2015), the possibility of activating this motivation by meeting the employee interests, and showing the relation between interests and future job search, choice of education, or the currently performed job (Harackiewicz and Hulleman, 2010; Hidi and Renninger, 2006).

Given the above, it is worth pointing out that the literature on the subject makes attempts, referring to the results of empirical research, to indicate the most important interests of employees related to the performance of work (e.g. Gableta, 2012, pp. 15-75; Hai-dong and Yu-jun, 2006; Paliwoda-Matiolańska, 2014, pp. 62-63; Wachowiak, 2013, pp. 148-149):

- a rewarding salary and/or compensation commensurate with responsibilities,
- a sense of job security,
- good occupational safety and health,
- clear criteria for the evaluation of task performance,

[1] One interpretation of the term 'interest' indicates that it means a benefit or something that benefits someone (*Cambridge dictionary*, 2021).

- access to reliable information about the enterprise and its situation,
- friendly atmosphere in the workplace,
- opportunities for development and promotion.

The complexity and fast pace of changes occurring in the global economy have led to the transformation of enterprises, the way they operate, their management, and the nature of the work itself. This gives rise to the need to increase the flexibility of employees, having the ability to adapt to new challenges coming from enterprises and their environment, in particular the continuous updating, complementing, and developing competencies by people providing work (Myjak, 2019, pp. 79--88). As emphasized by researchers, pursuing the chosen profession and career path for many years (see e.g. Auer, 2006; Barley, Bechky, and Milliken, 2017; Gembalska-Kwiecień, 2017; Juchnowicz, 2010; Muffels, Crouch, and Wilthagen, 2014; Pawłowska, 2017) has ceased to be a defining characteristic of working life. Instead, instability of employment with a single employer, occupational mobility, and insecurity of employment are enumerated. In these circumstances, among the interests of employees, the category of security and its perception by employees becomes increasingly important.

The term 'security' is interdisciplinary in its nature, which makes it difficult to define. As stated in the literature, it is sometimes defined differently for the needs of different scientific disciplines (Ejdys, Lulewicz, and Obolewicz, 2008, p. 53). According to one definition, security should be associated with the ability to avoid harm resulting from risk, danger, or threat (*Cambridge dictionary*, 2021).

When considering the individual risk associated with the stability of employees within the enterprise, the literature usually refers to job security (Barley et al., 2017; Chung and Mau, 2014; Collins, 2006; Green, 2009; Juchnowicz, 2010; Lowe, 2018; Myjak, 2018; Salladarré, Hlaimi, and Wolff, 2011; Probst and Jiang, 2017). To understand the essence of job security, it seems crucial to look at it from the standpoint of its reference perspectives. The analysis of the literature on the subject draws particular attention to two of them:

- the perspective related to ensuring that workers are not exposed to harmful and hazardous conditions in the workplace,
- the perspective related to the possibility of job loss, or revealing job insecurity within the enterprise.

The former is explored mainly in the literature on the protection of health and life of employees and, more broadly, the problems of working conditions. Thus, this security is identified here with the state of a workplace's equipment, its adaptation to the physical, mental, and social capabilities of the person performing the work to limit dangerous situations, potential accidents, etc. (Studenski, 1996, p. 15). In other words, job security is perceived in this perspective as an activity aimed at protecting employees from potential exposure or accidents using various technical measures, safe organization of work, and instilling safe human behavior at work, taking into account the type and severity of potential accident hazards (Hansen, 1998, p. 14).

It should be added that job security understood in this way is also described in the literature, especially in Polish, using the term *bezpieczeństwo i higiena pracy* (BHP), the English-language literature opts for 'occupational safety and health' (OSH). Similarly to Polish literature, OSH refers to the anticipation, recognition, evaluation, and control of workplace hazards that may adversely affect employees' life and health, taking into account the impact on surrounding communities and the environment (Alli, 2008).

In the latter perspective, characteristic especially of studies in the field of social economics, sociology, and social policy, job security refers to the possibility of keeping a particular job and at the same time providing protection against dismissal (see e.g. Madsen, 2007) or the lack of fear of losing the job. Part of the international research on perceptions of job security, conducted as early as in the late 1990s, is therefore based on the consideration of the attitudes to employees' perceptions of the likelihood of downsizing (Wooden, 1999). In Polish literature, an analogous understanding of the concept of job security can be observed. It is indicated that job security should be combined with certainty about the workplace, fear of losing the specific benefits associated with it, and a sense of helplessness to prevent it (cf. Pawłowska, 2017).

According to businessdictionary.com, the security in question is seen as the assurance, or the lack of assurance, that an employee will not be laid off. Thus, this does not mean only being employed in a particular enterprise at a particular time but also having a job throughout one's working life. A similar perspective on the perception of job security was presented by Heibutzki (2013), who indicated that it should be combined with both career stability and the improvement of work motivation. This author also pointed out that job insecurity cannot be equated with subjective assessments of job opportunities by individual employees (van Oorschot and Chung, 2015).

Consequently, researchers are increasingly stressing that in today's flexible conditions of providing work, job security should be associated with a sense of employment security (cf. Lowe, 2018). It is emphasized that employment security is associated not only with having a job at a particular place and time but with career progression, regardless of the current place and time of employment. This is because employability plays a key role here, meaning the individual's perception of the possibility of finding a new job using the individuals' knowledge and skills (see e.g. Madsen, 2007; Marx, 2014). It is pointed out that the increase in employability is facilitated in particular by the creation of conditions for participation in training, which foster the improvement of qualifications (Collins, 2006). The literature also points to the importance of individual competencies as key to increasing employability (Miller, 2018; Roth and Kurtyka, 2017; Wood and Payne, 2006; World Economic Forum, 2016). However, it is important to keep in mind that in practice, differences in individual countries, even in Europe, emerge both in the very understanding of employability and in how its development is supported (cf. Marzec, 2015).

Considering the complexity of the job security problems discussed here, including its two-dimensionality (the OSH perspective and the perspective related to having work and/or employability), the author's definition of job security is proposed, namely the possibility of getting a job, keeping it and securing the conditions of its performance which do not endanger the health and life of employees, and the possibility of obtaining income by individuals performing work, regardless of the employee or non-employee form of its provision. Note that the definition also refers to the aspect which has not been explored to date, i.e. income generation by persons performing work. However, it seems that this aspect cannot be omitted when talking about employee safety.

10.3. The empirical research methodics

The main goal of the empirical research was to identify the importance given by employees to job security as one of their interests. Due to the ambiguity of the concept of job security, it was deemed appropriate, as a first step, to identify the perception of the term in light of empirical research among employees.

The following research questions were formulated:

1. How do employees perceive the concept of job security?
2. What place does job security have in the hierarchy of employee interests?
3. Are employee interests in ensuring job security respected by employers?

To answer these research questions, an empirical study was conducted among employees in 2018-2020[2]. The information was collected using a questionnaire, the PAPI (*Paper and Pencil Interview*) technique was used[3].

A random sample of employees working in enterprises registered in the Lower Silesia Voivodeship was used (working both based on full-time employment and e.g. contract of mandate). Data from EURES (European Job Mobility Portal) show that the population of employees (in the business sector of the Lower Silesia Voivodeship) in 2018 numbered 484,100.

For the purpose of the study, a random sample of $N = 274$ was drawn from a finite population of employees working in enterprises registered in the Lower Silesia Voivodeship. Assuming a 6% maximum estimation error, a significance level of alpha = 0.05, and an estimated fraction size of 0.5 for a finite population of $N = 484{,}100$, the minimum sample size was $n = 267$. The randomness of the sample was obtained using a random operator in the form of a database of employees working in enterprises registered in the Lower Silesia Voivodeship from a population of employees defined for the purposes of the study.

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[2] The research results presented here are a part of a larger study on the interests of employees and respecting them, conducted by the author of this article and presented in a broader context in the monograph (Cierniak-Emerych and Gableta, 2022).

[3] At this stage of the study, the author collaborated with the Instytut Badawczy IPC Sp. z o.o.

