

EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AGE STRUCTURE OF ITS EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

Administration of the public affairs is an area that affects every citizen of the country. In the previous period, the sphere of public administration has undergone numerous reform steps in order to streamline the administration of public affairs, increase the efficiency of public administration and get closer to the citizens. Modern governance of the public affairs presupposes, in addition to the appropriate equipment with information and communication technologies, the most important thing: qualified employees. Repeated surveys have shown that the efficiency of public administration in Slovakia is hampered, among other things, by the rigidity and inflexibility of public administration employees. Behind this, two key issues can be found: the lack of specific education in the field of public administration and the aging in the employment structure of public administration. While specifically oriented education, employees in Slovakia are gradually gaining, the problem of lack of a qualified workforce of the younger generation and the constant aging of the employment structure remains unresolved. Lower work performance and weaker orientation in the current dynamically changing conditions also have an impact on the efficiency of public administration performance. This paper therefore focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of public administration in Slovakia in a demographic context.

Key words: public administration, performance of public administration, efficiency, demography

JEL Code: C10, H83, J11

Introduction

Public administration is one of the most elementary tasks in modern affairs society and each state. Public administration is a comprehensive, essential, and coherent system essential to a country's political system. The implementation of public administration does not only consist of building public-administrative infrastructure in the form of the creation of individual levels

of public administration and institutions. Territorial self-government is one of the important pillars of the functioning of public administration and the whole political system of our country. In the environment of territorial self-government, local and regional self-government bodies are closest to the citizens and know their daily needs.

If we want to address the phenomenon of efficiency of public administration, we must keep in mind that often the rigidity of its bodies lies in legislative barriers and the inflexibility of public administration employees. An important component of governance is employees working in this field. Human resources are irreplaceable wherever there is direct contact with citizens, the population of a certain area. The initial establishment of contact between the citizen and the public administration body is ensured by an employee of the relevant public administration body. The effective functioning of public administration and the fulfilment of tasks and goals in individual sections of public administration depends in many respects on employees' existence, structure, qualifications, and socio-psychological maturity in this sphere. Traditionally, more women than men are employed in public administration due to the very nature of this work. The field of public administration has many specifics, for which it is not so lucrative employer for the younger generations. Subsequently, this fact is gradually reflected in the ageing of employees and raising the age limit. This shifts the age structure of employees upwards and, with insufficient reproduction of human resources, causes problems in ensuring the administration of public affairs. For this reason, the article deals with the situation in the field of the age structure of public administration employees on the example of a sample.

1 Literature

The field of public administration is broadly researched and highly treated. From the point of view of social reality, public administration represents an area of complex relations in the public sector related to the administration of public affairs. Public administration examines the activities and functions of individual subsystems of public administration, which are the subject of administrative law, economics, sociology, philosophy and political science. Public administration thus has a strong interdisciplinary character, Machyniak (2020) emphasizes.

Even though more than thirty years have passed since the fundamental and political fundamental changes in our society, the field of public administration is still undergoing dynamic changes today. Today, it is no longer a question of how to implement the transformation process or how to create a public administration system, what degrees it should have or what public administration bodies are necessary for its performance. Questions of monitoring significant factors influencing the country's administrative system with an emphasis

on the number of units and their effective performance come to the fore, according to Horvath and Mikuš (2016).

In his contribution, Cernenko (2017) also approaches the evaluation of the area of public administration through the prism of efficiency. The author points out the considerable fragmentation of the local government, which is very characteristic of Slovakia. There are 2927 municipalities in our country, which, given the current population of Slovakia (5.4 million), indicates proper fragmentation. Consequently, this is reflected in the low efficiency of governance and financial reserves (Androniceanu, 2021). In order to increase the efficiency of the exercise of powers, municipalities often merge with other municipalities into larger units.

