POLITICAL INFLUENCE FREE CIVIL SERVICE

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Civil Service Reform

Report

2021

Contents

Charts, tables and graphs

Research Summary

Research Review

The goal of the given research is to acquire empiric evidence on the extent to which Civil Service Reform has ensured formation of efficient, based on meritocratic principle, politically neutral system of human resource management (HRM) at the municipal level.

The human resource management system based on meritocratic principle is the key indicator of the basic characteristic of public governance and democratic development of the country. In terms of the research, current practices of human resource management, such as selection, evaluation and career advancement of civil servants in municipality city halls was assessed. Adherence to such fundamental values as supremacy of law, impartiality and political neutrality were especially highlighted. Evaluation of *gender equality and employment and inclusion of people with disabilities*, also identification of career barriers for these target groups were inherent part of the research.

The research was conducted in the period of local government elections; hence, it enabled us to assess the engagement of civil servants in pre-election and election processes.

The research is complex in terms of both the methods applied and the target groups.

At the level of municipality, the efficiency of the reform was evaluated *from a number of perspectives*. The research incorporated *various target population*: employees of the municipality city halls, HRM representatives of the municipality city halls and municipality population.

Qualitative and quantitative research design was applied in the research; selection of such a framework of methods and techniques of research was conditioned by the desire to ensure achievement of the goals identified by the research.

The research was conducted in 16 municipalities and in two administrations of Tbilisi. Though obtained information reflects the main trends of assessment of efficiency of civil services, the results and conclusions of the research are mainly directed at the municipalities involved in the research.

A total of 538 civil servants and 782 people from the selected municipalities (population) participated in the quantitative research; **the qualitative research** included 12 focus groups (6 civil servants, 6 residents of the municipality) and 18 in-depth interviews with HRM specialists of the municipalities, as well as document analysis (content analysis) and expert evaluations. The HRM analysis methodology was also used in terms of quantitative research. A focus group of self-government experts was conducted at the *final stage of the research*. This method provided an assessment in the context of objective data on the perceptions and attitudes of those involved in the research.

It should be also noted that an **in-depth research** was conducted in 6 municipalities, where all those methods described above were used. In 12 municipalities and 2 administrations only the interviews with civil servants, HRM specialists were conducted and important for HRM analytics information was collected.

For the result analysis **so called triangulation-based framework** was applied. This method is significant for in-depth analysis of the information collected from various target groups by means of qualitative and quantitative methods and for validation of the research findings.
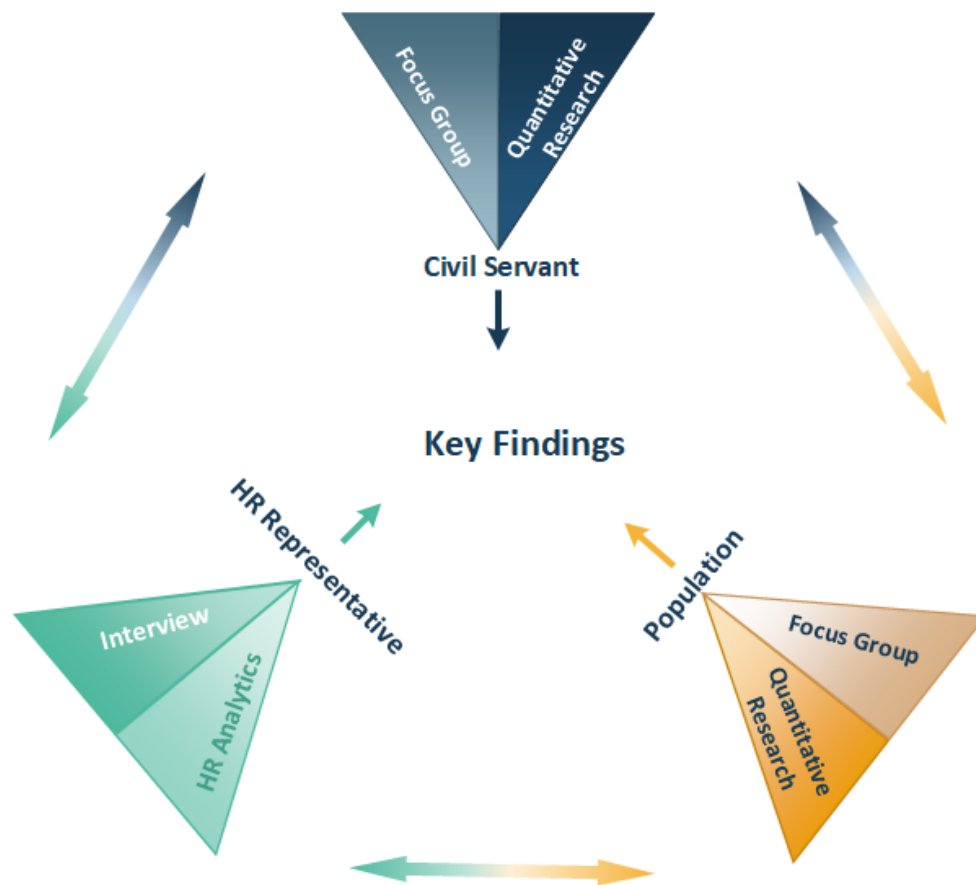
During quantitative research analysis the following methods were used: descriptive statistics and conclusive statistic methods, including correlation analysis, dispersion analysis, evaluation of statistical reliability of differences between means, evaluation of statistical reliability of frequency distribution, factor analysis and evaluation of indirect relationships (mediation and moderation analysis).

Civil service reform is oriented on establishment of fundamental principles of organizational justice (equality, impartiality, appreciation of professionalism, etc.). Consequently, **the organizational justice theory** has been selected as a **theoretical framework** for the research. The concept of justice is inherently linked to the two key issues of the civil service reform, and consequently, our research: meritocratic human resources management and political neutrality. In our conceptual model of the research the assessment **efficiency** of HRM practice in the municipality city halls is conducted based on the perceptions of the organizational justice. Our research has to answer the following question: *To what extent does the current practice of human resource management ensure the perception of organizational justice of civil servants?* The idea of a politically neutral civil service is also based on adherence to the principles of justice, therefore, important personnel decisions made under political influence should create a sense of injustice. Another question sounds as following: *To what extent does the current degree of political neutrality in municipality city halls ensure the perception of organizational justice?*

To indicate the efficiency of the reform several research variables are additionally incorporated in the research, including city hall reputation, working life quality of employees (degree of labor welfare and professional burnout), subjective perception of meaningful work (perception of doing valuable and community useful job), commitment to the organization. Additional research questions are:

How the established practice of human resource management in the city hall, the degree of political neutrality and perceptions of organizational justice affect the reputation of the city hall, the formation of organizational commitment and working life quality of employees.

In terms of the project working framework, new survey instruments were created that ensured collection of valid information for the project goals. Two questionnaires were designed in terms of the research: (1) city hall employee attitude survey instrument (*civil servant questionnaire*) and (2) public opinion/attitude survey interview (*population questionnaire*). *3 factors identified as a result of the factor analysis turned out to have similar content and even the labels, they have are similar* (the degree of freedom from political influences, HRM practice and organizational reputation). This fact allowed us to assess and compare them from the perspective of the population and employees of the city halls.

Additionally, there are several scales integrated in the civil servant questionnaire; they are adapted/shortened versions of standardized instruments. These scales are:

Subjective perception of the meaningful work, commitment to the organization. Working life quality is assessed by scales of burnout and labor wellbeing.

All the instruments, factor, and scale used in the research are distinguished with high reliability.

Complexity of the research, use of various methods and inclusion of different target groups enabled us to assess current situation despite the challenges that arose in the data collection process.

Research Findings

In terms of HRM, the reform has both achievements and challenges. The most important achievement is **creation of legal leverages for the protection of civil servants**, thanks to which substantially reduced **politically motivated decisions of dismissal**. The research positively assessed the conceptual part and initiatives of the civil service reform. However, the problems that have emerged in the process of their implementation have also been identified. Part of these difficulties have more operational nature, while another part is related to the methodological aspects of human resource management in the civil service.

The challenges in various municipalities are mostly similar that refers to their systemic nature. The **main challenges of the reform are**: formal nature of the implementation of the performance appraisal system and limited opportunities for career advancement (these issues are discussed in detail in the Human Resource Management section). In all cases, participants' concerns about poor remuneration and scarcity of incentives are particularly evident.

Despite the decline in the practice of political patronage, it remains one of the major civil service challenges at the municipal level. Since one of the most important goals to be achieved in terms of

the fundamental principles of the Law of Georgia on Civil Service is a politically neutral publlic service, we will start summarizing the results with this issue.

Political Influences on the Municipality Level

Introduction of civil service free from political influences at the municipality level, on the example of municipality city halls, has some *positive dynamics*, which is reflected in the prevention of coercive mechanisms for engaging civil servants in the pre-election process and also in reducing the practice of making politically motivated decisions related to personnel (selection, promotion, dismissal); the research shows that political patronage has more or less been replaced by meritocracy-based human resource management procedures, although **political affiliation** as one of the form of patronage still remains one of the patterns in municipality city halls, especially when selecting for or promoting to senior management positions.

High level of civil servants' engagement in pre-election process in the municipality city halls is retained, however, with observance of the law and regulations.

This is demonstrated by the growing number of civil servants on leave in the pre-election period. Political influences are also reflected in the opinion of local experts and the general public stating that the selection process in the city halls has become more meritocratic, however the use of entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities (NNLEs) for the employment of political supporters still pertains.

The assessments of the target groups involved in the research are mostly contradictory. For example, by the assessment of a big portion of civil servants and HRM specialists, political influences in the municipality city halls have significantly reduced; however, the population still remain critical and believe that the degree of politization and nepotism in the city halls is high; the positive outcomes of the reform noted by civil servants remain less obvious.

The situation is different at the municipality level though. We came across obvious examples of reduction of political influences on personnel decisions, as well as vividly expressed negative practice in terms of the municipalities involved in the research.

Legislative regulations to protect against political influence have partially or almost completely relieved civil servants from pressure; however, multi-year experience and collective memory, however, have made civil servants less sensitive to political influences at the municipality level, as evidenced by the fact that local political interventions and engagement in election processes do not trigger in them the **feeling of unfairness.** Whereas, the processes of human resource management in the city hall and the degree of political influences on them (politically neutral environment) are important determinant of organizational justice (especially, human resources practice).

Adjustment to the local political interventions is the result of multi-year experience, which, most probably is compounded by lack of autonomy – part of the employed develop individual political accountability toward concrete political powers; engagement of civil servants in pre-election processes (even if the law is observed) is an example of that. To protect civil servants, in the conditions of formation of legal leverages, release from political influences lies in the free choice of the civil servant. In case of its shortcoming, the positive outcome of the reforms tends to be illusory. Current

situation, as in case of the countries in transition, "resembles social game found on the dichotomy between actual and formal rules" (Mlcoch., 2000).