The study group included both individuals who have been with their current employer for less than a year (14.2%) and those with more than 15 years of job seniority with their current employer (19.0%). Most of the respondents at the time of the survey were employed under a contract for an indefinite period (56.6%), while 21.2% were employed under a contract for a definite period of time. The study group was also highly diverse in terms of gender and age; women accounted for 50.4% of the group while there were 49.6% men. There were 24.5% of the respondents under the age of 30 years, and 21.5% of those over 50. One in four respondents was aged between 31 and 40. The most numerous group, accounting for 28.8% of the total study group, were those aged 41-50.

10.4. The empirical research findings

When searching for an answer to the research question concerning the employees' perception of the concept of job security, it was found – based on the results of the study – that the respondents most often associated job security with occupational safety and health and employment security (48.2% of responses) (see Figure 10.1).

However, 42.7% of the respondents associate job security only with safe and healthy working conditions (machinery, equipment, lighting, etc.). Furthermore, 41.6% of the respondents perceived job security as the certainty of having a job, whereas slightly fewer (38.3%) linked it with working under a contract of employment (see Figure 10.1). It should also be noted that the respondents had mixed opinions on the non-standard forms of employment; 44.9% stated that these forms of employment do not allow the interests of employees to be satisfied. The opposite view was held by 36.5%, whereas the other respondents were not able to give a clear answer.

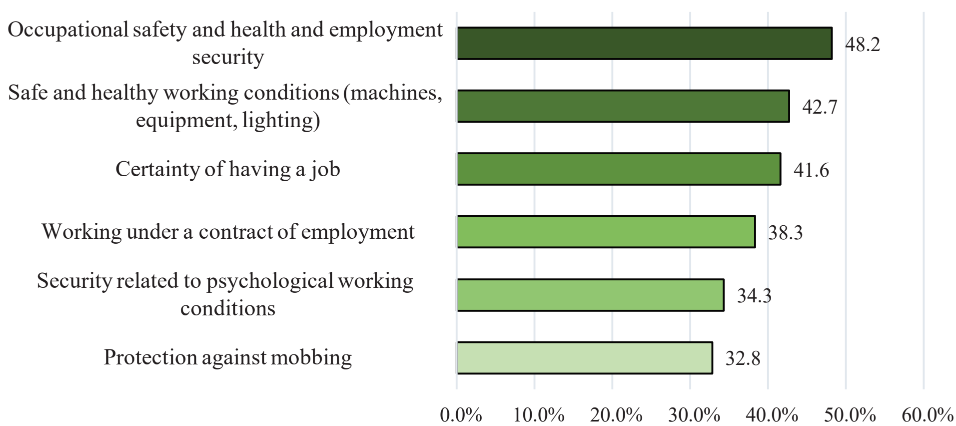

Figure 10.1. Job security as perceived by the respondents

Source: own research.

It should be noted that among the respondents with a contract for an indefinite period of time, there was a higher percentage of indications of associating the term 'job security' with both occupational safety and health and employment security than in the study group in total. The relation was confirmed by the chi-squared test (see Figure 10.2).

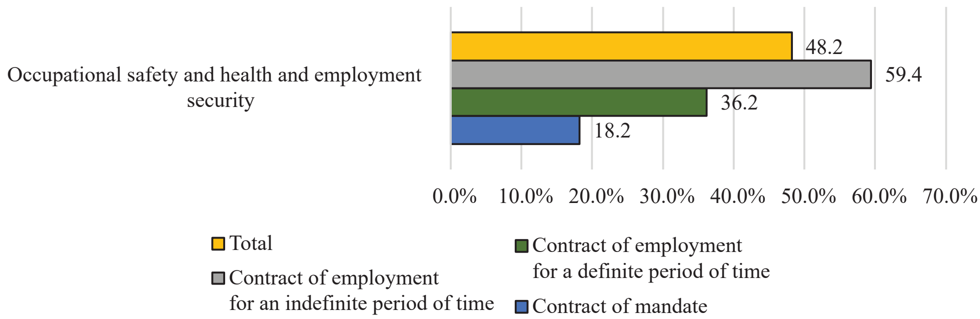

Figure 10.2. What do you associate the term job security with? – in terms of employment

Source: own research.

There was also a relation indicating that women are significantly more likely than men to associate job security with protection against mobbing (see Figure 10.3). The relation was confirmed by the chi-squared test.

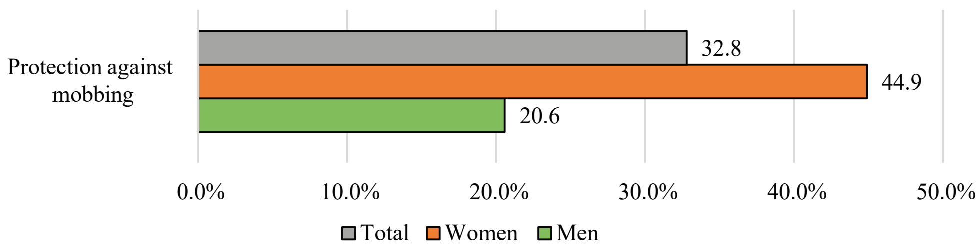

Figure 10.3. What do you associate the term job security with? – in terms of gender

Source: own research.

While searching for an answer to the question of the place of job security in the hierarchy of interests of employees, it was found that among the proposed choice of interests[4] which could be indicated by the respondents, first place was taken by safe and healthy working conditions (96.3%), and second by compensation commensurate with responsibilities (92%). With the accepted definition of the concept of job security, it should be noted that other important factors indicated by employees

[4] The proposed choice of 22 interests was developed based on research conducted in 2009-2017, in which the author of this paper was a member of the research team and carried out a literature review.

are permanent employment (85% of indications) and protection against dismissal (83.9% of indications). Of the other interests of employees, a good atmosphere was also enumerated by the respondents and was ranked third in terms of importance. More than 90% of the respondents also indicated the provision of clear criteria for evaluating task performance as important.

The last research question was whether employee interests in ensuring job security were respected by employers. The results of the survey showed that almost all the respondents had safe and healthy working conditions at their workplace (96.7%, see Figure 14). In terms of the number of indications, a good working atmosphere was in second place, whereas the help of superiors and co-workers was third. The listed items were indicated by 83.1% and 80.1% of the respondents, respectively. In the context of the discussion, however, it is noteworthy that among the interests that are respected, employees did not give significant priority to issues related to job security such as employment for an indefinite period or protection of employment.

According to the employees surveyed, managers take the interests of employees into account, mainly because of the need for maintaining a good reputation (71.5% of affirmative responses). Concern about conflict with employees came second (59.5% of indications). Furthermore, according to 59.1% of the respondents, this type of behavior is a result of the enterprise's organizational culture. It should be noted that, among others, Sanders and Roefs (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2004) emphasized that an appropriate combination of safety and health issues with social responsibility helps create a positive image of the employer.

10.5. Final conclusions and research summary

The changing conditions of the functioning of business entities are reflected, among other things, in the area of job security. This requires recognizing the symptoms of these changes and reviewing the existing solutions related to respecting the employee interests concerning job security.

Meeting the employee interests in terms of safe and healthy working and employment conditions is related to corporate social responsibility (CSR). One of the aspects of CSR is responsibility related to employment, including job security. The approach to job security presented here reflects an effort to consider it as comprehensively as possible. This is evidenced by going beyond the field of occupational safety and health. Consideration of job security in relation to employment security also demonstrates the desire for a multifaceted view of occupational safety in modern enterprises.

By presenting an approach to job security that meets today's challenges, the attempt was made in the study to draw attention not only to the importance of adequate OSH within an enterprise but also to the importance of employment security, including employment for an indefinite period of time and related protection against dismissal, as important items in the group of interests expressed by employees.

In this context the main goal of the empirical research was to identify the importance given by employees to job security as one of their interests. Referring the research findings presented in the previous section it can be concluded that the goal has been achieved. The author presented and discussed the data associated with such issues as the employees' perception of the job security concept, the place that job security occupies in the hierarchy of employees' interests, and the respect of employers toward employees' interests in ensuring job security. Moreover, this allows to recognize that the goal of this chapter has also been achieved. Namely, in the final summary one can conclude that the thesis that that job security should be considered as an important interest of employees has been supported both by the literature review and empirical research findings.

However, the investigations carried out in this study should be continued having in mind, in particular, the changes occurring in the labor market associated with generational changes, the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and migration, especially from Ukraine.