The introduction of electronic public administration services has made a massive contribution to building and increasing the efficiency of the performance of public administration bodies in the past period, recalls Peracek (2019). Both public authorities and citizens praise this step because it simplifies communication and speeds up the administrative process. The implementation of the e-government system into practice has brought speed, flexibility, and efficiency to society's public and commercial spheres (Peracek, Kocisova, Mucha, 2017; Oláh et al., 2019). This results in lower costs, more efficiency and better management of public services as shown the research study conducted by Androniceanu and the team in 2021.

Part of the public administration system in the area of administration of cities, municipalities, regions, which are most closely connected with the daily life of the country's citizens. In municipal or city offices, there are several tasks that they must perform in the interests of their citizens, writes Brix (2019). In addition to their competencies, local governments also have numerous roles in delegated administration, which places increased demands on their activities. At the same time, it is not only a matter of technical and organizational provision of the administration but also of the need for qualified employees and ensuring an adequate level of employment in the public sphere, Caposova (2020) points out. However, indeed, the situation is not the same in every region. According to the author, in the field of human resources employment, the public administration currently has to deal with many challenges, but especially with ageing, raising the age limit of employees, a large predominance of women.

Following this fact, we find a solution to a similar situation with a foreign author. Johnston (2019) points to the unequal representation of women in public policy and public administration. This means that this phenomenon is one of the other phenomena related to gender equality or age equality in public service.

Safrankova and Sikyr (2021) also commented on the issue of human resources in the public sphere. Improving the management of public administration also means improving the leadership of people employed in this area. Because people as employees in public administration are the main and most valuable resource available to public authorities, their research showed the need to improve and change approaches in public administration management in the area of employees. Based on the professional literature, it turns out that efficiency and increasing efficiency in public administration performance depend not only on the implemented reforms, electronization but in many respects also on employees working in this area.

Mazouz, Rousseau and Hudon (2016) say that the role of management is, therefore to adopt an adequate strategy aimed at its effectiveness so that the area of public administration can be performed more efficiently. The strategy should be based on the processes taking place in the public sphere. It requires creativity and appropriate management tools, writes Kosar, Machova, Simonova (2017). According to Prokopenko and Shkola (2010), it should be noted that intellectual capital is part of strategic management.

One of the outbreaks currently in the public administration is the problem of an ageing population and thus the ageing of employees. To reveal the current situation, it is necessary to conduct a field survey. Due to the beginning of the solution of the scientific project and the limited space, we implemented this activity on a sample.

2 Aim, materials and methodology

This paper focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of public administration in Slovakia in a demographic context. This means that we approach the evaluation through the prism of the age structure, which will allow us to identify the current state, at least on the example of a sample. The paper aims to reveal the current age structure of employees in public administration based on data from a sample. The secondary goal is to determine the accumulation of the achieved age of employees in the age diagram. To process the paper, we had to proceed from the tasks and partial goals of the new research project APVV-20-0076. Since we have only just started the research, we found out the facts on the example of a sample survey in the first stage. The entire research is carried out in two selected regions of the Slovak Republic: the Nitra and Košice self-governing regions. Competent authorities were included in the sample to identify the age structure based on self-selection. Seven and seven offices performing their activities in public administration took part in this stage from the Nitra and Košice regions. Based on their data, we subsequently carried out research using descriptive statistics and the construction of

an age diagram. We consider these data to be data having the character of primary material. In addition, it was necessary to reach for secondary material for the paper. From secondary sources, we used professional and scientific literature in the field of public administration, demography. We chose the selected methods in the spirit of the nature of this paper. Descriptive statistics dominate with procedures such as the collection description, processing and presentation, basic scientific methods, and we have constructed age diagrams for better illustration. At the end of the paper, we summarize the importance and essence of the researched issues with the definition of recommendations for the future and practice of public administration.