Presented results are based on the *triangulations of results* obtained by different methods (*interview, focus group, quantitative research, HR analytics*) from three target groups of the research (civil servants, human resource management specialists, population).

The attached illustration schematically demonstrates assessments of the target groups in regard to political influences.

Diagram II. *Practice of Political Influences in Municipality City Halls: Assessments of Various Target Groups.*
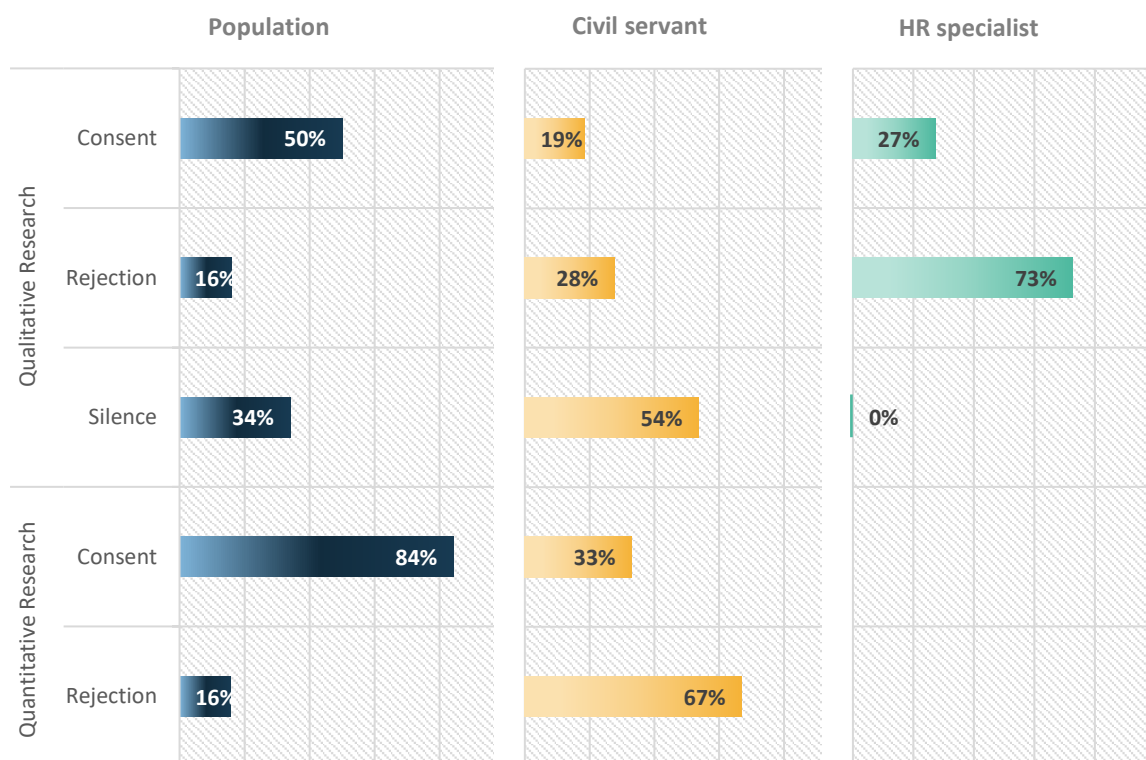
Explanation: The illustration depicts respondents' three types of answers – **rejection, consent and silence** in regard to political influences in the *qualitative research*. Proceeding from the specificity of quantitative research, we have not reflected on the category of silence in the analysis.

In the interviews conducted with HRM specialists, the indicator of silence is negligent, which is conditioned by the specificity of a face-to-face interview, where the opportunity 'to hide', to stay silent is less.

Regarding the existence of political patronage and influences, population has the highest rate of *consent*, and human resources management specialists – the highest rate of *rejection*.

After summarizing all the six focus groups of civil servants, it is obvious that a significant portion of the civil servants involved in the research refrain themselves from expressing their opinion regarding

political influences and prefer to keep silent[1], which points at the sensitivity of the topic (which created certain difficulties during the administration of the research). Probable reasons for silence of civil servants are as follows: (1). *Employees' nihilistic attitudes* caused by the feeling that they cannot have any impact on the ongoing processes in the organization; (2). *Protecting oneself from potential threats (so called defensive silence)*. To refrain from expressing own views, high level of silence is, as a rule, characteristic for the organizations where there is high centralization and scarcity of formal mechanisms of upward feedback.

The general picture of the research is obtained by collating the results gained from various target groups by different methods.

Diagram III. *Percentage of consent to the existence of political influence in municipal halls. The information obtained from the population, civil servants and HR representatives through quantitative and qualitative research method.*
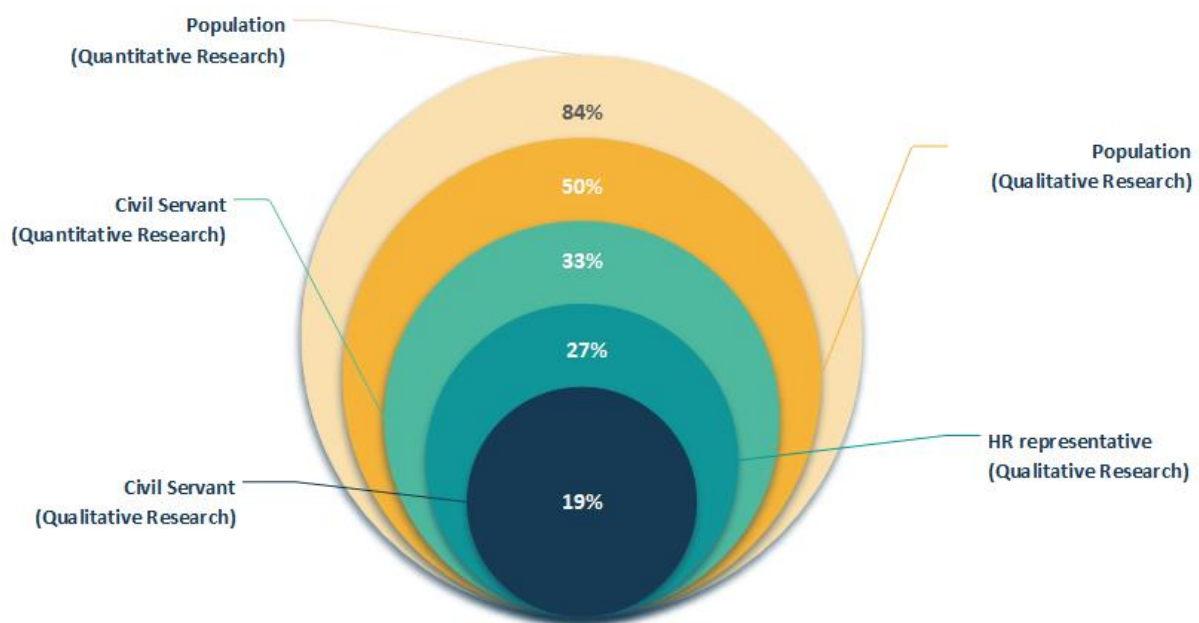
Assessment of Policy and Practice of Human Resource Management

In the municipal city halls, the model of HRM is basically concentrating on operational activities. Responsible for strategic issues is Civil Service Bureau. The challenges in resource management that were identified in both policy of human resource management and operational HRM by the research require certain changes and/or modifications.

Along with significant achievements, the municipalities face the following challenges:

In terms of civil service reform, **to introduce an objective system of performance appraisal and based on it, effective promotion and motivation schemes hves not yet been possible.** Formal nature of

---

[1] Silence is "the concealment of own views and concerns about the problems of the organization by employees." (Morrison, Milliken; 2000; p. 707).

performance appraisal, unification of compensation mechanisms (principle: equally for everybody) is a common practice in municipal city halls. Current legislation which is oriented on preventing nepotism or political influence leverages, which is itself a very significant aspect, has also limited the opportunities for promotion and motivation of eligible, qualified employees. In addition, **poor remuneration, lack of material incentives and career growth opportunities not only complicate recruitment of qualified staff but are also a prerequisite for personnel turnover**. Active and systematical response to these challenges will essentially increase the reform's efficiency.

One of the reform's achievements is process optimization; in this regard, the positive importance of the introduction of the electronic governance system is highlighted, despite the fact that its functionality in the municipalities is limited due to the fact that the system was not fully implemented, and, in addition, a portion of the population lacks sufficient competence to use it.

Centralization

The HRM processes in the municipal city halls are rather ***centralized***. It is paradoxical that the processes that has been created to provide neutrality, transparency and justice, in a number of cases limit the municipalities' chance to respond efficiently to own, sometimes specific needs. Civil service regulations should allow flexibility. Municipalities differ from one another by their demographic profile and needs; the challenge of the new reform is to take this diversity into consideration and at the same time retain strong sides of equal opportunities. Observance and retention of balance between centralization and decentralization is also one of the challenges of the civil sector; strategic planning in the centralized system is much simpler, though, not sufficient enough for strategic HR to perform its function effectively. Strategic planning provides integrated and holistic approach of HRM; however, in municipal city halls along with the ***increase in HRM competencies*** (for which Civil Service Bureau carries out many significant activities), the municipalities' capacities to respond autonomously to their specific needs and challenges should be increased.

Diversity management

Equal representation of women in civil service is an important indicator of progress in creating a diverse and inclusive workforce. The research shows that the chances of women being employed in municipal city halls are higher than their career advancement opportunities. Among the first-rank professional civil servants in the municipalities surveyed, the number of women is about 4 times less; as a result, the issues of women's career advancement in municipal city halls require more attention.

Despite the entries in various legislation acts (such as 2014 Anti-Discrimination Law) that prohibit discrimination and bias on any grounds, the practice introduces frameworks inconsistent with the law: in theory, employment of persons with disabilities is feasible, but the environment is so inefficient and therefore, 'not friendly' that substantially limits this opportunity. More serious work needs to be done in the city halls to provide people with disabilities with unimpeded access to services and employment. Despite successful practices, in most cases, the problem remains unaddressed. We cannot say that municipalities' lack of efforts to promote the employment of persons with disabilities is due to the stigma associated with disability; instead, it most likely indicates more the lack of a systematic approach to this issue.

Challenges of the Municipalities Populated by Ethnic Minorities

In municipalities populated by ethnic minorities, ignorance of the state language creates certain barriers to both employment and, subsequently, to professional development and retention of employees.

