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THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ORGANISATIONS TOWARDS EMPLOYEES: A PILOT STUDY WITHIN ATYPICAL NGOS IN ROMANIA

Mihaela PĂCEȘILĂ

Associate Professor PhD., Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania
mihaela.pacesila@man.ase.ro

Abstract:

An organisational entity (non-governmental organisation, company, public institution or authority) should not be seen socially responsible if its staff is not satisfied and motivated. However, despite many publications of social responsibility in the literature, papers focusing on the social responsibility of the organisation towards employees are rare. The following article aims to analyse the social responsibility of an atypical NGO towards its employees. In this regard, a survey conducted by using one questionnaire was used. The analysis is based on several aspects of the organisations' social responsibility towards employees, namely recruitment and employees' retention, employees' health and safety, effects generated by the employees' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, reward system. The study revealed that the workplace atmosphere, the organisation's concern towards the employees' problems, as well as the reward for their efforts leads to the increasing their loyalty and to achieving high performances.

Keywords: employees' development, health and security at work, suitable wages, social responsibility

JEL: M14, J54, L31

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to provide a brief overview on the social responsibility of atypical non-governmental organisations towards their employees. In this regard, the study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

- a. Analysing the organisation social responsibility's influence on the well-being of its employees.
- b. Analysing the organisation social responsibility's influence on the efficiency of its activities.

The research method used in this article is the questionnaire-based survey. The sample is non-probable, including 15 employees from different departments within Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and Industry. There is no calculation formula to establish the size of the non-probable sample. However, the sample is relevant because it includes respondents with essential characteristics of the entire studied group (the employees of the organisation). The research tool used is the questionnaire because it ensures the collection of a large amount of data in a short time.

The questionnaire was applied between March-April 2021 by using the platform isondaje.ro. Responses from 15 respondents have been obtained. The questionnaire comprises 13 items of several types: Likert scale, dichotomous questions and open questions. The first part of the questionnaire contains items about the socio-demographic profile of the respondents while the second part analyses the respondents' perception regarding the social responsibility of the organisation towards the employees.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The practice of social responsibility of organisations not only means an obligation to society in terms of social and environmental aspects, but also to the employees. When employees consider that their organisation is socially responsible, they have a greater sense of belonging to it. In fact, the social responsibility may be more important than the financial benefits in establishing how much employees identify with their workplace (Kamble et al., 2018).

According to Gorovei (2020), a socially responsible organisation should ensure that their employees are happy and satisfied with their jobs. It is unethical for employees to be treated like mere machines, and for the organisation to expect them to work continuously for eight to nine hours just because they are paid. The management should ensure that the people associated with their organisation actually enjoy what they do and also grow with time. Job profiles should be assigned based on the expertise, knowledge and educational qualification of individuals so that no one will be overburdened.

In fact, just as employees have responsibilities to the organisation they work for, in turn, the organisation should also have certain responsibilities to its employees. These refer to the following (Cohen, 2011; Păceșilă, 2019):

- **Employees development.** It can be achieved through training programs, courses or various activities contributing to the employees' professional or personal development. However, employees development is not only about optimising the individuals' skill set, but also about continuous learning that helps professionals to advance in their careers. Although professional development is in the individuals' responsibility, it is to the employer's advantage to encourage continuing education by providing or facilitating both internal and external learning opportunities.
- **Fair and non-discriminatory practices when dealing with employees.** Any organisation should maintain a balance between its employees and treat them equally without discriminating them.
- **Transparency and permanent communication with employees, their consultation and involvement.** The more the organisation communicates with employees, provides them information about its current status and involves them in future plans, the more the employees will feel more important and will show their interest in contributing to the evolution of the organisation.
- **Suitable wages paid on time to the employees.** The credibility of an organisation towards its employees is closely related to the timely payment of wages. Moreover, a motivating factor for their retention within the organisation for as long as possible is the wages increase depending on the seniority or the performances achieved.
- **Concern for the employees' safety, health and security at work.** All organisations should be concerned about fulfilling these aspects, both morally and legally, as they have the legal responsibility to guarantee the employees' safety and security at work.
- **Benefits provided beyond wages.** In addition to wages, other ways to motivate employees by the organisation or to show appreciation towards them are the following: meal vouchers, subscriptions for medical services, paid training programs, flexible working hours, holiday vouchers, high performance mobile phone/laptop etc.
- **Respect for the employees' rights and their appreciation.** Employees appreciation can be shown by providing positive or constructive feedback.