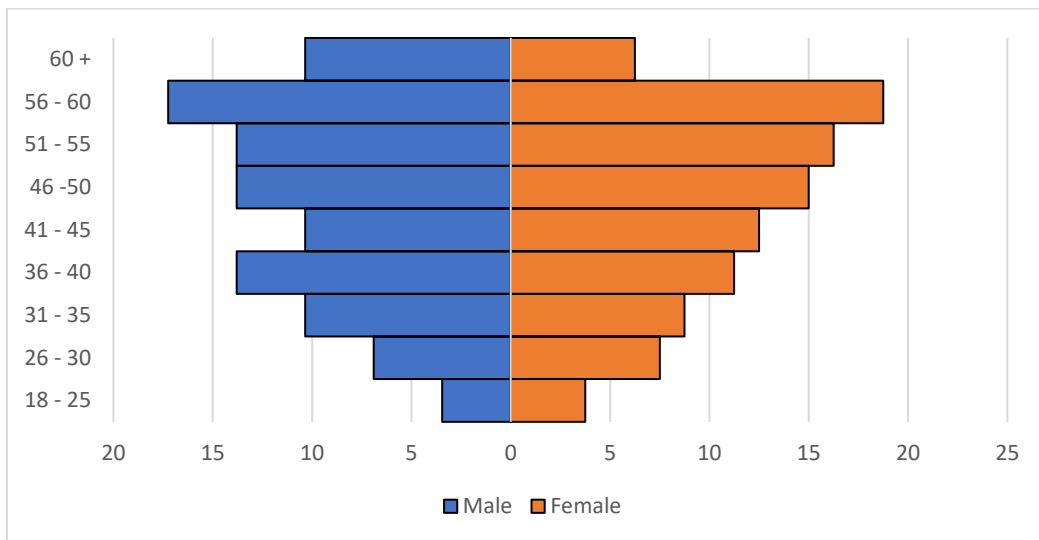
3 Results

The main part of the article is its practical part, in which we focus on the description and illustration of the findings. In practice, this means presenting findings, describing them in more detail and visualizing them. The research sample consisted of fourteen public administration offices from Slovakia, with seven offices representing the Nitra self-governing region and seven representing the Košice self-governing region. They entered the sample by self-selection based on addressing and free participation in research. Due to data protection, we cannot specify the exact names of the authorities willing to participate in the research.

The first evaluation of the obtained data concerned the first seven offices operating in the Nitra self-governing region. Seven offices from this region took part in the research activity in the first phase of solving the project task, which means that we examined these offices from the point of view of all employees of these offices through the prism of the age structure. The situation is illustrated in Figure 1. The total number of employees from the seven offices was 110 employees. Of this number, 80 were women, and 29 were men. At first sight, significant gender inequality and the predominance of women employed in the public sector are evident. However, it is more important to find out the age structure of current employees in a sample from the Nitra region. Looking at the data obtained, it can be stated that in the case of female employees, the range of data is more balanced, and the employment of women predominating in the middle and upper-middle age categories is constantly growing. From this, it can be concluded that women prefer job security, albeit at the expense of lower earnings, and are trying to stabilize at a time of approaching retirement age. On the contrary, in the case of male employees, we see a not evenly uniform development of their representation, but again with a predominance in the middle and upper-middle age categories. However, it should be noted that their representation in the total number of employees is significantly lower. In the sample from