HRM Practice, Political Influences and Perception of Organizational Justice

Positive evaluation of HRM practice and politically neutral environment significantly determine the perception of organizational justice by city hall employees. Concurrently, compared to **HRM practice, the effect/influence of politically neutral environment is weak**. As to local political interventions, they do have **direct** impact on the formation of employees' perception of organizational justice. Unlike career advancement, reward and benefit distribution, and other HRM processes that are important prerequisites for perceiving organizational injustice, dissatisfaction with political influence is not converted into a perception of injustice. This result of the research suggests that political patronage is perceived as a common occurrence by city hall employees. They are less sensitive to such facts, which can be explained by their nihilistic attitudes and/or high degree of adaptation to political influences.

Reputation of the City Hall

The goal of the reform is creation of efficient and effective civil service based on meritocratic principle and improvement of institutional environment. To what extent this goal has been achieved was identified by evaluation of the city hall reputation. The actual picture looks as follows: the population's attitudes to the city hall are mostly rather critical. The low degree of public trust damages the 'legitimacy' and reputation of the decisions made by the city hall. According to civil servants' assessment, the reason for the critical attitudes of the population is conditioned by the *lack of information* about the work done, also about the authority that this or that service of the city hall has to solve problematic issues; The role of other important contextual factors is also highlighted, such as social poverty, opposition-minded media, and others.

Other Results of the research Important for Recommendations Development

In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in human resource management issues due to civil sector's orientation on a high standard of performance appraisal. There emerged a tendency to 'psychologize' the field; numerous surveys study the impact of HRM on individual performance indicators, such as labor attitudes, perceptions of well-being, and others. These indicators are mainly identified as a result of private sector survey and include such organizational variables that are no less relevant in public organizations (Osborne, 2017). The presented survey also follows this trend ... Given the complexity of the organizational environment, as well as cause-and-effect analysis, *along with the organization's reputation*, the research includes several important results variables that can indirectly measure reform efficiency. They are: *labor attitudes (commitment to the organization), working life quality of employees (professional burnout and perception of labor wellbeing)*.

HRM Practice, Political Influence and Organizational Commitment

In the formation of organizational commitment, the employee's perception that he is doing a meaningful work is the most important – the more valuable the civil servants consider their work,

the higher their organizational commitment is. *Perception of meaningful work* enables the employee to overcome difficult situation at the workplace and cope with challenges. The feeling that you are doing work meaningful for the public compensates for the negative impact of unfair HRM practice on employees' organizational commitment.

HRM Policy, Political Influence and Working Life Quality

HR**M practice is the most important in shaping the quality of working life of city hall employees**. The effect of a politically neutral environment on the quality of employees' life is much weaker than on HRM practices. Local interventions (influence of a majoritarian MP, involvement in pre-election processes, etc.) do not affect the quality of employees' labor wellbeing. Fair HRM practice is positively reflected on employee's welfare and reduces the risks of professional burnout.

These survey results are used in the recommendations development process.

To reform such a complex and complicated system as the civil sector is connected with many challenges. During the reform, the outputs should be constantly reviewed and the process adjusted, if necessary. This was the purpose for carrying out the given survey.

Proposed recommendations and strategies have been developed based on the principles of sequencing and synchronization. Implementation of any specific recommendation or a group of recommendations will not yield the desired result as long as the proposed recommendations are interrelated and require adjustment to time.

The recommendations are tailored to the research findings and take into account / build on the current achievements of the reform.

Chapter 1. Research Design

Research Purpose

Establishing a transparent, independent and impartial system in civil service is an international obligation under the Georgia-EU Association Agreement. *Civil service reform* has been implemented to meet these obligations. The spirit of the reform is in line with international standards and best practices, including the **principles of effective civil service** described in the OECD Conceptual Framework[2] for Public Administration Reform. These principles are: impartiality and professionalism (as opposed to political bias), a fair, meritocratic selection system, a transparent and fair evaluation of the job performance and a policy of remuneration and promotion based on it, equal access to training and development activities[3].

The purpose of this study is to provide empirical evidence on the extent to which civil service reform has created a unified and effective civil service, that is free from political influences – developing a human resource management model focused on supporting professionalism, career advancement, political neutrality and impartiality.

The effectiveness of the reform was assessed at the **municipal level**. The research was conducted during the local government elections, which allowed us to monitor and evaluate the situation in terms of *political neutrality of the civil service* at the municipal level, as well as to make recommendations based on the research.

Research Problems and Questions

The main target of the research is the City Halls from different municipalities. Accordingly, the main research questions were formulated as follows:

- How meritocratic are the human resource management processes in the municipal City halls, whether such fundamental values as the rule of law, impartiality, transparency are preserved. How fair is the current practice of selecting, evaluating and advancing civil servants.

- To what extent are management practices in general and personnel decisions made at the municipal level free from political and other influences (e.g., nepotism)l; How involved are civil servants in the pre-election and election processes?

Today, the development of meritocratic HR management practices, gender imbalance and "aging" of the workforce is a significant challenge, not only for Georgia, but also for many developed countries. Equal representation of women in civil service is an important indicator of progress in creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce (OECD, 2017a). Therefore, the focus of our research was on the issue of **gender equality** in municipal City Halls, as well as the **employment and inclusion of people with**

---

[2] Within the framework of the EU Joint Project (SIGMA) on Promoting Governance

[3] The principles of public administration, OECD, Sigma, 2017
http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Principles-of-Public-Administration-2017-edition-ENG.pdf

disabilities; Analyzing employment and career advancement opportunities at the City Hall and identifying career barriers is an important part of the research for these target groups.

Methodology and Target Groups

The research is complex in terms of both the methods used and the target groups.

The effectiveness of the reform at the municipal level was assessed from several perspectives. The study covered different target populations: employees in municipal City Halls, representatives of the Human Resources Management (HRM) department of municipal City Halls and the population of municipalities. Representing HRM specialists as a separate target group was critical because of their organic connection to the key research issues.

Qualitative and quantitative research design is used in the study; A framework of research methods and techniques was selected that ensured the achievement of the research objectives.

Qualitative research included focus groups (Civil servants, population) and in-depth interviews (HRM specialists), as well as document analysis (content analysis) and expert evaluations. Total held:

- 6 focus groups with civil servants

- 6 focus groups with population

- 18 in-depth interviews with HRM specialists

The target population for **quantitative research** is civil servants and the population. Involving community members in the study as a target group allowed us to further assess the civil service reputation and comprehensively analyze the research problem. The HR analytics was also used as a part of the quantitative research. This method allowed us to collect and analyze objective data on the perceptions and attitudes of those involved in the study.

In the quantitative research participated:

- 538 civil servants

- 782 person from different selected municipalities (population)

We also note that **in-depth research** was conducted in 6 municipalities where all the methods described above were used. In the remaining 12 municipalities and 2 municipal governments ("gamgeoba"), the research was conducted using the following methods: surveying public officials, interviewing human resource management specialists, and gathering information relevant to HR analytics.

Finally, the research sampling and methods used with the target groups looks like as follows:

Figure 1. 1   *Research methods used in the study and target groups*

Data triangulation

Qualitative research   **Quantitative research**

Focus group
- Population
  (6 municipalities)
- Civil servants
  (6 municipalities)

Interview

HRM specialists
(16 municipalities,
2 municipal governments)

Expert evaluation

- Civil service reform regulations
- Analysis of existing studies on the
  effectiveness of civil service reform.

Target groups
- Population
  (6 municipalities)
- Civil servants
  (12 municipalities)

HRM analytics

Quantitative analysis of HRM
activities and outcomes
(16 municipalities,
2 municipal governments)

Definitions of sampling design: To ensure sampling representativeness, the target population was initially divided into several strata: (1). Regions, (2). Population size in the municipalities; (3). Self-governing and non-self-governing cities / municipalities. In each stratum, municipalities were first selected, with a proportional probability of number of employees, and then employees were selected, using systematic sampling. The sampling model ensured the inclusion of self-governing cities, municipalities, densely populated with ethnic minorities, and mountinous municipalities in the sampling. Sampling size was calculated according to sampling accuracy standards (standard error - 3%, reliability level - 95%); Despite the work done to ensure sampling representativeness, the final model has been modified. The number of selected municipalities was reduced to 16, however, 2 administrations of Tbilisi were added. It would be correct to say that the information obtained from the study reflects the main trends in the evaluation of civil service effectiveness, however, the results and conclusions of the research are mainly still directed at the municipalities involved in the research.

Analysis of Research Results and Triangulation

A triangulation-based framework was used to analyze the results. Triangulation involves the inclusion of many different approaches to better understand a particular theory or phenomenon (Obel, 2018). This method is important for analyzing information collected from different target groups by qualitative and quantitative methods and validating research findings. Usually, it is used for three main

purposes. These goals are: to increase the validity of the research findings, to create an in-depth picture of the research problem, and to use different ways of understanding the research problem.

Because a variety of methods are used in the study, and the target populations are different, triangulation allows us to detect cases where one "set" of data contradicts another; It also helps to confirm the hypothesis expressed in the case of one set of data by means of another "set". And most importantly, triangulation helps us interpret research results.

In the study we used three kinds of triangulation: (1). *Convergence*: identifies sections / overlays between data sets collected by different methods. (2). *Complementarity*: Creates a richer picture of research results by combining results obtained by different methods. (3). *Divergence or dissonance*: Reveals inconsistencies and challenges in the methods used.

Methods of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics are used in the analysis of quantitative data; Including correlation analysis, dispersion analysis, assessment of statistical reliability of differences between means, assessment of statistical reliability of frequency distribution, factor analysis, and evaluation of indirect relationships (mediation and moderation analysis).

Theoretical Framework of the Research and Research Model

Civil service reform focuses on the introduction of fundamental principles of justice; *Conscientiousness, political neutrality, impartiality, appreciation of professionalism, accountability -* are the operational side of justice. That is why the theory of organizational justice has been chosen as the conceptual framework of the research.

Adequate selection of a theoretical framework for research is important for several reasons. Theoretical framework:

- Helps us to develop a conceptual empirical model of research.

- Assists in formulating and / or refining hypotheses; Helps to make scientifically sound assumptions about the expected outcome between target variables / constructs.

- Helps us to interpret research results - opens links between research variables and allows us to make scientifically sound assumptions about why we obtained such a result.

Fundamental Terms of the Organizational Jusctice Theory

Organizational justice is related to the subjective perception of employees about the fairness of the organization they work in (Robert Folger, 1998). Organizational justice covers all aspects of workplace behavior - the treatment of superiors, pay, access to training, gender equality and etc. Organizational justice stems from the theory of equality, according to which individuals discuss justice in terms of what effort they put into their work and what they receive in return.

There is a growing body of research showing the effectiveness of human resource management policies and practices based on fundamental principles of justice, as well as the positive impact of justice on employee attitudes, work behaviors and organizational effectiveness in general (Cohen-

Charash & Spector, 2001; al. Cropanzano, 2001; Mengstie, 2020). International as well as local studies of justice show that organizational justice is an effective mechanism for preventing deviant, antagonistic behaviors and encouraging positive on-the-job behaviors in the organization (Baharom et al., 2017; Kutaladze, Tsulaia, 2021).