On the other hand, according to Elaine Cohen (2011), a socially responsible organisation is also concerned with ensuring a balance between the employees' career and their personal life. Moreover, in most employees' opinion this balance does not really exist because of the employers'

pressure on employees. However, the above-mentioned author shows that the situation is exactly the opposite because not employers are responsible for this balance, but it is actually an employees' internal conflict. Therefore, the balance depends on the prioritisation of activities by the employees.

This idea is also supported by other authors considering that the balance does not mean dividing time equally between career and private life, but prioritising these two dimensions while putting a barrier between in order to separate them. Thus, the balance should not be achieved by the employer/organisation, but should be designed by the person who wants it (Cohen, 2011).

The workforce is constantly changing, not only due to the integration of Generation Z into the workforce, but also due to digitalisation and globalisation. In light of these transformations, the organisations change their perspective on recruiting and retaining highly trained employees in this new transparent world. Apart from salary and other employee benefits, the social values and responsibilities are among the most important characteristics of an employer. In fact, according to a study conducted by Elwira Skrybus for Pacific Prime, 93% of employees surveyed, of various ages, consider that high ethical standards are very important as regards an employer. This means that there is another aspect that organisations should be interested in when trying to attract and retain their employees. Therefore, the impact that the organisations have in society may or may not provide a higher purpose to their employees (Pacific Prime, n.d.).

Other authors such as Caliguri et al. (2013) also identified a positive relationship between social responsibility practices and employee engagement. Furthermore, Glavas (2012) concluded that employees of socially responsible organisations find greater meaning and congruence of values at work. Specifically, the social responsibility practices enable organisations to go beyond formal values that tend to be words on paper in order to turn them into reality (Jones et al., 2014). The social responsibility practices can also be a way to find deeper meaning in the workplace, a way for employees to find the purpose, because in doing so, they feel they are contributing to a greater good (Rosso et al., 2010).

In recent years, employee involvement has benefited from increased attention of researchers, especially as it has positive results for both the individual and the organisation. Several researches have shown a strong link between employee engagement and other aspects such as: increased commitment (Saks, 2006; Halbesleben, 2010; Ferreira and Real de Oliveira, 2014), low absenteeism, increased job satisfaction (Saks, 2006; Alarcon and Edwards, 2011), better individual and organisational performance (Kahn, 1990; Harter et al., 2003). Moreover, increasing employee involvement could be a key element for business success (Shuck et al., 2011).

Nowadays the employees have huge expectations from their employers. They are looking for other elements in addition to the traditional benefit offering. They hope that their employer will inspire them so that they have a good feeling about their employment choice (Chaudhary, 2017; Hermano, 2021). Moreover, according to Greening and Turban (2000), the individuals prefer to work for ethical and socially responsible organisations. Furthermore, in Andersson's (1996) opinion, the unethical behavior of organisations represents an important violation of their rights leading to employee cynicism.

2. ATYPICAL NGOS IN ROMANIA: CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF ROMANIA

Typical non-governmental organisations in Romania are regulated by the Government Ordinance (G.O.) no. 26/2000 regarding associations and foundations. These organisations are classified into three categories: associations, foundations and federations.

Atypical non-governmental organisations are not regulated by G.O. no. 26/2000, but they are regulated by special laws that may or may not be supplemented by the aforementioned ordinance (Păceșilă, 2016).

Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Romania are legal entities under private law without patrimonial purpose, established by traders. They support and defend the interests of their members as well as of the business community in relation to public authorities and other bodies in the country and abroad. These entities are one of the most important forums representing business people in Romania in the last 150 years (Păceșilă, 2016).

The Romanian Chamber System is the associative network of the business environment with the most extensive representation at the national level and it is the only organisation existing in each county. The system of chambers of commerce includes: the county and Bucharest chambers of commerce called county chambers, the Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry called the National Chamber, the bilateral chambers of commerce. Currently, this system is regulated by law no. 335/2007 regarding the Romanian Chambers of Commerce supplemented by law no. 39/2011.