Chapter 11

THE SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF ORGANIZATIONS AS A DETERMINANT OF EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT

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11.1. Introduction

The dynamic development of technology and globalization processes have led to the formation of highly competitive markets. Organizations operating in such an environment are forced to constantly search for sources of competitive advantage and to consolidate it, among which the knowledge, experience, and talents of employees. Their effective use depends, in turn, on the level of their satisfaction and commitment to work. Satisfied and engaged employees are very valuable to an organization, as they identify with it more strongly, generate higher revenues, or are characterized by lower absenteeism. Therefore, all the actions taken by organizations to increase the level of satisfaction and commitment at work become very important. These actions can cover many areas, such as those discussed in the previous chapters of this monograph.

In this part the authors are interested in the area of social activity. In the literature, this term is rarely used in the context of organizations, researchers mostly use it to explain civic attitudes. However, given the role that organizational social activity can play in shaping employee satisfaction and commitment, **the goal of this chapter** is to propose the conceptual model of the relations between the social activity of an organization, and employee satisfaction and commitment. This goal is realized in three stages which correspond to the subsequent sections. Firstly, the authors outline the theoretical foundations for the concept of the social activity of an organization, including their own definition of this phenomena. Next, the attention is focused on the explanation of two types of relations – the first concerns those

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between employee commitment and the social activity of an organization, while the second one addresses the relations between employee job satisfaction and the social activity of an organization. Finally, the concept of the relations between employee satisfaction and commitment and the social activity of an organization makes up the last section of this chapter.

11.2. Theoretical foundations for the concept of the social activity of an organization

All of us live in two perspectives, individual (individual) and social (collective). Each person sets individual goals, concerning his or her development, as well as social goals regarding the requirements and expectations of the surrounding environment. Both individual and social perspectives play an important role for people (Klamut, 2013, p. 187). A person's involvement in the public sphere can take the form of professional activity or socially oriented activities, including, for example, local, regional, or national issues, and can be realized in the form of individual or institutionalized activities. The former should be understood as pro bono work for those most in need, performed outside the place of one's professional (providing income) activity. While the latter, the so-called institutionalized social activity, is carried out within organizations, associations, unions, church, and religious associations (Worach-Kardas, 2015, pp. 24-25).

In social psychology, social activity is described in the area of pro-social behavior, such as altruism, benevolence, and friendship. Klamut defines social activity as actions for the benefit of fellow citizens, i.e., actions for the widely understood social interest or the common good (Klamut, 2013, p. 200). In turn, Słowik states that social activity is a personality trait, meaning the very readiness of an individual to deal with social problems, and readiness to act for other people and groups (Słowik, 2008, p. 98). The PWN encyclopedia defines social activity as all socially normalized activities of individuals, performed as part of specific social roles (*Encyklopedia PWN*, n.d.).

The literature lacks, however, a complete definition of the social activity of organizations. It seems to be a term that is in the process of constructing its meaning. Despite attempts to find a definition of the social activity of organizations, in both domestic and foreign literature, one can only find the meaning of the term *social activity*, *local government,* and *local community*. An interesting combination of the term social activity with the praxeological concept of efficient action was presented by Kotarbiński (2019), according to whom both individuals and entire organizations pursuing a specific goal should be as active as possible, i.e. make full use of the resources and opportunities at their disposal to develop strategic action and influence the processes taking place in the course, approaching the set goals. This approach seems to strengthen employers' image activities, yet it only reveals the hallmarks of the social activity of organizations and should be treated as a prelude to creating a definition of the term.

There is also a noteworthy concept describing social activity through participation in civic engagement networks, e.g. in the so-called ‘country housewives’ clubs’ in the post-war Poland, associations, foundations, sports clubs, and others. Klamut also described a model of civic activity understood as the social activity of a person in the context of being a citizen of a democratic state (Klamut, 2013, p. 187).

The gap in defining the term of the social activity of organizations prompts further exploration. It seems that the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) could become a supporting element in the further clarification of the notion. In the literature on the subject, one can find numerous ways of presenting the essence of Corporate Social Responsibility, however this study quotes a synthetic way of defining this term proposed by Hopkins, who analyzed the problem, defined its components. He also drew attention to an important aspect, presenting CSR as the process of treating a company’s stakeholders ethically and responsibly, namely in a manner recognized as acceptable according to international standards. According to Hopkins, the notion of Social Responsibility includes economic, financial, and environmental responsibility, and the broader goal of Social Responsibility is to create ever higher standards of sustainability while maintaining organizational viability and integrity, both inside and outside organizations. He emphasizes that the key to CSR activities is to generate profit, and not to pursue profit at any cost. CSR is a process of achieving sustainable development, and treating key stakeholders responsibly. However, assuming such a position, the issue of CSR should be treated more broadly and always discussed from the macro position, while the term of the social activity of organizations should be treated from the micro position, as it directly affects local, possibly regional issues. Assuming that CSR is a broader area than the social activity of organizations, the initial attempts to identify both terms seem to be a wrong direction of research.

Figure 11.1. Concepts underlying the social activity of organizations

Source: own elaboration.

To fully understand the essence and activities in the field of the social activity of organizations, it appears important to show the notions that can be used to indicate the proper direction of defining the term, namely *sustainability*, the idea of *Green HRM, dual labor market,* and *the concept of stakeholders* (Figure 11.1).

The first of the presented terms within the framework of deliberations devoted to the theoretical sources of the problem of the social activity of organizations (SOA), is *sustainability*. The origins of this concept can be traced back to the World Economic Forum held on 31st January 1999, when Kofi Annan, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, called on world business leaders and organizations of workers and representatives of civil society to engage in the Global Compact initiative. The idea was to enable nations around the world to share in the benefits of globalization and to define the fundamental values and methods of operating on the global market to meet the socio-economic needs of all people. In addition, the initiative was intended to encourage companies around the world to align their organization's strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labor, environmental protection, and anti-corruption. In 2007, the UN Global Compact introduced the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). This is a set of six principles that should be adopted by management institutions to educate and train managers sensitive to social and environmental challenges along with an understanding of economic issues.

Sustainability refers to a company's ability to continuously learn, adapt and develop, revitalize, reconstruct and reorient for maintaining a sustainable and distinctive position in the market by offering above-average values to buyers today and in the future (consistent with the paradigm of innovative growth), thanks to the organic variability constituting business models, and resulting from the creation of new opportunities, as well as objectives and responses to them while balancing the interests of different groups (Wysokińska-Senkus and Senkus, 2016, p. 114).

The second term presented for the problem of the social activity of organizations is the idea of *Green HRM.* This is a component of sustainable development that considers the environmental context as a basis for making decisions related to human resources management. It is an important tool for implementing the concept of sustainable development in an organization. The main objective of *Green HRM* is to shape employees' ecological sensitivity, pro-environmental work environment, and ecologically responsible attitudes of employees, which will consequently be implemented as a functioning model into the subsequent areas of the organization, such as employee teams, organizational units, inter-organizational relations, and into the private lives of the organization's employees (Różańska-Bińczyk, Matejun, and Matusiak, 2020, p. 79). *Green HRM* practices include green initiatives in all activities related to human resources management, such as planning, acquisition, and adaptation, motivating and evaluating, developing, or de-recruiting employees. These include, but are not limited to, activities within organizations' best practices that incorporate green criteria and competencies.

Pocztowski (2016, p. 306) pointed out the desirability of introducing in organizations the idea of *Green HRM* and implementing solutions, such as building employee involvement in environmental issues, creating the so-called green teams, training, building green leadership, and shaping the organizational culture.

The third term discussed within the framework of the issue under consideration is *the dual labor market*. *The dual labor market* as a theoretical concept, and the notions of primary and secondary labor markets were first introduced by Piore in 1969. Subsequently, the terms were clarified by Doeringer (cf. Leszczyński, 2007, p. 26 ff). The concept distinguishes between the so-called good jobs, attributed to the primary sector of the economy, and bad jobs, associated with the secondary sector. The primary segment offers jobs in large, profitable companies that are largely subject to union supervision and influence. Employment and salary mechanisms are set by state legislation. Those employed in this sector are protected from radical decisions by employers, have high job security, promotion prospects, incentives, and opportunities to expand their professional knowledge, as well as stable working conditions. The jobs offered in this sector are generally sought by all employees, have more favorable salary conditions, and social prestige. Secondary market jobs are not very attractive. Salaries offered in this segment are relatively lower, the working conditions are assessed as very low, there is also a lack of opportunities to improve qualifications or opportunities for promotion with high instability of employment. At the same time, in the secondary market, there are various forms of failure to use the potential of employees. This is due to the lack of representation of employees' interests. The low attractiveness of jobs consequently leads to high employee turnover. The secondary labor market consists of immigrants, national minorities, juveniles, some women, and others referred to as those discriminated. These people have less bargaining power and little chance of entering the primary market. Moreover, they are employed under much worse conditions.