Organizational justice is assessed by employees based on labor outcomes, organizational procedures, and interaction with management. Accordingly, organizational justice reflects individuals' perceptions of how fair or unfair formal processes and procedures are in the organization and how fair or unfair their management interacts with them. In the study we use threedimensional model of organizational justice: *distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice.*

Distributive justice focuses on fairness of labor outcomes; It reflects the perception of employees about the fair distribution of resources/outcomes (salary, bonuses, opportunity to develop and advance knowledge and skills, etc.) in the organization. Employees monitor how rewards are distributed and sanctions are imposed on the organization, including monetary rewards, promotion decisions, training, transfers, vacations, bonuses, penalties for delays or delays. Distributing such rewards and imposing sanctions on employees is perceived as fair or unfair depending on how resources are allocated to them and their colleagues (Folger & Greenberg, 2001).

Procedural justice refers to employees' perceptions of how fair or unfair decision-making processes and formalities are going on in an organization. The organization establishes formal rules and regulatory mechanisms for allocating resources and managing employee behavior. If the rules and regulations are unfairly perceived by the employee, he / she feels that it is impossible to get a fair result (reward / sanction) in return for the work performance, which is a prerequisite for strong demotivation.

Interactional justice focuses on the way in which an individual is treated when decisions are made; individuals feel they are being treated fairly when employers provide explanations for decisions and treat employees with dignity, respect, and sensitivity (Colquitt, 2007). It is the perception of employees about the direct supervisor and, more generally, of management fairness or injustice. Interactive justice, as a link between organizational procedures and decision-making, may be more important to employees than the allocation of resources and/or the structural features of procedures (Mikula, 1990).

Other Constucts Involved in the Study

The main target variables of the research are: **human resource management practices and political neutrality in the Municipality.** Given the complexity of the organizational environment, several important outcome variables are also included in the study for the analysis of causal relationships, which can be used to measure the effectiveness of civil service reform. These are: **the reputation of the organization, the subjective perception of the meaningful work, work attitudes (organizational commitment) and the quality of work life of employees.**

Operationalization of other constructs involved in the study

Organizational Reputation - "Reputation is a unified/conclusive representation of the benefits of the organization's past activities and achievements" (Arild Wæraas, Moshe Maor, 2014).

Meaningful Work - Individuals' perceptions that they are doing something worthwhile and beneficial to the community (Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2012).

Organizational Commitment - an employee's dedication to an organization and wish to remain part of it. Organizational commitment is often described as having both an emotional or moral element (affective commitment) and a more practical element (continuance commitment) (APA Dictionary of psychology). With the conceptualization used in the study, this notion also includes perceptions of belonging to an organization and psychological ownership.

Work Related Well-being - The term work related well-being combines the physical and mental health of an employee. Work related well-being "is the feeling of positive emotions in the process of working; The individual's perception that work allows him to express and develop his potential, as well as take effective steps to achieve his lifetime goals" (Paschoal, Torres, & Porto, Felicidade no trabalho: relações com suporte organizacional e suporte social, 2010). It determines employee health, satisfaction, and efficiency (Paschoal, Torres, & Porto, Felicidade no trabalho: relações com suporte organizacional e suporte social, 2010).

Burnout – It is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by engaging in an emotionally difficult situation for a long period of time. It is associated with a low rate of job performance, reduced motivation, the formation of negative attitudes towards oneself and others. Occupational burnout is most often experienced by individuals who work under strong stressful situations (APA Dictionary of Psychology).

The conceptual model of the research is based on the theory of justice and includes the variables described above. The research model is discussed in detail below.

Figure 1. 2   Research Model

The conceptual model of the research
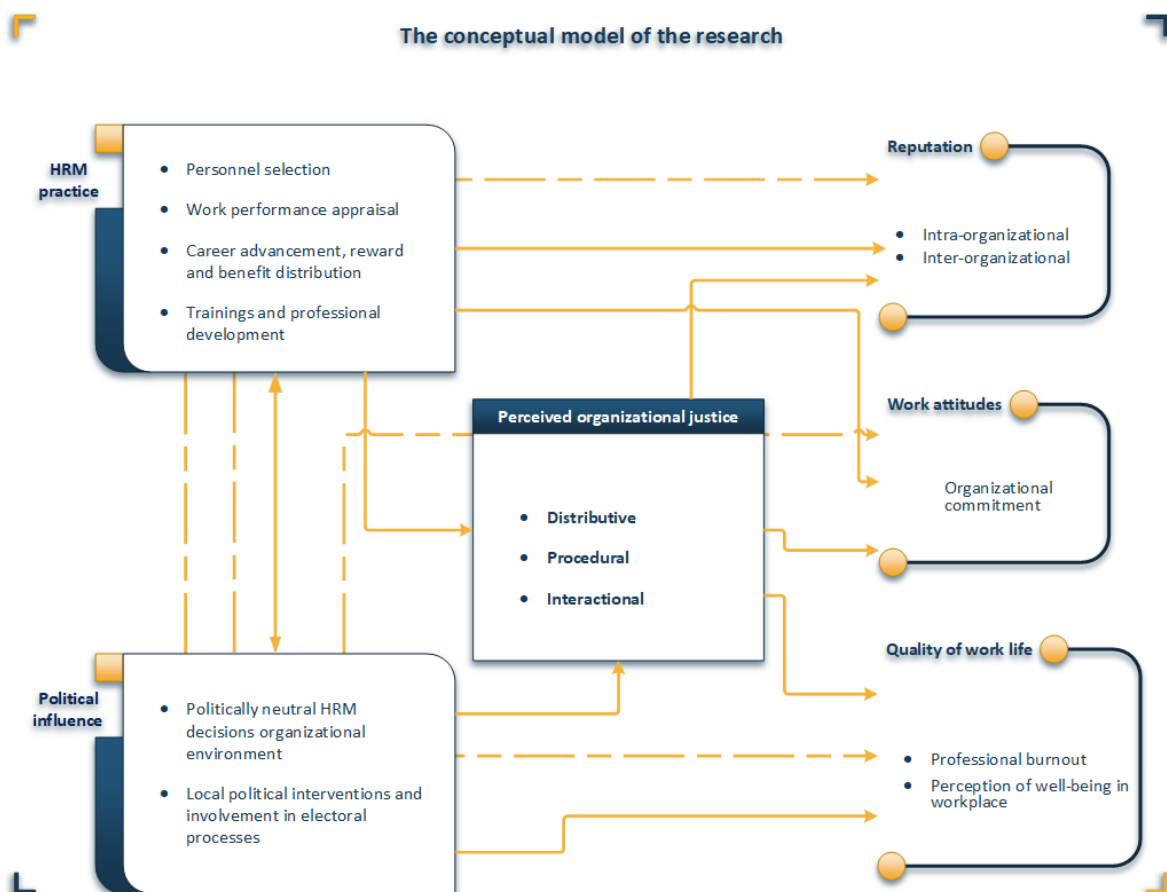
Model Description: Civil service reform is focused on the introduction of fundamental principles of organizational justice (equality, impartiality, appreciation of professionalism, etc.); Studies on organizational justice show that human resource management policies and practices make a significant contribution to shaping employees' perceptions of organizational justice. Studies have identified organizational processes that contribute to employees' perceptions of injustice. These are: *the selection process, performance evaluation, promotion, compensation and retirement* (M. J. Cullen, 2003). In the conceptual model of the research presented by us, the ***effectiveness*** of human resource management practices in municipal City Halls is assessed through perceptions of organizational justice. One of our main research questions is: **To what extent does the current practice of human resource management ensure the perception of organizational justice of civil servants?**

The idea of a politically neutral civil service is also based on the principles of justice. Significant personnel decisions made under political influence create a sense of injustice. The following research question in the model is as follows: **Does the existing degree of political neutrality in municipal City Halls ensure a perception of organizational justice?**

Studies show that the employees perception of organizational justice is reflected in the quality of work life of employees, the nature of work behaviors and the effectiveness of the organization (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Cropanzano et al., 2007, 2011; Dundon et al., 2004; Lotfi & Pour, 2013; Mengstie, 2020; Rasheed & Al, 2017). Based on this research data, we assume that City Hall employees' perceptions of fairness will also make a significant contribution to shaping City Hall's reputation (the key to reputation is the effectiveness of the organization). The next research question is: **Does the established practice of human resource management in the City Hall, the degree of political neutrality and perceptions of organizational justice ensures trust in the City Hall, how does it affect the evaluation of its effectiveness and reputation?** The reputation of the organization, with the conceptualization used in the study, includes assessing the effectiveness of the City Hall and the degree of trust in it from two perspectives: population assessments and civil servant assessments.

Studies also show that perceived organizational justice is a prerequisite for job satisfaction, work motivation, organizational commitment, and positive organizational behaviors (Bakhshi et al., 2009; Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Cheng et al., 2020; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Gillet et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2020; Mengstie, 2020; Moliner et al., 2008; Rasheed & Al, 2017). Because organizational justice also affects employees' quality of life and work attitudes, we further assess the impact of key research factors on employees' quality of work life, which is measured by perceptions of well-being at work and burnout; Organizational commitment is selected to assess work attitudes. The research questions are as follows: **How does the established practice of human resource management in the City Hall, the degree of political neutrality and organizational justice affect the formation of organizational commitment and the quality of working life of employees?**

We will start presenting the research findings with a complex model, which assesses the role of *human resource management practices, politically neutral environment, as well as the role of local political and pre-election interventions in shaping the perception of organizational justice.* In the study perceptions of organizational justice are presented in various forms: the one-dimensional construct of organizational justice - general organizational justice, and its three dimensions - distributive, procedural and interactional justice.

Research Instruments

New quantitative research tools were developed at the initial stage of the project to ensure the collection of valid information for research purposes.

Within the framework of the research, two questionnaires were developed (1) a tool for measuring the attitudes of the employees of the City Hall (servant questionnaire) and (2) a tool for researching public opinion / attitudes (population questionnaire). As a result of psychometric and factor analysis of the instruments (Exploratory Factor Analysis), 7 factors were identified in the servant's questionnaire, and 3 factors in the population questionnaire.

The 3 factors identified as a result of factor analysis were found to have similar content in both questionnaires and accordingly, thay have the same name (degree of freedom from political influence, HRM practice, and organizational reputation). This fact allowed us to evaluate and compare the processes described by the factor from the perspective of the population and the people employed in the City Hall.