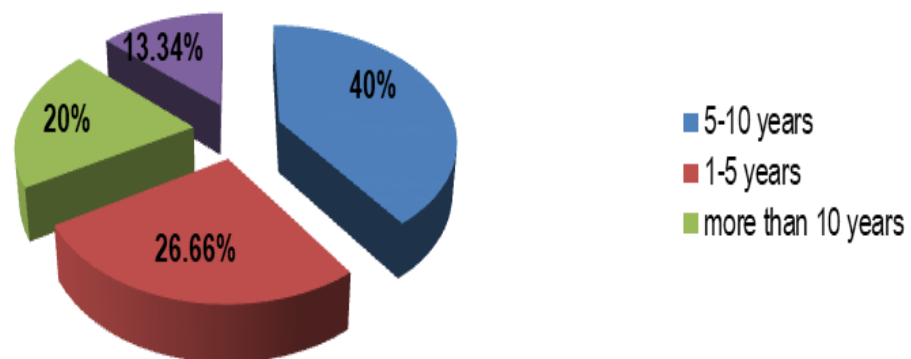
The Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) is an autonomous, non-governmental, apolitical organisation, without patrimonial purpose, with legal personality, of public utility, intended for representation, defense and support of its members' interests and the advantages of the other economic operators in Bucharest. Its aim is to develop trade and industry as well as agriculture and services according to the requirements of the market economy. As an authorised representative of the Bucharest business environment, BCCI aims to ensure a stable, coherent and transparent business environment, favorable to the sustainable development of the Bucharest economy, by promoting beneficial legislative initiatives. Moreover, the Bucharest Chamber supports the economic-social development of the Romanian capital while involving in projects carried out in public-private partnership (Ccib.ro, n.d.).

3. ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

- 60% are women while 40% are men
- Average age: 38.4 years old (respondents are between 22 and 60 years old)
- The seniority of the respondents within the organisation: most employees have been working for 5-10 years (40%), 26.66% have been working for 1-5 years while 20% of them have been working for more than 10 years; only 13.34% of them have been working for less than one year.

Figure 1. The seniority of the respondents



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

3.2. ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION REGARDING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ORGHANISATION TOWARDS THE EMPLOYEES

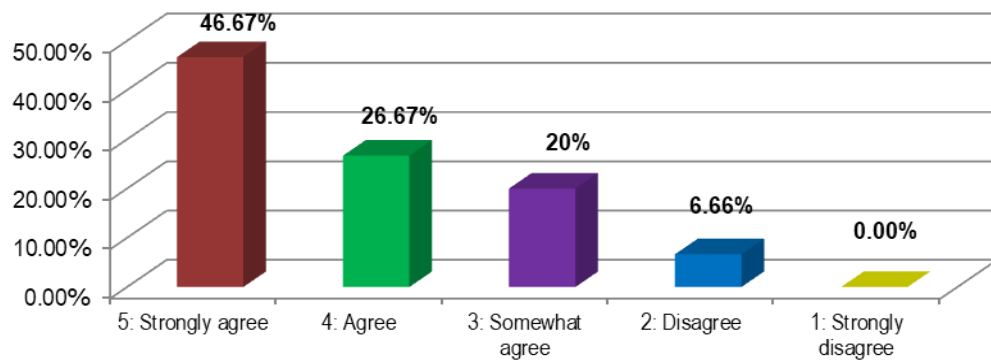
Table 1. Respondents' perception regarding the concept of "social responsibility towards employees"

| Possible values | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Ensuring comfort at work | 12 | 80% |
| Safety (security) | 11 | 73.33% |
| Timeliness and fairness of rewards | 7 | 46.66% |
| Promoting diversity, non-discrimination, granting equal opportunities | 8 | 53.33% |
| Conflict resolution | 5 | 33.33% |
| Loyalty to the employee | 14 | 93.33% |

Source: Păceșilă, 2023

As can be seen, loyalty ranked first in the respondents' preferences. In fact, just as the organisations want to obtain the loyalty of employees, the latter also expect the organisations to provide them with stability and give them confidence.

Figure 2. The respondents' perception regarding the organisation's responsibility towards employees

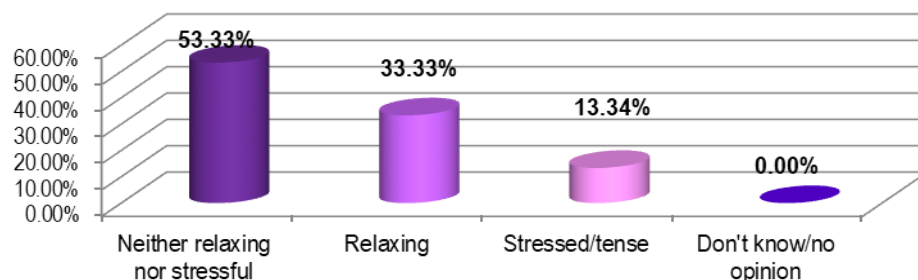


Source: Păceșilă, 2023

Question no. 5 refers to the respondents' perception regarding the organisation's responsibility towards employees. The respondents had the possibility choose an answer on a Likert scale of 5 (1: *strongly disagree* while 5: *strongly agree*). As can be seen from figure 2, most people surveyed (46.67%) generally consider that the organisation under analysis is responsible towards employees.