The final issue discussed is *the concept of stakeholders*. Stakeholders are often referred to as strategic supporters, partners and they can be defined as individuals or groups of individuals who exert direct or indirect influence in an organization's efforts to achieve its goals. Obłój defines *stakeholders* as institutions and organizations that meet two conditions (cf. Ogrodnik and Mieszaniec, 2010):

- they have a stake in the company's operations, decisions, and effects,
- they are able to exert effective pressure on the organization.

Kafel characterizes stakeholders in the following way the dependence between an organization and a partner is usually mutual, but it does not have to be balanced, because the organization can be dependent on the partner, forming the basis of its existence, survival, and having power over it. Partners are dependent on the organization morally and legally and remain under its influence. The strength of the dependence is subject to change over time, the organization-partner relationship is contractual in nature, strives for balance, and is based on legitimate legal demands, expectations, and they obligatorily move towards their satisfaction or weakening (Kafel, 2000, pp. 48-49).

In the environment of each organization, it is necessary to distinguish certain spheres in which stakeholders are placed. Each selected stakeholder should be assigned a certain level of influence and interest; conducting such a study can divide stakeholders into several groups, such as:

- key stakeholders who are very interested in the company's situation and have a very strong influence on it,
- stakeholders who are very interested in the company's situation but have little influence on it,
- stakeholders who have a very strong influence on the company but have no interest in the company's situation,
- stakeholders who are not interested in the company's situation and have minimal influence on it.

Thanks to this procedure, decision-makers receive clear information about whose interests and preferences should be taken into account most.

From the above analysis, the authors of this chapter propose the following definition of the social activity of organizations (SAO) as all initiatives and activities of an organization consisting in influencing its environment, going beyond the normal duties associated with running a business, expressed in undertaking activities for both individuals and groups, aiming at the implementation of tasks, satisfying the highly valued social values in the environment of the organization, even at the expense of additional financial outlays incurred by the organization.

The social activity of organizations is influenced by, among others:

- patronage and sponsorship,
- volunteering.

Among the first group of the indicated activities, the following are important:

- the participation of the organization's authorities during social consultations concerning widely understood public matters not undertaken by local authorities, e.g. acts of law (amendments, the enactment of new ones), investments, undertakings, initiatives;
- cooperation with education through the organization of internships, apprenticeships, providing materials for bachelor's, master's, postgraduate theses, as well as competence, and instrumental support for schools;
- supporting institutions involved in charity and civic activities, e.g. local associations, voluntary fire brigades, local sports clubs, etc.;
- patronage and sponsorship of cultural, sports, and scientific events;
- activities addressed to former employees of a given organization (including company retirees).

In the second group of activities, one can indicate as examples the following types and forms of volunteering:

- volunteering in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), associations, foundations;
- employee volunteering, supported by a company (the voluntary participation of employees in pro bono work for the benefit of those in need);
- senior citizen volunteering, sharing their time, knowledge, and experience;
- school volunteering, activities on school premises for the benefit of the school environment;
- sports volunteering, such as by organizing competitions, games, championships.

11.3. Theoretical concept of the relation between employee commitment and the social activity of the organization

Employee satisfaction and commitment are the key areas in which organizations see their competitive advantage. It has become a common belief that taking care of these areas through appropriate activities carried out as part of human resources management brings tangible benefits to organizations. Therefore, it is worth considering the relation between the areas and the social activity of organizations. The intensification of activities within the framework of SAO may have a positive influence on both the satisfaction and involvement of employees and thus improve the functioning of organizations.

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) defines commitment as a positive attitude of an employee to an organization and its values. A committed employee is aware of business needs and cooperates with others to increase efficiency for the benefit of the organization (Vance, 2006, p. 3). In turn, Juchnowicz treats commitment as "a special attitude to work, which is manifested by above-average readiness to act, in which the interests of an organization are as important as individuals' own interests, passion for action, identification with the company (employees believe in the success of the organization, express positive opinions about the organization in the environment in which they function) and a desire to stay in the organization" (Juchnowicz, 2014, p. 56).

The analysis of the literature indicates that employee commitment manifests itself in four forms (Młokosiewicz, 2017):

1) commitment to an organization – identification with its mission, shared values, and the goals of the company;
2) commitment to work – performing tasks at the highest level;
3) commitment to one's job – the consistent pursuit of one's own professional development path;
4) commitment to the social environment – identifying with superiors and co-workers.

The first form of engagement – the commitment to an organization – can be crucial in the context of the social activity of organizations. According to the IES Survey, the main factors influencing the level of engagement are the sense of being appreciated and participation, which in turn are the results of a number of activities in many areas of human resource management. Feeling valued and participating in the life of an organization depend, among other things, on whether employers/supervisors care about the well-being of employees, value their opinions, take into account their goals and value systems, care about their overall job satisfaction, or are willing to accommodate employees' requests in urgent, unusual cases. These issues are largely explained by the concept of psychological contract (Juchnowicz, 2012). It can be assumed that the activities carried out by employees as part of the social activity of organizations will strengthen their goals and the adopted system of values, and their opinions on social problems, for example in the local labor market, should be noticed and considered in the process of managing the company. Thus, the increasing sense of appreciation and participation translates into the level of commitment. This relation is shown in Figure 11.2.

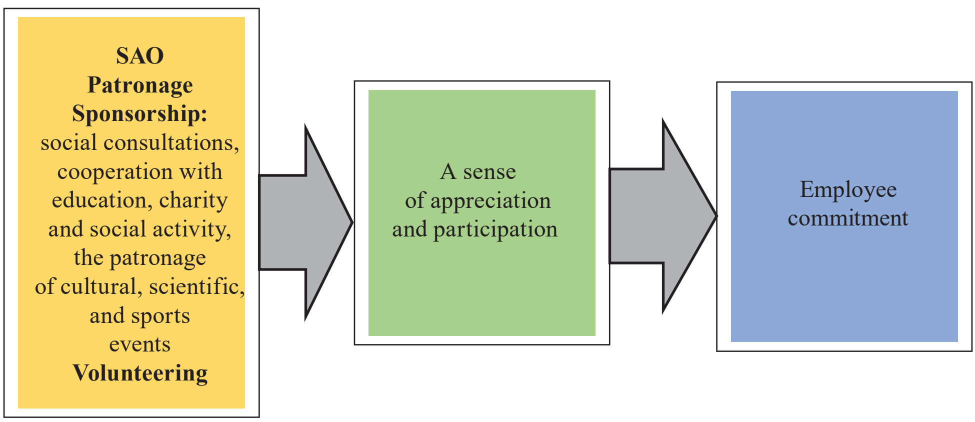

Figure 11.2. The relation between SAO, the sense of appreciation and participation, and employee commitment

Source: own elaboration.

11.4. Theoretical concept of the relation between employee job satisfaction and the social activity of an organization

Job satisfaction, despite numerous discussions and scientific research already conducted for several decades, is still a central point of consideration in many publications (Juchnowicz, 2014; Nieć, 2020). It is a highly subjective category, as it is based on individual expectations and value systems of particular employees. As a result, there are problems with designing a system that would affect all people employed in a given organization similarly and, at the same time, allow for the exact level of intensity of the discussed category (Sowińska, 2014).

Job satisfaction (contentment) is defined differently in the literature. Classically, it refers to the result of perceiving one's work as one that enables the attainment of important values, and these values are in line with or help to attain basic human needs (Locke, 1976). Yet Juchnowicz, analyzing the differences between job contentment and job satisfaction, states that job satisfaction is a higher level of job contentment, requiring that work provides intellectual challenges, a sense of success, the joy of professional development and self-realization, and full identification with one's job and/or organization (Juchnowicz, 2014, p. 15).