Table 1. 1   *Research Factors*

Servants Questionnaire	Population Questionnaire
☐ HRM Practice	☐ HRM Practice
☐ Local Political and Pre-election Interventions	☐ Reputation of City Hall
☐ The degree of freedom from political influence	☐ The degree of freedom from political influence
☐ Organizational Reputation	
☐ Distributive Justice	
☐ Procedural Justice	
☐ Interactional Justice	

Additionally, several scales are integrated into the officer's questionnaire, which are adapted, abbreviated versions of standardized instruments. These scales are: meaningfull work, organizational commitment. The quality of working life is assessed on a scale of burnout and work related well-being.

All instruments, factors, scales used in the study are highly reliable. Detailed information on factors and scales is given in Appendix 1.

Presentation of research results

The presentation of the research results begins with a description of the complex connections between the conceptual model of the research and the main constructs (Chapter 2), which reflect general patterns and are important for the development of research recommendations. The following

chapters describe the results of triangulation of data obtained from different target groups using different methods on the topics of human resource management practices and political neutrality (Chapter 3, Chapter 4); Several aspects of diversity management are also given (Chapter 5) and City Hall's reputation assessment (Chapter 6). The report concludes with a chapter of recommendations. The following insertion will help you to better understand the content of the main research factors and, consequently, the research results.

Insertion — Operationalization of key factors used in the study

Servant Questionnaire

Human Resource Management (HRM) practice describes the vision of City Hall staff regarding various aspects of human resource management, such as employee selection, performance appraisal, promotion and rewards, training and development practices. Typical items are: *"Professionalism is encouraged, promoted and valued in my organization." "My organization adheres to the ethical standards of civil service, there is an impartial and honest environment." "Promotion in my organization is fair - according to the results of an employee performance appraisal", etc..*

Politically neutral environment describes the attitudes of City Hall employees about how politically neutral the HRM decisions are. In contrast to the HRM practice factor, a politically neutral environment views HRM decisions in terms of political influence. Typical items are: *"My organization encourages employees to work diligently and professionally, their political party affiliation does not influence the process.", "It is important for my organization to have the opinion of each employee, regardless of their party affiliation." "Personnel in my organization are selected on the basis of professionalism and not on the basis of party affiliation."* The questions also show that the opinions of employees in this factor focus on the politically neutral nature of personnel decisions.

The factor of **local political and pre-election interventions** focuses on the influence of the local political context - To what extent are personnel decisions under the local political influence in the pre-election period? Typical items are: *"The influence of the parliamentary majoritarian on the selection and promotion of staff in my organization is high", "Pre-election processes have a negative impact on the climate and efficiency of my organization.", "I expect that in case of a change of government, the people employed in the municipality will change.", etc.*

Population Questionnaire

The degree of freedom from political influence is also assessed from the perspective of the population. In the case of the population, based on factor analysis, one factor was identified, which we called the degree of freedom from political influence, it also includes questions about local political influence. Typical items are: *"In the event of a change of government, the civil servants employed in the municipality will change.", "The activities of the City Hall are determined by the political agenda and not the needs of the municipality.", "The City Hall usually employs people who are affiliated with the ruling political force.", "City Hall is free from political influence", etc.*

The reputation factor describes the vision of the population regarding how well the City Hall is fulfilling its duties, how much the society trusts it. Typical items are: *"I negatively assess the activities of the City Hall of my municipality.", "The City Hall has a good reputation among the population.", "The City Hall is doing its job well.", etc.*

The attitude of the population towards **human resource management (HRM) practices** is also assessed. We consider the perspective of the population as the perspective of the service recipient. Involved items are: *"Women and men have equal opportunities for employment in the City Hall", "The City Hall encourages, promotes and values professionalism", "The City Hall has an impartial and conscientious organizational environment", etc.*

In order to make it possible to compare the vision of the two target groups, we chose the same name of the factor in both groups (Human Resource Management (HRM) practice). In terms of content, public officials directly assess City Hall HRM practices from the perspective of the employee, and the population from the perspective of the service recipient.

It should be noted that all negatively formulated questions are reversed, therefore, a high score in the factor reflects a positive evaluation in all cases.

Chapter 2. Analysis of the relationships between the variables included in the study

Relations between the main target constructs of the study

The results presented in this chapter reflect the general patterns identified in the study, it is critically important for the development of recommendations. A detailed description of the current situation in terms of human resource management policies and practices, as well as the situation in terms of political neutrality, is presented in the following chapters.

The following discusses - (1) human resource management policies and practices, (2) the degree of political influence, and (3) local policy influences and interventions - the **effect/impact** on employees' perceptions of organizational justice. It also describes the impact of these three factors on organizational reputation, employee attitudes, and quality of working life.

The results are as follows:

Conclusion 1. HRM practices and a politically neutral environment make a significant contribution to shaping the perception of organizational justice of City Hall employees.

Compared to HRM practice, the effect / influence of a politically neutral environment on the perception of organizational justice is relatively weak;

Local interventions (influence of a majoritarian, involvement in pre-election processes, etc.) do not affect the formation of employees' perception of organizational justice.

*Reducing and eliminating local political influence is not a major challenge for City Hall employees. More important to them is the fairness of HRM processes. **City Hall employees are less sensitive to political influence**, especially when it comes to local political interventions, such as involvement in pre-election processes, the influence of a majoritarian on personnel decisions, and so on. If the main challenge of the reform is to reduce or eliminate political influence, political patronage for employees (regardless of who is the ruling force at the moment) is perceived, not as a significant challenge, but as an expected, routine case. This, of course, does not mean that political influences are generally positively assessed by them, it simply does not evoke a strong sense of injustice; In this respect, civil servants are particularly adapted to local political influences. Feelings of inequality and injustice are most common among the practices of promotion and encouragement, appraisal of work performed, and other HRM processes that directly affect their performance and outcomes.*

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, politically neutral environment, and local political and pre-election interventions together account for 46.2% of the variation in organizational equity scores ($R^2 = 0.462$, $F(3, 534) = 152.06$, $p < 0.001$). *HRM practice* is the most important factor in shaping the perception of organizational justice ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). An increase of 1 standard unit of positive evaluation of HRM practice is associated with an average increase of 0.48 standard units of organizational justice. The effect of a politically neutral environment is relatively weak ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$); Local interventions have no statistically significant impact on the perception of organizational justice.

Conclusion 2. A politically neutral environment is crucial in shaping the perception of procedural justice. The perception of distributive and interactional justice is influenced only by HRM practice.

Local interventions were not associated with any form of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, interactive).

By observing the existing HRM practice, the employees of the City Hall evaluate the fairness of the distribution of resources / results. These resources are: salary, bonuses, opportunity to develop and promote knowledge and skills, etc. (Distributive Justice); By observing the degree of political influence, the fairness of decision-making processes and formal procedures is assessed (procedural fairness).

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

The model, in which three factors - human resource management practices, politically neutral environment, local political and pre-election interventions - were presented together, explained 37.8% of the variation in distributive justice scores ($R^2 = 0.378$, $F(3, 534) = 107.74$, $p < 0.001$); However, only HRM practice was found to be statistically significant in these factors ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$). The same model explained 31.5% of the variation in interactional justice scores ($R^2 = 0.315$, $F(3, 534) = 82.99$, $p < 0.001$). In this case, too, only HRM practice is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$).

The combination of these three factors has the weakest effect on procedural jusctie, it explains only 11.5% of the scores variation ($R^2 = 0.115$, $F(3, 534) = 23.12$, $p < 0.01$). In the case of procedural justice, only a politically neutral environment proved to be statistically significant ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion 3. HRM practices and a politically neutral environment are also important in shaping City Hall's organizational reputation. The effect of a politically neutral environment is relatively weak in this case.

Local interventions (influence of majoritarian, involvement in pre-election processes, etc.) do not affect the formation of organizational reputation of employees.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

Human resource management (HRM) practices, politically neutral environment, and local political and pre-election interventions account for nearly 60% of the variation of organization's reputation scores ($R^2 = 0.592$, $F(3, 534) = 93.52$, $p < 0.001$). **HRM practice is the most important in the formation of organizational reputation** in this case as well ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$). An increase of 1 standard unit of positive evaluation of HRM practice is associated with on average an increase of 0.63 standard units of organizational reputation. An increase of 1 standard unit in a positive assessement of politically neutral environment is associated with an increase in the average organizational reputation by 0.15 standard units. ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.001$). The effect of local interventions is statistically insignificant ($\beta = 0.03$, $p = 0.761$).

Conclusion 4. The most important in the formation of organizational commitment: the perception of the employee that he is doing something worthwhile and useful for the community; HRM practices and a politically neutral environment are also important in shaping organizational commitment. The effect of the neutral environment is relatively weak in this case as well.

Local interventions have no statistically significant impact on the formation of perceptions of organizational commitment.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

All three factors together (Human Resource Management (HRM) practice, politically neutral environment, and local political and pre-election interventions) account for 34.5% of the variance in commitment scores ($R^2 = 0.345$, $F(3, 534) = 93.52$, $p < 0.001$). **HRM practice is the most important in the formation of organizational commitment** ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). An increase of 1 standard unit of positive evaluation of HRM practice is associated with an increase of average organizational commitment by 0.48 standard units. The effect of a politically neutral environment is relatively weak in this case as well ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$); Local interventions have no statistically significant impact on the formation of perceptions of organizational commitment. If we add to these three factors the perception of the meaningfulness of work as a predictor, four factors together account for 54.1% of the variation in commitment scores to the organization. ($R^2 = 0.541$, $F(4, 533) = 156.55$, $p < 0.001$). **Perception of the meaningfulness of work is most important in shaping the perception of commitment to the organization** ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$), the next is – HRM practice ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$) and after that, politically neutral environment ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$). An increase in meaningful work perception by 1 standard unit is associated with an average increase in commitment to the organization of 0.54 standard units. The impact of local interventions is statistically insignificant ($\beta = -0.04$, $p = 0.49$)

Conclusion 5. HRM practice is the most important in shaping the quality of working life of employees. Fair HRM practices have a positive impact on employee well-being and reduce occupational burnout risks. The effect of a politically neutral environment on the quality of life of employees is much weaker. Local interventions (influence of a majoritarian, involvement in pre-election processes, etc.) do not even affect the quality of working life of employees.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

The model, in which three factors - *human resource management practices, politically neutral environment, local political and pre-election interventions* - were presented together, explained 26.8% of the variation in work related well-being scores of City Hall employees ($R^2 = 0.268$, $F(3, 534) = 64,95$, $p < 0.001$) The same model explained 31.6% of the variation in *employee burnout* scores ($R^2 = 0.316$, $F(3, 534) = 81,77$, $p < 0.001$). In both cases the contribution of HRM practice is high - only HRM practice was found to be statistically significant for work related well-being ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$); For employee burnout – HRM practice ($\beta = -0.46$, $p < 0.001$) and politically neutral environment ($\beta = -0.10$, $p < 0.001$).