As for question 6, in most respondents' opinion the work environment in the institution is neither relaxing nor stressful (53.33%), while 33.33% consider that it is relaxing. Only 13.34% of the employees feel stressed/tense.

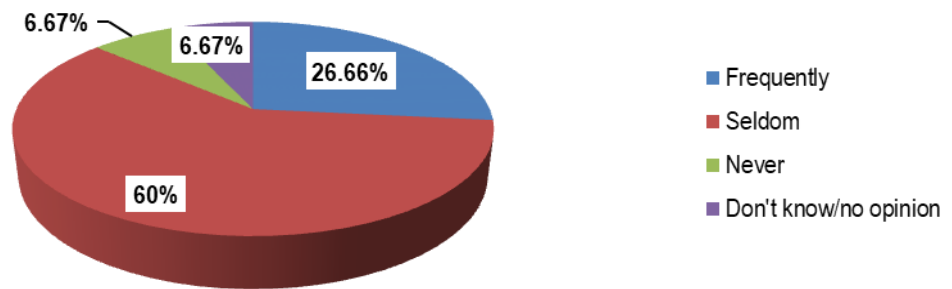
Figure 3. The characteristic of the work environment within the organisation



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

As regards the initiation of periodic meetings where workplace grievances are addressed, figure no. 4 shows that 60% of the respondents consider that they do not occur frequently while 26.7% are at the opposite pole because they checked the option answer "frequently".

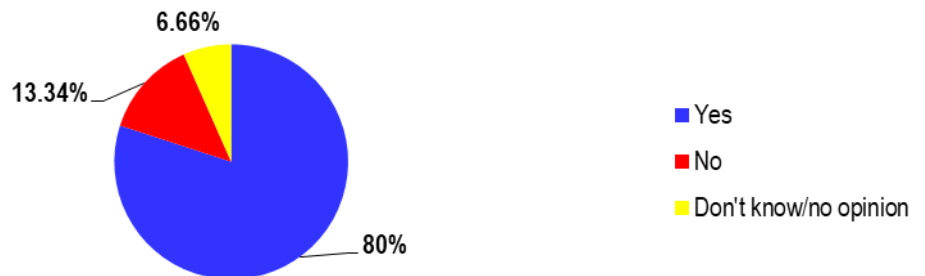
Figure 4. Initiating periodic meetings regarding workplace grievances



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

Question no. 8 also received positive answers, most of the respondents (80%) considering that the organisation where they work regularly takes care of their health and safety.

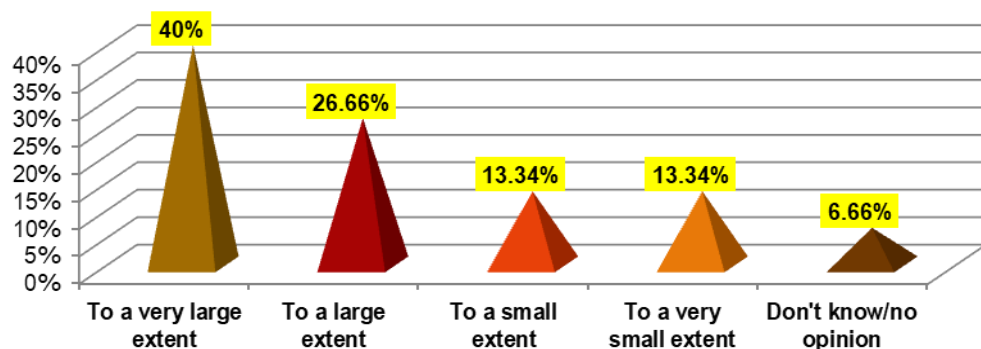
Figure 5. Respondents' perception regarding the organisation's periodic concern for the employees' health and safety



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

According to figure 6, in most respondents' opinion (66.66%), the extent to which the organisation takes care of employees' needs strongly influences their personal lives, while 26.68% consider that this aspect does not affect them. There were also respondents (6.66%) who either did not want to answer or did not know how to provide an answer for various reasons.