Considering the problem-related nature of the chapter, the factors shaping the level of job satisfaction are of great importance. The literature on the subject provides many examples of their classifications. For example, Gross divided them into three categories (Gross, 2003):

1) organizational – directly related to work, such as the type of tasks performed, the amount of remuneration, promotion prospects, organizational operating policies (care for employees and their needs);
2) social – organizational climate, relations with supervisors and co-workers, respect at work;
3) personal – age, gender, cognitive abilities, personality traits, etc.

An interesting proposal for the classification of factors determining job satisfaction was presented by Bartkowiak (2009), suggesting the factors discussed can be classified as direct or indirect, while in each group, one can distinguish employee and organizational factors. From the point of view of the deliberations carried out, indirect factors deserve attention, with particular emphasis put on the organizational context. According to the cited author, this group of factors should include the requirements of the organization, relations with customers, the environment, public opinion, etc.

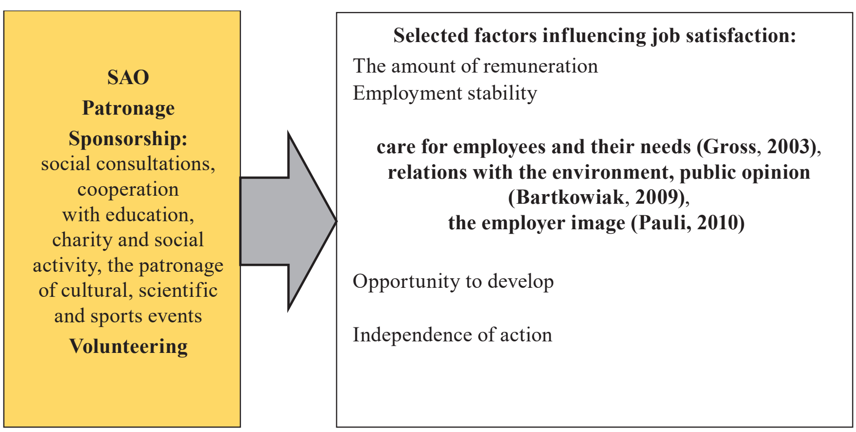

Figure 11.3. The social activity of organizations vs. factors shaping job satisfaction

Source: own elaboration.

Another proposal for the classification of the discussed factors was presented by Pauli (2010), who distinguished three areas: working conditions, relations at work, and the management system. Each area includes many factors that together determine the final level of job satisfaction. One of them is the employer image (working conditions area), which determines how recognizable the organization is in the labor market, to what extent working for the employer is a source of additional satisfaction, and indicates whether an employee would recommend working for the company to others. Again, SAO can have a large impact on the final level of job satisfaction, as shown in Figure 11.3.

11.5. The final concept of relations between employee satisfaction and commitment and the social activity of an organization

Concluding the discussion conducted in the previous sections it can be said that the social activity of organizations and employee satisfaction and commitment constitute interrelated categories. It is assumed that the basis for the full involvement of employees is to achieve the appropriate level of satisfaction. This relation can be presented as follows (Juchnowicz, 2014, p. 57):

1) achievements at work result in extrinsic rewards;
2) an employee evaluates the fairness of rewards by comparing the results with the effort made;
3) when rewards are evaluated as fair, the employee is satisfied and feels satisfaction;
4) satisfaction becomes a motivator to undertake further tasks and increase commitment.

Figure 11.4. Relations between the social activity of organizations and job satisfaction and commitment

Source: own elaboration.

It is important to emphasize at this point that satisfaction is not just a cause but also an effect of the increased levels of engagement. This mutual driving of satisfaction and commitment can be strengthened by the participation of employees in the social activities of organizations. Help in organizing cultural or sporting events, active cooperation with education, charity or volunteer work for people in need all contribute to the stronger identification of employees with a given organization, thus lowering the probability of leaving it. These relations are shown in Figure 11.4.

The presented theoretical aspects of organizational social activity and its relation with employee satisfaction and commitment are an attempt to conceptualize them. Thus, they can be a starting point for adopting hypotheses and their verification in the research process. Their confirmation may contribute to a better understanding of the functioning of organizations in the context of the local community.

In the context of the above, it can be said that the goal of the chapter has been achieved. As a result of literature studies and their own considerations, the authors proposed the conceptual model of the relations between the social activity of an organization, and employee satisfaction and commitment.

Summarizing, the social activity of organizations includes all the initiatives and activities of an organization that involve influencing its environment, beyond the regular duties associated with running a business, expressed in undertaking activities for both individuals and groups, aiming to accomplish tasks that satisfy highly regarded social values in the organization's environment, even at the expense of additional financial outlays incurred by the organization. Its practical manifestation can be patronage, sponsorship, and volunteering. Based on the analysis of the literature on the subject, the relations linking SAO with employee satisfaction and commitment were presented. This new perspective opens a wide range of possibilities for organizations in terms of shaping the level of employee satisfaction and commitment.

Chapter 12

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS IN THE USE OF GREEN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN AN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY COMPANY – A CASE STUDY

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12.1. Introduction

Green initiatives in management are becoming an important factor determining the development and success of an organization. Concern for the environment has also become a new topic in the human resources management strategy of an organization, especially in terms of improving the environmental behavior of employees at work. In the previous chapter, green human resources management (Green HRM) was one of the issues discussed in the context of the social activity of an organization, whereas in this chapter it is the main topic of concern.

Green HRM is discussed in the context of the current environmental megatrends, including the European Green Deal, related to the energy transformation in order to achieve zero emissions by 2050, adopted by the European Commission. Moreover, documents regarding the transition period, the so-called “Fit for 55”, have important implications also for the automotive sector. In order to fulfill the guidelines of the Green Deal, automotive companies are investing up to 10% of their own income in new technologies (Warner, 2020). In order to meet such stringent requirements, more and more organizations are implementing strategies based on the ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) approach, taking into account all aspects related to environmental, social and corporate governance. Enterprise non-financial factor ratings are carried out based on these aspects. The transport sector is responsible for 27% of total CO_2 emissions in the European Union. In order to achieve the goal of the Paris Agreement on not exceeding the global temperature increase by 1.5°C, individual countries and enterprises of industrial sectors are forced to formulate

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interventionist policies and the resulting legal regulations, going beyond the current consumer choices, which are transforming entire sectors towards new technological solutions, creating infrastructure (e.g. electric car charging stations) and generating demand. Road transport accounts for 21.1% of total CO_2 emissions; passenger cars account for 12.8% of emissions in Europe, vans for 2.5%, and trucks and buses for 5.6%. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce cleaner, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport, as well as new technological solutions (Pichler, Krenmayr, Schneider, and Brand, 2021, pp. 140-152).

Green HRM practices mean activities in enterprises that relate to all HR processes, as well as human resources management as a whole personnel function, and are associated with the increase in the company's value over time due to these activities. When considering the goals and tasks of Green HRM, it should be assumed that for the automotive sector, which faces enormous challenges, green people management practices will be one of the fundamental factors determining the chances of sector entities success in achieving compliance with current megatrends. The implementation of Green HRM practices can be the basis for building motivation, and hence the awareness of employees and other stakeholders of the automotive sector, which results in various benefits.

This is why the goal of this chapter is to discuss the concept of Green HRM and show what its implementation can look like in a specific type of organization, in this case an automotive industry company. The structure of this chapter has therefore been designed to attain this goal. Firstly, the concept of Green HRM was addressed, hence the author outlines the basic theoretical assumptions determining this concept from an organizational point of view. The next section describes the research methodics applied in her own empirical research. The research was conducted using the case study method. In a further part, the main research findings covering the benefits and limitations of Green HRM implementation in a selected company are presented. In the final section the author summarizes the research results and formulates final conclusions.

12.2. Theoretical foundations for the concept of Green HRM

Based on the available literature on the subject, it can be said that the concept of green human resource management (Green HRM) is part of the sustainable human resource management concept. It refers to long-term activities aimed at attaining the pillars of sustainable management, namely: management by values, care for the environment and social commitment (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021, p. 79). At this point, it is worth explaining what Green HRM means – in brief, it covers these human resource management practices that are developed and implemented to promote behavior among employees which increases the ecological efficiency of the entire company. Its theoretical basis is the assumption that Green HRM consists of intermediary variables located between the independent variables (stimulators) and dependent variables (ecological efficiency*)* (Ackermann, 2017, pp. 21-39).