These results of the study reveal the dominant role of human resource management practices in the perception of organizational justice and the formation of other important organizational variables (organizational commitment, quality of working life ...). Because civil service reform focused on political influences as one of the major challenges, we tried to answer the question: How does the degree of political influence affect the evaluation of existing human resource management practices? **It turned out that the role of political influence, including the role of local political interventions, is quite significant - political neutrality is an important contributor to the positive assessment of**

existing human resource management practices by employees. This is clear from the following conclusion as well.

conclusion 6. The role of a politically neutral environment and local policy interventions is crucial in positive assessment of existing human resource management practices by employees. The more neutral the political environment is and the less local political interventions appear, the more positively the existing practices of human resource management are evaluated.

However, the effect of local political interventions is even weaker in this case, than the role of politically neutral HRM decisions. Accordingly, the interpretations given in the first conclusion are valid in this case as well.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

Politically neutral environment and local political interventions account for 70.6% of the score variation ($R^2 = 0.706$, $F(2, 536) = 639.08$, $p < 0.001$). At the same time, increasing the score by 1 standard unit on a neutral political environment scale increases the positive assessment of human resource management practices by an average of 0.50 standard points ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), and local political influences by 0.46 ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$).

Let us clarify this conclusion: the HR factor includes questions aimed at evaluating individual **HRM** processes, while a politically neutral environment and local political interventions mainly combine questions that reflect political influence on these processes. Consequently, the result is logical. The lower the degree of political influence on **HRM** processes, the more positively it is evaluated. This result demonstrates the importance of political influences, including local policy interventions, in positively evaluating **HRM** processes. Consequently, political neutrality plays an important role in positively assessing **HRM** processes. As a result, local interventions have not a direct, but an indirect impact on the perception of organizational justice and the formation of organizational commitment. The effect of politically neutral personnel decisions / environment has been confirmed by other analyzes presented so far. This is made even clearer when reviewing the models of complex relationships given below at this chapter.

conclusion 7. Assessing the reputation of City Hall from the perspective of Civil servants

HRM practice is the most important in shaping City Hall's organizational reputation. Perceptions of meaningful work and a politically neutral environment also have an impact on organizational reputation, although compared to HRM practices, their impact is weaker. Local interventions have no statistically significant impact on the formation of perceptions of organizational commitment.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

Human resource management (HRM) practices, politically neutral environment, and local political and pre-election interventions account for nearly 60% of the variation of organizational reputation scores ($R^2 = 0.625$, $F(3, 534) = 93.52$, $p < 0.001$). **HRM practice is the most important in the formation of organizational reputation in this case as well** ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). An increase of 1 standard unit of positive evaluation of HRM practice is associated with an increase of an average of 0.52 standard units

of organizational reputation. Other factors contributing to reputation perception include: Meaningful work: β = 0.22, $p < 0.001$ and politically neutral environment: β = 0.16, $p < 0.001$.

Conclusion 8. Assessing the reputation of the City Hall from the perspective of the population

In shaping the reputation of the City Hall, it is important to see how fairly perceived the existing employment and promotion opportunities are in the City Hall (City Hall HRM practice). The effect of the degree of freedom from political influence on shaping City Hall's reputation is weak and statistically insignificant. *In this regard, the assessments of the population and public officials are consistent.* Recall that the population evaluates these processes from the perspective of the service recipient; If access to these services is satisfactory, however, the fundamental principles of equality are upheld, the population is satisfied, and local political interventions are less problematic for them. When access to services is limited, they perceive political interventions and the political context in general more negatively.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

Freedom of political influence and HRM policy factors account for 67.5% of City Hall's reputation scores variation in population ($R^2 = 0.675$, $F(2, 772) = 799.96$, $p < 0.001$). The more positively the HRM policy is evaluated, the greater the reputation of the City Hall among the population (β = 0.85, $p < 0.001$).

Models representing complex relationships

In the social sciences, including labor and organizational psychology, only the analysis of direct relationships between target variables lacks the ability to fully reflect the complex and multifaceted relationships between them. The complexity of the work environment - the presence of many interrelated factors in it - necessitates a complex analysis - the evaluation of the indirect relationships between target variables and the complex mechanisms underlying the relationships. Such an analysis reveals the role of political neutrality and local political interventions in the analysis of indirect links - they have a mediating effect on the various variables included in the study. The results of such an analysis are presented below.

Conclusion 9: Employees' perception that their actions in the workplace are valuable and useful and that they are doing something important for the population (subjective perception of meaningfulness of job) acts as an incentive factor for organizational commitment, even when negatively evaluating human resource management practices. That is, the feeling that you are doing something worthwhile, important to the population, compensates for the negative impact of unfair HRM practices on employee organizational commitment.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

The relationship between HRM practice and organizational commitment is moderated by a subjective perception of the meaningfulness of work. The model explains 55% of the variability of scores. ($R^2 = 0.55$, $F(3, 532) = 216.3$, $p < 0.01$). The diagram below shows the empirical model of the relation. In case of negative evaluation of HRM practice, the highest level of organizational commitment is given to those employees who consider the work worthwhile and good for the society.

Figure 2. 1 *Simple Moderation Model: The Moderational Effect of Subjective Perception of Job Meaningfulness on HRM Practice and Organizational Commitment*
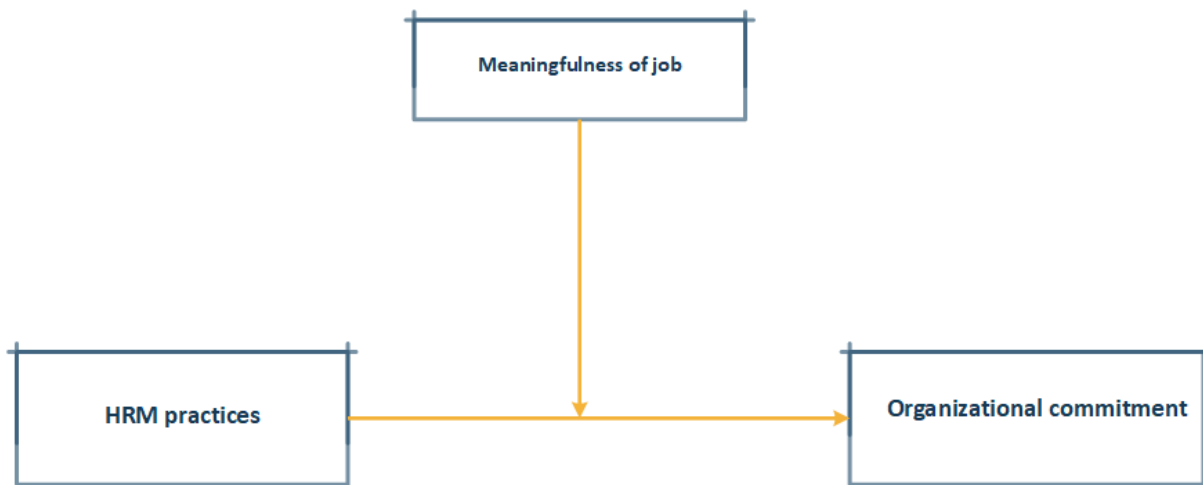
Conclusion 10: A positive assessment of HRM practices in an organization is associated with an environment, free from political influence - if the environment is perceived as politically neutral, human resource management is more likely to be positively assessed, and their contribution is important in shaping the perception of organizational justice; In turn, the perception of justice is an important determinant of the positive reputation of the City Hall.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

We made this conclusion based on a serial (sequential) mediation analysis of a politically neutral environment, human resource management practices, organizational justice, and perceptions of an organization's reputation. The relationship between human resource management practice and the perception of an organization's reputation is serially mediated by the above factors. The graph below shows the empirical model of the relation. The model is statistically significanr and explains 34% of the variation in organizational reputation scores ($R^2 = 0.34$, $F(3, 532) = 263$, $p < 0.01$).

Figure 2.2 *Serial Mediation Model: Degree of Freedom from Political Influence and Organizational Justice as a Mediator Variables in the Relationship between HRM Practice and Organizational Reputation*
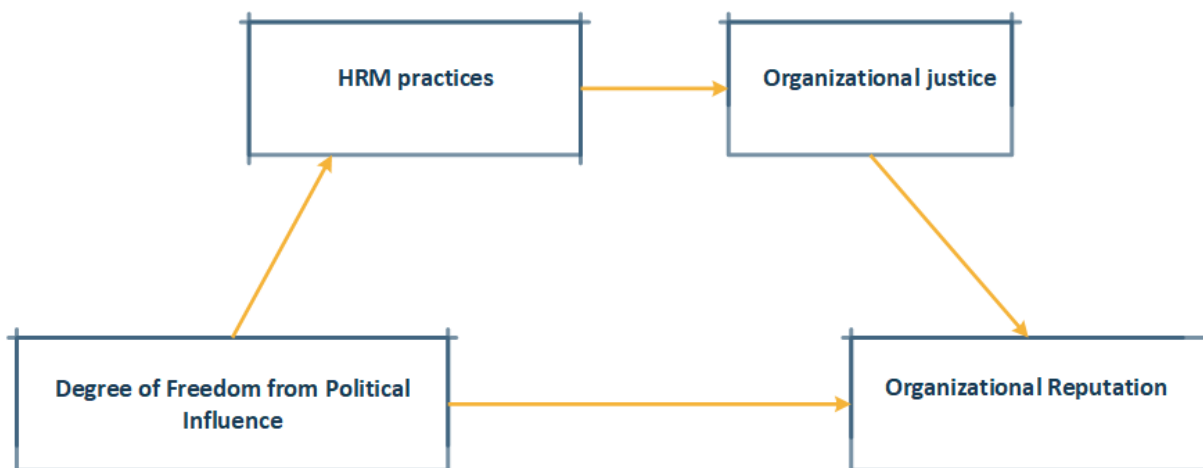
This relation is confirmed even if we include local political interventions in the model instead of a neutral political environment (the model explains 39% of the variation of organizational reputation scores), thus confirming the indirect impact of this factor on organizational justice and reputation.

Conclusion 11: A politically neutral environment evokes a sense of fairness among employees; Perceptions of fairness in the practices, procedures, and communication styles of the distribution of labor outcomes have a positive effect on the degree of commitment, adherence, and identification to the organization, which in turn improves the organization's reputation in the eyes of the employee.

<u>This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:</u>

Serial (sequential) mediation relationships between the degree of freedom from political influence, organizational justice, commitment, and reputation were assessed. Within this model, two mediating factors, the mediator, are represented between the independent variable and the dependent variable. This model evaluates three different mediational relations:

1. The mediated effect of the perception of organizational justice on the relationship between the degree of a politically neutral environment and organizational reputation (a politically neutral environment shapes perceptions of organizational justice, while the perception of organizational justice has a positive effect on organizational reputation, which means that the relationship between these two variables is mediated by the perception of organizational fairness);

2. The mediated effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between the degree of a politically neutral environment and organizational reputation;

3. The impact of perceptions of organizational justice and organizational commitment on the relationship between a politically neutral environment and organizational reputation.