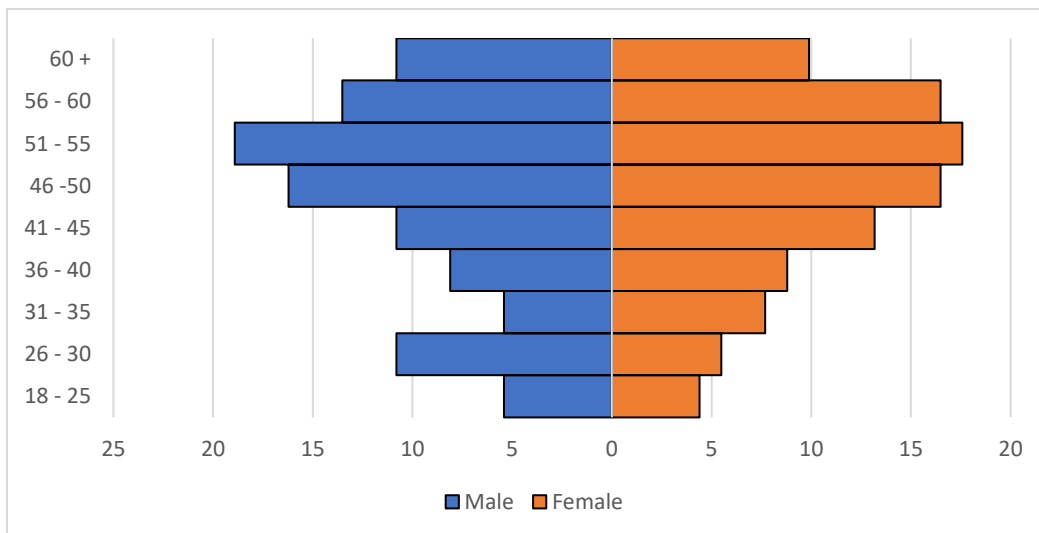
the Nitra self-governing region, out of the total number of 110 employees, only 29 were men, which means in relative terms only 26.36%. Men are represented in the sample by just over a quarter of the total number of public employees.

Fig. 1: Age diagram of employees in public administration in the Nitra region



Source: primary research, own processing

Fig. 2: Age diagram of employees in public administration in the Košice region



Source: primary research, own processing

The second evaluation concerns the age structure of public administration employees in the Košice self-governing region, again on the example of a sample. This sample also consisted of seven offices, but with a more significant total number of employees. In this case, 128 employees were included, of which 37 were men and 91 women. It is also true for this sample

that the representation of women is significantly higher. Women accounted for 71.09% and men for 28.91%. For a more even gender distribution, this situation is more favourable than in the case of employees in the sample from the Nitra region. Figure 2 shows that even in this case, the age distribution of public administration employees is not optimal. The maximum values can be identified in the upper middle, resp. middle age. Most employees are employed in the age categories 51 to 55 years. This group is followed by two age groups: 56 to 60 and 46 to 50 years. In the case of men, the maximum values are recorded in the age categories 51 to 55 and 46 to 50 years. In the case of offices represented from the Košice self-governing region, there is an acute need for the reproduction of employees because employees are represented mainly from higher age categories. It is a question following the theory in the field of strategic management, motivation. It is necessary to create more favourable conditions that will have a positive response in the ability to employ even younger age groups. This is an essential fact for maintaining the quality and efficiency of public administration.

Conclusion

Ensuring the basic functioning of state administration is one of the keys and leading tasks that each country must perform in all circumstances. The quality of the performance of public administration depends on several factors that coexist and shape the character of public administration as such. An essential part of public administration is its employees, who form an important pillar for its functioning.

In connection with the quality of public administration, the efficiency of public administration also comes to the fore, which is manifested mainly in the area of efficiency of performance of individual public administration bodies. One of the important components of ensuring the effective performance of public administration in its various sections are employees performing work for the benefit of the public sector. The public administration needs reliable, qualified, educated, dedicated employees and, last but not least, in an appropriate age structure to ensure its tasks. The optimal age distribution of employees is important for ensuring the continuity of the implementation of public administration services. In this context, the reproduction of human resources is one of the leading issues that leaders in the field of public administration have to solve. The practice of the Slovak public administration points to the ageing of employees in this area and the necessary need to renew the generation working in this area.

Based on the first stage of the primary survey within the solution of the project APVV-20-0076, we focused our attention on finding out the current situation in the field of efficiency

of public administration depending on the age structure of employees. On a sample of 10 offices representing the field of public administration, we find out the gradual obsolescence of employees and the need to ensure the reproduction of human capital for the smooth provision of public administration tasks. The sample is dominated by the middle to upper-middle generation with a predominance of women. In the future, managers must acquire more new employees from the younger generation with the prospect of staying in the workplace, which will enable the continuous provision of public administration.

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