Green HRM is a response to the deepening ecological and social problems in the modern world. The implementation of Green HRM practices is aimed at shaping the pro-ecological attitudes of employees, and thus increasing environmental efficiency. In the subject literature, Green HRM has been defined as the policies, practices and systems that make employees of an organization show pro-environmental behavior which implies individual, social and environmental benefits (Opatha and Arulrajah, 2014, p. 104). In other words, these practices and systems are included in the basic functions of human resources management, such as recruitment and selection, staff appraisal, remuneration system, training and so on.

Authors exploring the issues of Green HRM indicate a number of activities that can be implemented within the so-called green recruitment and selection (Masri and Jaaron, 2017, pp. 474-489; Tang, Chen, Jiang, Paill_e, P., and Jia, 2017, pp. 1-25), green training (Pham, Tuckova, and Chiappetta Jabbour, 2019, pp. 386-390; Pham, Vo Thanh, Tuckova, and Thuy, 2019, pp. 3-4), initiatives aimed at motivating and rewarding employees (Masri and Jaaron, 2017, pp. 474-489; Pham, Tuckova, and Phan, 2019, pp. 446-465; Tang et al., 2017, pp. 1-25). For example, green recruitment and selection emphasize the preference of candidates with professional experience in environmental projects, or communicating the employer's commitment to ecology during recruitment. Moreover, with regard to the appraisal process, the analyzed approach highlights the setting of goals and responsibilities of employees (individual, team) related to the implementation of an ecological initiative, or the inclusion of pro-ecological attitude and behavior in the code of ethical conduct. From the point of view of implementing the Green HRM concept in the enterprise, it is also very important to develop a system of employee rewards for implementing ecological projects (awards, bonuses to remuneration), or incentives for employees to develop green competencies. Activities aimed at promoting green employee behavior in the organization are complemented by environmental training courses in order to develop environmental skills and knowledge (education for environmental activities) (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021, p. 79). Many authors also point to those related to engaging employees in green projects carried out by the organization, and activities aimed at creating a pro-ecological culture in the company (Pham, Tuckova, and Chiappetta Jabbour, 2019a, pp. 386-390).

In light of the above considerations, it can therefore be assumed that sustainable human resource management and Green HRM are based on the same reasons and assumptions. In addition to the undoubted advantages and benefits brought by the practices of Green HRM, there are also barriers that may effectively limit the implementation of this concept in the organization. These limitations include (Bugdol and Stańczyk, 2020, p. 44):

- lack of adequate awareness and training among managerial staff on the types, role and importance of Green HRM practices in environmental management of the organization,
- lack of support for operational staff in this regard,
- cost-intensity of these practices, especially when other competitors do not use them (it should be remembered that Green HRM practices are not commonly distinguished from environmental management).

The conducted literature review showed that Green HRM can generate a number of benefits for the organization in which it is applied. First of all, the implementation of its practices plays an important role in the process of building awareness among employees in the organization. This applies primarily to environmental and ecological awareness, which is extremely important from the point of view of operations context, as well as the results of economic entities in particular industries and sectors (Upadhyay and Dangarwala, 2018, pp. 5-9). In (Muisyo and Qin, 2021, pp. 46-71), it is stressed that Green HRM practices can significantly affect environmental performance. Such effects apply, in particular, to those organizations that undergo voluntary certification of environmental management systems, conduct environmental audits, etc., whereas Green HRM, supports these activities, and also initiates them. In the same context, some authors emphasize that Green HRM is a way to provide the organization with a competitive advantage on the labor market, because care for green, friendly work environment attracts employees and consists a distinguishing factor (cf. Muisyo and Qin, 2021, pp. 46-71. Additionally, as emphasized in the literature, thanks to the implementation of Green HRM activities, an organization can create a new model of pro-ecological organizational culture that promotes achieving environmental goals, thus supporting the idea of sustainable development (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021, p. 78).

Some studies also draw attention to the relation between implementing Green HRM practices and employee behavior. Sardana points out that Green HRM can influence the pro-environmental behavior of employees in such a way that while carrying out tasks at their workplaces, they take into account the obligations and needs resulting from caring for the natural environment and take voluntary, unforced actions to comply with them (Sardana, 2018, pp. 63-73). Moreover, the use of the Green HRM concept in an organization may favor civic behavior in the workplace (Shen, Dumont, and Deng, 2018, pp. 594-622). This applies, in particular, to such behavioral aspects as: commitment, loyalty to the organization, taking initiatives (including pro-environmental), compliance with formalism and regulations whose task is, among others, to counteract the negative impact on the environment, self-development, unforced motivation to develop personal competencies and skills (Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie, 2006, pp. 85-97). Additionally, encouraging employees to behave in a green way in the workplace may influence their behavior outside the work environment, as the patterns of behavior and attitudes in the organization are transferred to everyday life (Shen, Dumont, and Deng, 2018, pp. 594-622).

It should be noted that there are reasons for which implementing Green HRM results in the following benefits (Suharti and Sugiarto, 2020, pp. 200-211):

- creating an environmentally friendly organizational culture that inspires and motivates to undertake such activities,
- increasing the efficiency of various resources by not wasting them, preventing excessive and unjustified use,
- shaping a positive image of the company and increasing economic and ecological efficiency.

The bibliometric analysis carried out by Piwowar-Sulej shows that the authors dealing with this issue defined the future directions of research on Green HRM as follows (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021, p. 81):

- the impact of the HRM function on environmental performance,
- non-green effects of Green HRM practices,
- Green HRM and other areas of the organization, e.g. logistics, investments, marketing,
- extension of the territorial (various countries) and subjective (industries) research context.

Considering the above, it should be pointed out that most of these directions focus both on the benefits that are supposed to be brought by green people management in terms of environment, working (social) conditions and, ultimately, economic benefits in the long term.

Based on the literature review, Bugdol and Stańczyk stated that future research, which could develop the issue of green people management, should focus on the impact of Green HRM on the following phenomena (Bugdol and Stańczyk, 2020, p. 139):

- professional and organizational loyalty,
- benefits for organizations from using Green HRM,
- employee satisfaction with working in specific industries,
- may also focus on the way gender and age may influence the implementation of Green HRM practices in the work environment,
- employees' attitude and behavior in the work environment.

The literature review has also led to the conclusion that the issue of Green HRM has not been sufficiently explored in companies of the automotive sector. There are singular available publications relating to the GHRM issue in this sector (Raut, Gardas, Luthra, Narkhede, and Mangla, 2020, pp. 925-944). However, in the studied cases, the authors indicated that the degree of implementing Green HRM practices was far from sufficient (Chaudhary, 2019, pp. 630-641). In this context, it can be considered that the automotive sector is not recognized in terms of research. Considering the above, it was concluded that addressing the problem of benefits for the organization as well as the employees themselves, which result from the use of green practices in human resource management, constitutes a niche research area.

12.3. The empirical research methodics

The main goal of the empirical research was to identify the benefits and limitations to the implementation of Green HRM practices in a particular organizational context of an automotive industry company.

To reach this goal the following research questions were formulated:

1. What practices related to the concept of Green HRM are implemented in the researched company?
2. What are the barriers (limitations) to the application of Green HRM practices in the organizational reality?
3. Does the application of green practices have a positive impact on the current operations of the studied company, and if it does, in what aspects? Can these benefits be measured?

The author used a case study as the research method. Taking into account the situation regarding a niche research area, as well as one economic entity being a subject of research, the decision was taken that this qualitative research method would be the most appropriate, especially as it is a method that can also be used in everyday management practice (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, and Morales, 2007, pp. 236-264; Yin, 2003, pp. 1-15). Its purpose is not to describe but to stimulate reflection on the situations and phenomena described. In a larger number of studies conducted to the same extent in similar organizations, it is possible to draw conclusions on a general level (Obłój and Wąsowska, 2015, pp. 51-60). The case study is also suitable as a research tool for the subject of this chapter due to the fact that the number of variables exceeds the number of possible observations. Therefore, it is used to answer the questions why and how certain phenomena that are the subject of a study take place (Yin, 2003, pp. 109-116). The description of the case allows for a detailed understanding of the issues related to the analyzed phenomenon from the perspective of various aspects and approaches. This method allows to (see Strumińska-Kutra and Koładkiewicz, 2012, pp. 1-40):

- refer to certain criteria, contexts or similar phenomena,
- make changes or support putting forward new theories to explain phenomena,
- explain certain described phenomena, enabling the creation of general concepts.