The results of the analysis show that all three mediated relations were confirmed. Organizational justice and organizational commitment serially, sequentially mediate the link between the degree of freedom from political influence and organizational reputation. The model explains 47% of the variation of reputation scores ($R^2 = 0.47$, $F(1, 534) = 486.96$, $p < 0.001$), which is quite a high rate for a similar complex model.

Figure 2.3 *Illustration of a serial mediation model*

Figure 2.3 *Illustration of a serial mediation model*
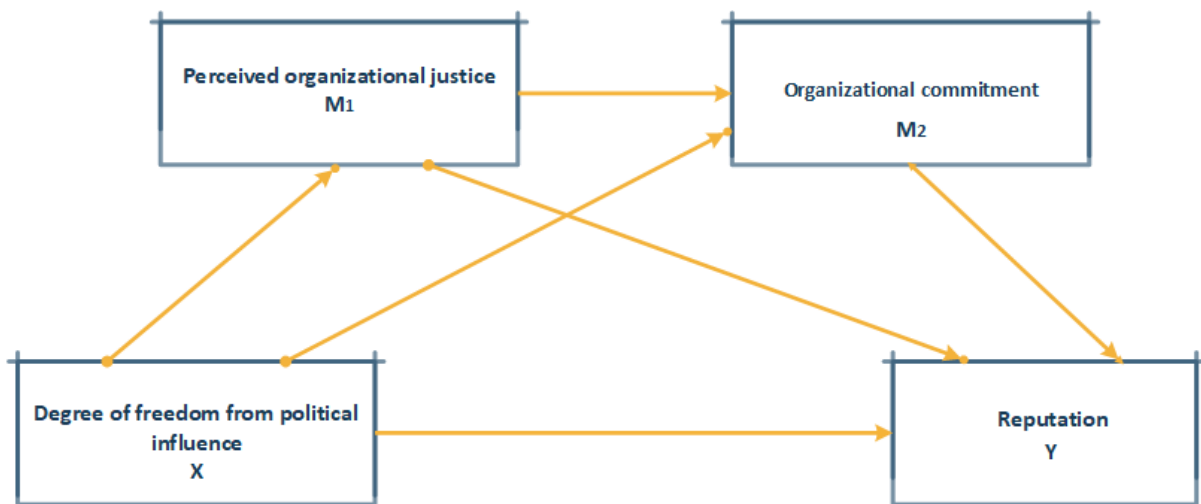
Summary of Chapter 2

A positive assessment of HRM practices and a politically neutral environment significantly determines the perception of organizational justice of employees in the City Hall, organizational commitment, quality of working life of employees - it positively affects the perception of work related well-being of employees and substantially reduces the likelihood of professional burnout. However, compared to HRM practice, the effect / influence of a politically neutral environment is weak in all cases considered. Local political interventions do not have a **direct** impact on the formation of employees' perception of organizational justice. Dissatisfaction caused by political influence is not converted into a perception of injustice, unlike career advancement, reward and benefit distribution, and other HRM processes that are a significant prerequisite for perceiving organizational injustice. This result of the research suggests that City Hall staff have become somewhat adapted and / or less sensitive to political influences.

Complex analysis shows that employees' perception that they are doing something important for the population (subjective perception of meaningful job), even when evaluating human resource management practices negatively, acts as a compensatory, motivating factor of organizational commitment.

This and other research findings presented in this chapter are taken into account when developing recommendations.

Chapter 3. Assessment of HRM processes within the context of civil service reform

Human resource management

There is a growing evidence of the critical importance of human resource management (HRM) for effective functioning of modern organizations and the quality or working life of employees. This trend was also reflected in this study – **the practice of human resource management plays and important role in the formation of an organizational justice, commitment to the organization, labor wellbeing and other important employees' perceptions of the City Hall.**

In this section we will try to identify the prerequisites / predictors of a positive assessment of human resource management in the City Hall. The role of each HRM processes in relation to the perception of organizational fairness and other important variables is discussed below. First of all, we would note that **career advancement opportunities are the most important for the positive evaluation of existing human resource management practices by employees. If career advancement opportunities are evaluated positively, the practice of human resources as a whole will most likely be evaluated positively as well.**

Conclusion 1. Among HRM processes, the most important contributor in shaping the perception of organizational justice is the opportunity for career advancement. When an employee believes that the City Hall has a meritocratic system of career advancement, he/she acquires a perception of organizational justice; If, in employees' perceptions, career advancement opportunities are limited, even in the context of positively evaluating other HRM processes, they develop a perception of organizational injustice; At the same time, career advancement is most closely linked to distributive justice out of the three forms of organizational justice – it is a key determinant of the perception of distributive justice.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

The role of each human resource management functions (staff selection, performance appraisal, career advancement, training and development activities) in the perception of organizational justice was evaluated. These functions together explain 44% of organizational justice score variation (R^2 = 0.44, F (1, 536) = 107.4, $p < 0.001$). In addition, these functions gave the greatest impact on the perception of distributive justice (R^2 = 0.37, F (1, 536) = 62.54, $p < 0.001$). Career advancement plays the most important role in shaping the perception of organizational justice (β = 0.41, $p < 0.001$). An increase by 1 standard unit of positive career advancement is associated with an increase by 0.41 standard unit of fairness on average (job performance: β = 0.15, $p < 0.001$; training and development: β = 0.15, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the personnel selection does not have a statistically significant impact on the perception of organizational justice, which is probably explained by the fact that selection issues are no longer relevant for already employed people. On the other hand, career advancement has the greatest impact on the perception of distributive justice (β = 0.45, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion 2. Among HRM processes, only performance appraisal is not related to the formation of perceptions of organizational commitment. The contribution of other processes in the formation of organizational commitment is pretty similar.

Almost zero contribution of a performance appraisal to the formation of organizational commitment is explained by the findings of this study, which revealed that the performance

appraisal system was not effectively implemented, it has a formal look and does not affect important personnel decisions.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

Human resource management functions (personnel selection, performance appraisal, careers advancement, training and development activities) together explain 32.3% of organizational commitment score variation ($R^2 = 0.323$, F (1, 536) = 64.87, $p < 0.001$). In addition, these functions have the greatest impact on the perception of distributive justice ($R^2 = 0.37$, F (1, 536) = 62.54, $p < 0.001$).

The contribution of each HRM processes in the formation of the perception of organizational commitment is as follows: career advancement - β = 0.23, $p < 0.001$, training and development activities β = 0.15, $p < 0.001$.

Conclusion 3. Among HRM processes, limited career advancement opportunities contribute the most to the professional burnout of employees, and its contribution to the perception of labor well-being is the highest.

This conclusion is based on the following statistical analysis:

Human resource management functions (personnel selection, performance appraisal, career advancement, training and development activities) altogether explain 29.2% of the burn-out score variation ($R^2 = 0.292$, F (1, 536) = 54.7, $p < 0.001$), and 23.3% of well-being score variation ($R^2 = 0.232$, F (1, 536) = 40.28, $p < 0.001$). Employee burn-out is most facilitated by limited opportunities for career advancement (β = -0.31, $p < 0.001$); Its contribution to the perception of well-being is also the highest (β = 0.28, $p < 0.001$);

An increase of 1 standard unit in the positive evaluation of career advancement reduces the burn-out of employees by average of 10.31 standard units, while it increases the perception of well-being by an average of 0.28. However, personnel selection has no statistically significant impact on burn-out.

In the following sections, we will discuss the human resource management processes at City Hall (personnel selection, performance appraisal, training and development, career management) separately, and try to evaluate the achievements and challenges we face in each in the context of civil service reform.

Presentation of results

In the quantitative study, in order to present descriptive data (almost never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often or always), a scale focused on frequency estimation is used. This scale provides information on how often this or that result is achieved in practice, or how often this or that event occurs in practice. The scale, which is used in this study report, is in most cases converted into two types of evaluation: **critical evaluation** (almost never, rarely, sometimes) and **positive evaluation** (very often or always). Negatively formulated questions are reversed. Sometimes data is presented as s percentage of agreements and disagreements with the statement.

The principle of scale conversion is identical in the study of civil servants and the general public. Here we note that the assessments of the population are more hyperbolized, while the assessments of civil

servants tend to be more positive. Despite these observations, in order to balance the differences, a different conversion scheme is not used in the study.

Personnel selection

Personnel selection is one of the most important processes in the life cycle of an organization. Developing a valid process for evaluation the qualifications of candidates, conducting a fair and transparent evaluation process is one of the most important prerequisites for the effectiveness of the organization. It enhances the perception of organizational justice, while having a positive impact on the organization's reputation. In general, effective selection process is considered to be the most critical function of human resource management, since it plays an important role in the success, competitiveness and survival of an organization (Taylor, 2000).

The central issue to personnel selection is the validity of the selection process. Validity describes the extent to which existing sampling regulations and methods are used to hire highly competent personnel, in order to meet job requirements.

The statement "**My organization has a competitive and transparent selection process that attracts and employs competent people**" assesses the perception of civil servants about the validity and adequacy of the selection process. Due to the statistical analysis of the data, civil servants evaluate the validity of a selection process at 79.8% of the maximum possible score (M=3.99; SD=1; Std. Error of Mean=0.04).