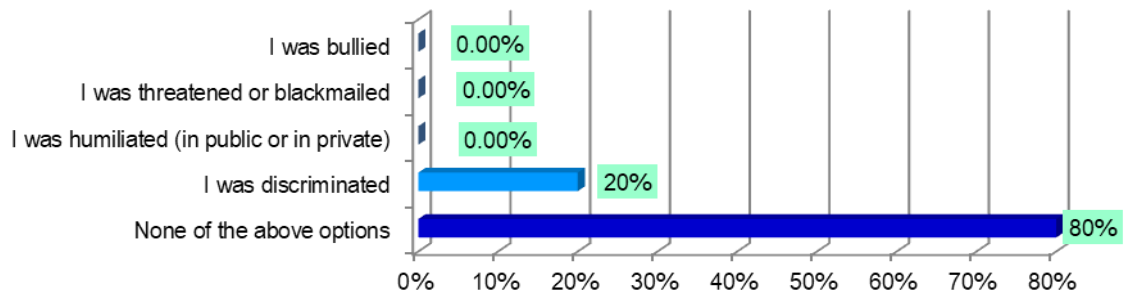
Figure 6. The extent to which the organisation's concern for employees' needs influences their personal lives



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

Question 10 lists some possible situations faced by employees at work, the respondents having the opportunity to choose several answer options. Figure 7 shows that 80% of the employees did not experience unpleasant situations at work, which means that aggressive behaviors are not promoted within this organisation while trying to create an environment that is as less intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive.

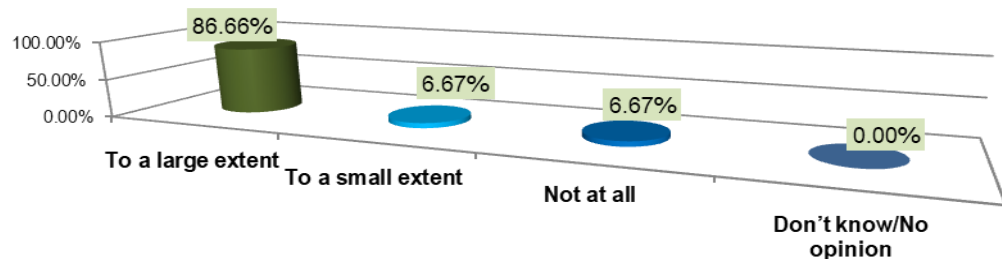
Figure 7. Possible situations faced by employees at work



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

Question 11 analyses the respondents' perception regarding the link between the image of the organisation responsible for its human resources as well as the attraction and retention of employees. The question has received positive responses from most of the respondents (86.66%).

Figure 8. Respondents' perception regarding the link between the image of the organisation responsible for its human resources as well as the attraction and retention of employees



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

The effects generated by employee dissatisfaction at work are analysed by question no. 12. As can be seen from figure no. 9, most responses were recorded by the option "feel less motivated and less willing to get involved in projects" (33.33%).

Figure 9. Effects generated by employee dissatisfaction at work
When employees are dissatisfied at work, they:



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

Compared to question no. 12, question no. 13 is at the opposite pole while analysing the effects generated by employee satisfaction at work. According to the responses received, when employees are satisfied with the organisation they work in, they become more loyal, more attached to their workplace, wanting to stay as long as possible within the organisation.

Figure 10. Effects generated by employee satisfaction at work



Source: Păceșilă, 2023

In order to improve the relationship with the employees, the organisation should focus on several aspects:

- ✓ Planning meetings once a week in order to manage the conflicts arising in the organisation, to improve communication with employees, to provide them the possibility of expressing the opinions, and to avoid their possible discrimination, blackmail or harassment;
- ✓ Motivating employees to increase their yield and performance by awarding bonuses for the results achieved, as well as by openly praising them in weekly meetings in the presence of their colleagues.
- ✓ Organising parties on special occasions (employees' birthdays, Christian holidays, international days, etc.). Participating in such events will improve relations between employees and make them feel like family. Moreover, these parties will make employees feel that they are appreciated and wanted in the organisation, while their loyalties will increase.
- ✓ Encouraging employees through verbal praise, personal letters, and written congratulations. Employees need to know what they are doing well in order to be able to repeat the performance in the future. Encouraging them can lead to increased self-confidence and the desire to continue to be actively involved in the organisation.
- ✓ Keeping managers in constant contact with employees, even if they are performing and showing motivation. The employees need feedback from their superior(s) about their effort at work. This feedback involves managers providing subordinates their opinion on their results, on the progress made and even on their failures. Feedback should be critical, with arguments, but addressed in a calm, positive, constructive and encouraging tone.

CONCLUSIONS

The social responsibility of an atypical NGO towards its employees has been investigated in this paper by using a questionnaire based survey conducted within Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In this regard, several aspects of the organisation's social responsibility towards employees have been examined: recruitment and employees' retention, employees' health and safety, effects generated by the employees' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, reward system.

The conclusion reached after the investigation is that organisations could have positive results if they consider that social responsibility towards employees is a key element for their future development.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

The paper represents the substantial and direct contribution of the author and has been approved for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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