Due to the fact that in qualitative research in management, which includes the case study method, no hypotheses are formulated, the author formulated only the research questions presented above.

As part of the case study, the interview method was used by asking the selected respondents the same set of questions, the content of which, together with the answers, is included in the next section describing the results of the research. The selection of the sample was purposive. Interviews were conducted with N-1 level senior management representatives, who are directors with the knowledge of how to obtain information on the analyzed issues.

The survey was conducted in February 2022 at the headquarters of the automotive industry company located in Opolskie Voivodeship. Due to the small number of interviews (conducted, however, with key people in the organization), no codification was done, and mostly full statements were presented. The author's correction was made in cases of repeated answers. Formal consent for the survey was obtained in order to maintain ethical principles, and moreover, only the numbering of respondents was introduced to ensure comfort and trust during the interviews without specifying positions.

12.4. The empirical research findings

Due to the fact that a case study was used in the research, at the beginning the results be presented of the context examination for the main problem, which is Green HRM, hence this section begins with the most important findings regarding the general characteristics of the studied organization.

LELLEK, the company where the research was carried out, sells and maintains cars, mainly from the Volkswagen Group. It is a family business managed by two brothers and the son of one of them. It has been operating continuously since 1994, when it received its first authorization from the Volkswagen brand in Opole. A brief profile of the LELLEK Group is presented in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1. A brief profile of the company under study in numbers

Characteristics	Description
Number of employees	• on 31.12.2021 – 806 people employed under employment contracts
Position in car sales	• eighth place in Poland in 2020 in new car sales
Authorization by car brands	• authorizations for seven car brands: Porsche (3 showrooms), Audi (3 showrooms), Volkswagen Passenger Cars (2 showrooms), Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles (2 showrooms), SKODA (4 showrooms), SEAT (2 showrooms), CUPRA (1 showrooms)
Authorization for used cars	• authorization for approved used cars, i.e. Porsche Approved, Audi Select Plus, Das Welt Auto
Unique authorization	• the only Porsche Classic authorization in Poland (specializes in the repair and restoration of classic Porsche models)
Repairs	• large and state-of-the art Accident Repair Centers
Authorization for services	• authorized services of all Volkswagen Group brands (sold in the Group)
Financial turnover	• over PLN 1 billion
Sold cars	• over 7,500 new cars sold in 2020 • over 1,800 used cars sold in 2020
Hours of repair	• over 130,000 completed service repair hours in 2020 • over 40,000 completed hours of body and paint repairs in 2020

Source: own research data.

The company has seven locations in Poland, namely Opole, Gliwice, Katowice, Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Wrocław, Sopot, and Tarnowskie Góry. A short description of them is provided in Table 12.2.

Table 12.2. A brief description of local units of the company under study

Local unit name	Description
LELLEK Opole	A large automotive complex including Volkswagen, Audi, SKODA and SEAT, a modern body and paint workshop and a used car yard
LELLEK Gliwice	Next to the SKODA, Volkswagen and SEAT showrooms, the largest Audi Center in Poland at that time, with a display of models on the roof of the facility, was established here. Today, the product offer in this location is complemented by the CUPRA brand and an authorized network of used vehicles
LELLEK Kędzierzyn-Koźle	A SKODA showroom which now also offers Volkswagen maintenance services and a wide range of used models
PORSCHE Center	A milestone in the history of the Lellek Group. The center was established with locations in Katowice, Sopot and Wrocław. On this occasion, the product offer is complemented by the unique Porsche SPA & Detailing and the only certified repair and renovation point for Porsche classics in Poland
LELLEK Wrocław	A result of the co-creation of a network of Audi, Volkswagen, SKODA, SEAT and CUPRA brand showrooms in Wrocław
LELLEK Katowice	An Audi showroom established a few years ago
LELLEK Tarnowskie Góry	The SKODA showroom which is the ‘youngest’ dealership of the Group

Source: own research data.

During the interviews, the respondents were asked questions aimed at identifying the practices of Green HRM implemented in the company. In their opinion, green practices are primarily activities related to environmental management. They said that:

- “(…)the most important: reminding about the obligatory segregation of all waste – from administrative employees, to mechanics and body and paint departments; respecting all environmental protection rules while creating and managing facilities, using e.g. varnishing machines, oil disposal, etc.; implementing the maximum amount of biodegradable materials, e.g. paper pens commonly used by employees and customers; eliminating plastic packing tape in favor of paper tape; eliminating all kinds of plastic bags in favor of paper bags, emphasizing at least 60% of recycled paper; using only paper packaging, preferably several times; using only recycled paper for printers, eliminating higher-quality paper in favor of kraft; reminding about segregation and need for double-sided printing (at least once a quarter)” (respondent #1);

- "(…) we pay most attention to waste management. We involve all employees in all departments in this process. Managers and foremen regularly control the behavior of staff and remind about the rules of waste segregation. The management ensures free access to appropriate containers for segregated waste. Another important activity is the departure from using plastic packaging in favor of packaging made of biodegradable materials, mainly paper" (respondent #2);
- "(…) these practices are: waste segregation; glassware at meetings (drinks served in glasses); water/drinks purchased in glass bottles; eco packaging; water saving; changing gift habits (overproduction) into charity events, e.g. online charity Christmas card; education: *Eko LELLEK* in internal communication HrNews @ – on segregation, water saving, etc." (respondent #3).

Bearing in mind the above opinions, it can be concluded that most of these tasks are obligatory activities (e.g. waste segregation) resulting from environmental regulations (e.g. abandoning plastic) as well as the environmental management system aimed at improving activities in this area, regardless of the implementation or application of HRM practices. Among the activities that go beyond compulsory activity, the respondents indicated the following:

- "Building environmental awareness among employees has many aspects: implementing a code of ethics which emphasizes the principles of economy and care for the environment; engaging in activities for electromobility, rewarding employees for active promotion of electric cars; external events with a strong emphasis on electromobility; employees encouraging customers to test electric cars e.g. over the weekend; in 2022, a large action of planting a forest (reconstruction) is planned together with the Opole Forest District, i.e. 1.48 ha in the Dąbrowa Forest District, where about 11.000 trees will be planted; during this campaign, additional education of customers to promote environmental friendliness; motto one car purchased = one tree planted; After purchasing the car, customers will receive a certificate with "sunken" seeds to be planted anywhere" (respondent #1);
- "The latest activity on the part of LELLEK is the active restoration of the natural environment by planting trees. When it comes to purchasing office supplies, we prefer products with a significant share of recycled materials" (respondent #2).

The respondents highlighted the broadly understood ecology. Taking advantage of the fact that they operate in the industry of modern technologies, they have a chance to promote electromobility among customers and restore green areas, thus building environmental awareness and contributing to the preservation of the natural environment.

The respondents were also asked about the limitations in the application of Green HRM practices. They had the biggest problem with this question. This results from the fact that since the very identification of green practices relates, in their opinion, to environmental management, the barriers also apply to the same. They said that:

- "(…) it will certainly be easier if society puts more and more emphasis on ecological values. Sometimes the company's activities do not matter much to the recipient. There is still a belief that ecological means expensive. The obstacle in this action is low environmental awareness - information on environmental protection ends at the stage of early primary school - we must engage in increasing the knowledge of adult clients (…) Green HR and ecological activities, despite their growing popularity, are not very highly rated for direct contribution to business. Top management does not always recognize a cause-and-effect connection between pro-ecological activities and the sale of products or services. Due to this purely profit-oriented thinking, some actions do not appeal to conservative directorships" (respondent #1);
- "(…) unfortunately, not everyone is willing to make additional efforts to implement pro-ecological activities. Even among our staff, we notice cases of ignoring the recommendations in the field of waste segregation or saving raw materials (…) At LELLEK, I don't see any difficulties in applying Green HRM practices. The company's top management is committed to promoting environmental practices" (respondent #2);
- "(…) these difficulties include a mental difficulty – change of habits; appropriate infrastructure – e.g. easy availability of appropriate waste bins, appropriate segregation on a global level (internal state solutions)" (respondent #3).

It follows from the above that the respondents look for obstacles, above all, among customers and employees, in the lack of adequate awareness. However, they equate Green HRM practices with environmental management. What is significant here is the statement of respondent No. 2, who indicates that he/she does not notice any difficulties in applying green HRM practices, bearing in mind segregation of waste or saving raw materials.

The researcher was also interested whether the benefits of Green HRM practices are measurable, i.e. if they be counted somehow, and whether there are any non-measurable benefits. In response the respondents said:

- "(…) at the moment, the LELLEK group is adopting soft conversions as indicators of success related to ecological campaigns, e.g. the number of mailing/SMS openings with eco information; number of clicks on call to action buttons in mailing/SMS; using UTM tags to check whether people who received an eco-message within the next 30 days take action on the website www.lellek.pl, e.g. browsing car offers or a message via chat. In addition, the benefits are measurable, because all implemented activities have a tutor responsible for reporting the effects – at the moment we see a lot of positive moments in our actions, especially in the direct reactions of customers" (respondent #1);
- "(…) the costs of waste management are quantifiable. The analysis of the costs of waste management revealed that in 2021 the fees for waste disposal were reduced thanks to the sale of raw materials recovered in the segregation process. In addition to the monetary dimension, the marketing effect of publishing

information about our pro-ecological activities is also valuable. Actions promoting electromobility attract a lot of interest. Accurately tracking the readings of our actions on the Internet allows us to determine the conversion to purchases. In 2021, pro-ecological actions around the issues of electromobility generated additional sales" (respondent #2);

- "(…) it's hard to say. Financial matters are beyond my competence. Non-financial benefits are primarily PR benefits related to the company's image" (respondent #3);
- "(…) promoting saving brings not only tangible benefits in the workplace, but good habits created at work allow households to save" (respondent #2).

The research summary and final conclusions from the conducted empirical research are presented in the next section.

12.5. Final conclusions and research summary

The main goal of the empirical research was to identify the benefits and limitations to the implementation of Green HRM practices in a particular organizational context of an automotive industry company. Referring to the research findings presented in the previous section, it can be concluded that this goal has been reached, especially owing to the ability to answer the formulated research questions.

Firstly, it should be noted that the preliminary assessment of the studied organization shows it as pro-environmental – oriented and open to contemporary ecological and environmental challenges. Everyone can perceive it everywhere, i.e. in sales halls, service workshops, etc., most likely due to two reasons. First of all, the image-related needs, forcing industry entities to have environmentally friendly surroundings in which cars are purchased and services provided. Strong competition causes a sort of race for design, customer comfort, professionalism and quality of service. Secondly, these are regulations for the sector, which is forced to reduce emissions through the use of hybrid solutions, electromobility, etc. Hence, the natural consequence of this is care for the proper management of waste and resources, also during the provision and implementation of services.

In terms of the first research question related directly to the types of practices and the resulting benefits of using Green HRM, the following were indicated by the respondents, mainly connected with infrastructure, equipment and resources (waste segregation, waste disposal stations, recycling, promotion of electromobility, pro-environmental events, abandoning plastics in current operations), and less to the individual elements of the Green HRM processes.

In the case of the second research question, concerning limitations in the implementation of green HRM practices, the respondents indicated the following issues: legislation forcing selective waste collection, introduction of electric cars, etc. It was also emphasized that society (thus the customers who buy cars) has low environmental awareness. Similarly to the first research question, the respondents referred to pro-ecological generalizations without any details that may compose Green HRM practices.

As for the third research question, the mentioned benefits include mainly the intangible, image-related ones, the evaluation of which in relation to Green HRM alone seems difficult. The effectiveness of an activity promoting an organization as ecological can be evaluated relatively easily, e.g. through the ratio of inputs to effects. In the case of the benefits of Green HRM, both internal and image-related, evaluating them is much more complicated. The topic associated with benefits did not appear in the interviews, but it can be presumed that the benefits related to employee behavior have not appeared yet, due to the fact that this is a relatively new approach. This behavior should be expected to emerge soon. It is worth pointing out that this is a long-term process.

It should be underlined that the current status of environmental activities in the studied organization, which is not surprising, mainly concerns the care for the environment as a whole at a general level, going beyond Green HRM, and even not taking it into account sometimes. It is suitable for concepts such as environmental management, sustainable management and the circular economy, without a partial breakdown into organizational areas such as green sales, green logistics and Green HRM.

Considering the above, it can be said that it was also possible to achieve the goal of the chapter. The author managed to discuss the concept of Green HRM and showed what its implementation can look like in a specific type of organization, which was an automotive industry company.

Finally, it can be said that the voice of the respondents regarding the level of pro-environmental awareness of both customers buying cars and using maintenance services is worth highlighting, as well as the management and employees of the studied organization. Without the systematic building of this awareness, Green HRM practices will be indistinguishable within the huge set of pro-environmental activities, and therefore can merely remain in the world of ideas.

SUMMARY

Thus, we have arrived to the end of this monograph. In accordance with its title, the subject of interest was human capital management in the wandering context of events, which the authors wanted to discuss from the perspective of challenges for the managerial staff.

Hence this journey began with the contextual effects on HCM practices in three types organization, i.e. multinational companies, the armed forces and universities. In the context of multinational companies, the authors identified the differences and similarities within the scope of employee development and competency management between local subsidiaries belonging to Central European MNCs located in Eastern and Western Europe. In the context of the armed forces, the study identified the differences and similarities in the approach to the training process in two scientific disciplines, namely management & quality sciences and military science. Additionally, the authors' own concept of the training process in the Polish Armed Forces was proposed. In terms of universities, a competency model of the research and administrative support staff was proposed, which can boost the process of transforming traditional Polish universities into entrepreneurial academic entities.

The next stop in this journey regarded HCM practices in the context of work virtualization and digitalization. Therefore, the authors presented the effects of virtual work on the formation of relations between people at their places of employment. Moreover, the study characterized and highlighted the role of selected digital technologies used in employee development processes in contemporary organizations. Furthermore, the benefits and threats of knowledge management supported with artificial intelligence algorithms from the end users' perspective were discussed. In addition, it was also determined whether the representatives of Generation Z which is referred to as the digital generation, are aware of the risks associated with the new technological developments.

Another stop centered on HCM practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Here the authors juxtaposed the results of the research on the job satisfaction level of teachers in Poland during the pandemic with the results of research conducted in this area in other countries. The study also juxtaposed the practices within the scope of employee development in businesses in Poland in two periods of time, i.e. before and during the pandemic. At the same time, the authors identified the competencies which are particularly desirable in the work environment so strongly affected by the pandemic. Similarly, the meaning of role and tasks of HR Business Partner in companies were compared in two periods of time, i.e. before and during the pandemic.

The final stop in this journey was the human side of business as a modern contextual factor for HCM practices. In this context the study provided the support for the thesis that that job security should be considered as an important interest of employees. The authors also proposed the conceptual model of the relations between the social activity of an organization, and employee satisfaction and commitment. Moreover, the concept of Green HRM was also discussed, showing what its implementation could look like in a specific type of organization, such as an automotive industry company.

To sum up, the authors believe that the goal set for this monograph has been achieved, also owing to the presentation of the empirical research findings and conceptual developments in the selected HRM problems in various contexts.

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From a review:

“The monograph is an original and interesting study which deals with the current issues of contemporary problems of human capital management in organizations operating in a changing environment. In particular, attention was paid to the challenges that HRM managers and specialists have to cope with in a constantly changing management context. The context in which the organization’s stakeholders operate is defined by the Editor as a wandering context, which very accurately describes the dynamization of adaptation processes in organizations and the need to develop completely new, previously unknown solutions. The monograph creates a logical and coherent whole. The Editor made every effort to ensure that in the introduction to each chapter, the goal was clearly defined, and the summary includes a reference to the degree of its achievement.”

prof. Anna Rakowska
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin

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