As it was mentioned above, the frequency scale used in study instruments (almost never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often or always), is converted into two types of evaluation: critical evaluation and positive evaluation. Consequently, in this particular case, the result is presented as follows:

Figure 3. 1   Population evaluations regarding the selection processes in the City Hall

„My organization has a competitive and transparent selection process that attracts and employs competent people "

These evaluations according to municipalities is presented in the following figure:

„My organization has a competitive and transparent selection process that attracts and employs competent people "
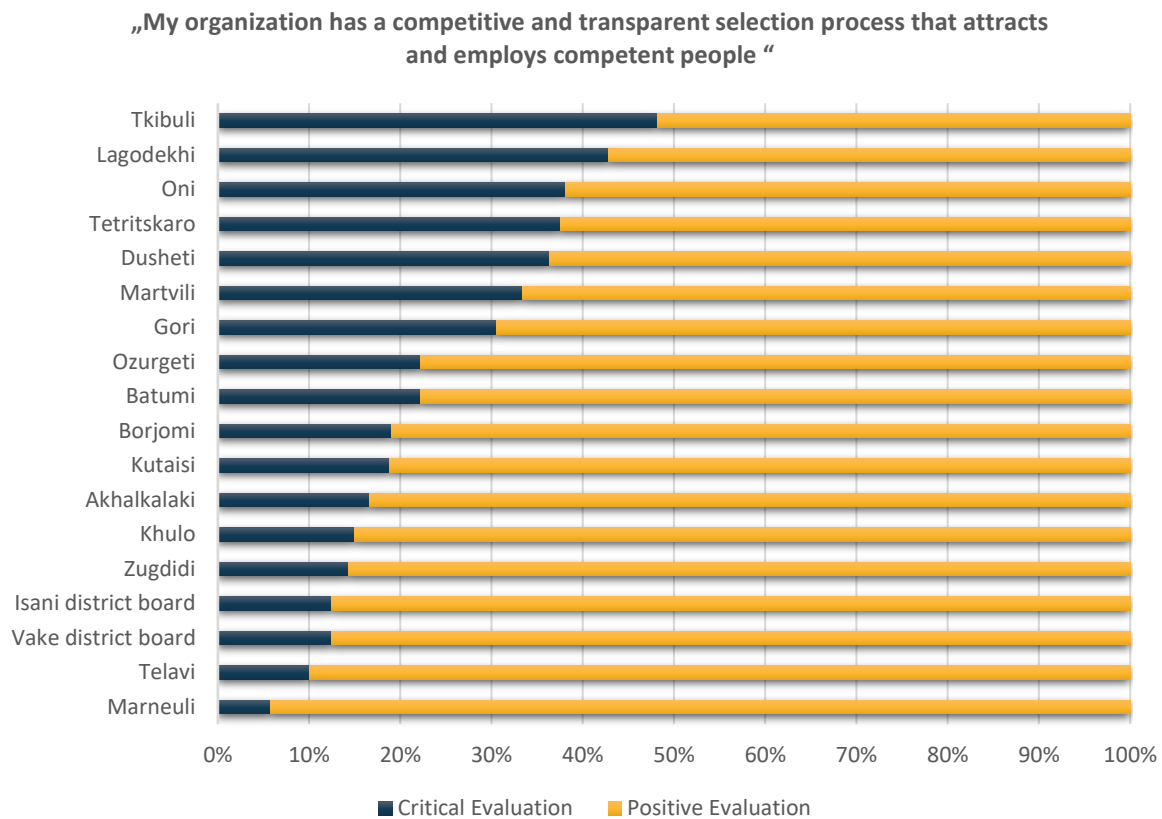
The results of the dispersion analysis show that the evaluation of the selection process validity is consistent and there are no significant differences between different groups. Differentiated groups according to the category of civil servants (professional civil servant, persons employed under labor and administrative contracts), as well as political party affiliation (Georgian Dream, National Movement, etc.) equally evaluate the selection process in municipal halls. In both cases differences between groups is not statistically significant (for political party affiliation - F (1, 536) = 2.03, p = 0.32, for categories of civil servants - F (1, 536) = 0.38, p = 0.69)).

The population is more critical towards the selection process in the municipal city halls. Perceptions related to the selection process validity are evaluated with a slightly modified question in the population questionnaire – "the selection of employees in the City Hall is fair, professionals are employed".

Statistical analysis of the data shows that the population evaluates the validity of the selection process at 54.4% of the maximum possible score (M = 2.72, SD = 1.16, Std. Error of Mean = 0.04). Differences in the estimates of the population and civil servants in this part are statistically significant (t (1241.5) = 21.09, p < 0.001).

How fairly and impartially will the personnel selection process be carried out in the City Hall and how does the current practice ensure the attraction and employment of highly qualified personnel in the organization? The answer to this question we have obtained also from qualitative study. In-depth surveys in 6 municipalities, as well as interviews with human resource management specialists in 18

target municipalities, allowed us to assess the methodological aspects of existing personnel selection practices and the challenges faced by municipal city halls during the selection process.

Selection practices, regulations and decision-making powers

Since 2014, personnel selection process in the civil service has been standardized. The procedures defined by the decree (formulation of qualification requirements, agreement with the Civil Service Bureau, posting on the website, receiving applications and attached documents, determining their compliance with the qualification requirements, etc.) are carried out in accordance with established rules in all surveyed City Halls. Persons, who were responsible for human resource management and were involved in the study, while discussing these issues, focus on the legal aspects of personnel selection and methods in terms of procedures prescribed by law. Most of the respondents say that the City Hall announces open competitions, that was allowed by the transition period.

Attracting applicants

It is an established practice to announce an open competition, in which anyone can participate. This is seen as a positive trend by civil servants involved in the study and indicates the transparency of selection procedures and the competitive environment.

Information about vacancies is posted on hr.gov.ge and on the website of the City Hall, which more or less guarantees access to information for interested citizens. In order to attract applicants, some municipalities publish information on the City Hall website, however, internet access is generally limited in the districts and these specific websites are less popular. They also use personal contacts and social networks. There are cases when the City Hall personnel personally helps the interested citizens to register on the site and upload information. As an exception, there is a practice of cooperation with the local media (e.g. in Telavi, local media "Voice of Kakheti" spreads information on vacancies in the City Hall).

Selection methods

Selection techniques are central to the perception of selection fairness (Steiner, 2001). What methods are used to select applicants in municipal City Halls? Human Resource managers point out that they make decisions based mainly on the selection of applications (first stage) and interviews (second stage). Testing practices were also used in some municipalities. In exceptional cases, it is still used today and mainly intended to test knowledge of the law.

Cases of hiring external organizations for developing tests have also been reported, however, this an additional cost, so in some municipalities, City Hall personnel themselves develop the test, or prepare case studies (from legislation, practice). Although, recently the testing method is less used in selection processes by City Halls.

Attitudes of City Hall personnel towards the testing process are heterogeneous. Most of them perceive the testing process as guarantor of objectivity and fairness ("testing was very serious, and I think we were treated fairly and now the law protects us"). In their view, testing enabled the selection of competent personnel. Skills assessment practices were positively assessed to ensure objectivity. Recently, however, testing of skills is practically no longer used. According to some respondents, the

testing phase in the selection process had positive impact on the assessment of the qualifications of City Hall employees and the reputation of the City Hall in general.

Some of the civil servants focused on the problems associated with testing according to their opinions: 1. testing put lawyers and non-lawyers in an unequal position, as it largely assessed the knowledge of legislative acts; 2. The sense of inequality was also raised by the fact that testing was used only for lower and middle level employees, and not for heads of departments (although currently this issue is regulated by law and according to it, the heads of departments are also civil servants, who are subject to all procedures provided by law). 3. Testing lacked authenticity – practice-oriented, real problem-oriented items. Professionally specialized knowledge was not assessed ("*if you work in the procurement department, how can it be that you do not answer a single question from the law on state procurement?!*"); 4. The testing process was stressful for experienced, elderly employees.

In case of using reliable, valid instruments, testing is one of the most effective means of selection process and, together with the interview method, provides a comprehensive assessment of applicants, thereby reducing the claims of subjectivity that accompany the selection process based on interviews.

The main and crucial method of the selection process in the City Halls is the interview. Interviewing is the most common and typical way of selecting employees. As selection experts point out, despite some of the challenges associated with interview subjectivity, it is inconceivable that anyone would be able to handle the selection process without the interview method (Levashina & Hratwell, 2014).

The interview is usually conducted by a commission. The commission is mostly composed of human resource management staff, a lawyer, the head of the structural department, where the vacancy is being announced, and component staff, who are in touch with the work to be performed on the vacant position. The interview may also be attended by a trade union representative (invited specialist).

Most HR specialists say that evaluation forms are pre-designed for the interview, which are completed by all members of the commission, evaluation forms are filled independently by the commission members, and after the interview, the evaluations are jointly reviewed, agreed upon and a final decision is made. Some respondents point out that for the sake of fairness, each member of the commission independently develops one or more questions, which are then sent to the chair of the commission. After that the final version of the interview questionnaire is elaborated. The final version of the questionnaire is announced for commission members just one the day of the interview – "*The last version of the questionnaire I find on the table when the interview already starts*". Respondents note that such an approach provides more fairness and less public skepticism and perceptions towards pre-agreed questions with applicants.

There is also a different practice, when the commission members jointly develop evaluation forms before the interview (evaluation form for each member and the final form for summative evaluation). Qualification, professional knowledge and personal skills are evaluated. After an individual evaluation, the members agree on one final score and the candidate with the highest score is to be submitted to the Mayor for approval.

"The process is as transparent as possible. The main thing is to attract the people as we want. We do not have any other problem. There was no case we chose the candidate and the Mayor did not approve".

Difficulties in the selection process based on interviews

According to civil servants, the issue of objectivity and fairness of the interview is particularly sensitive. It always leaves question marks – there is no guarantee that the candidates will be protected from biased assessments during the interview: "*Someone was asked family news, how they were doing, and another was asked all that could be asked*". It creates a sense of protest. Commission members are not responsible for explaining or substantiating decisions. The presence of an interview stage makes the selection process much more vulnerable to political influences as well.

Taking into account the best selection practices, the information obtained during the selection process by which the applicants are evaluated, should be job-specific. It is considered to be the best practice, when all applicants get the same questions (Campion, Pursell & Brown, 1988). A way to increase the validity of an interview is its organic connection to job analysis and structured interview format; Thus, it is necessary to fundamentally train the staff working on the selection process.

Transparency, fairness

The views of HR specialists on the methodological correctness, impartiality and fairness of the selection process are consistent – the selection is conducted impartially and fairly and it fits within the limits set by the law.

The fairness and impartiality of the selection process is achieved mainly on the basis of the diversity of the selection committee members and the availability of audio and video recording of the process. In order to illustrate the transparency of the selection process, HR specialists also cite access to video and audio recordings of the interview process. However, focus groups of civil servants stated that despite the existence of video recording of interviews, complaints and video recording mechanisms do not work in small municipalities (unlike relatively large municipalities where precedents for appealing interview results exist).

The interview process is vulnerable to political, nepotistic and other influences. Respondents believe that it is important to make more stress on special knowledge and skills during interviews, which should be the basis for this or that job in the City Hall.

The composition of the selection committee is determined by law and the decision on the appointment of a candidate on a certain job is made by the selection committee.

The law states: "*The selection committee should comprise of human resource management unit representative of the corresponding institution, a representative of the structural unit of the institution, in which there is a corresponding vacancy, a representative of a professional trade union of civil servants (if any), and an independent invited specialist and/or a relevant field specialist, who is not officially affiliated with this institution*".

According to HR specialists, it is the diversity of committee members that contributes to the transparence, impartiality and fairness of the process.

"The composition of the committee is stated in the law, it is quite diverse, there is no room left for cheating, in order to gain a little high score, it does not happen, just awkward. Yes, of course, the recommendations are of great importance, not only in Georgia, but also in Europe. We, of course take

it into account, but if the recommendation does not follow anything (meaning the candidate's qualification), it is impossible for the candidate to get high scores. We also have audio and video fixation. I have archived all our selection processes with the consent of applicants".

"It is conducted impartially, professionally. The decisions are made only by the selection committee and no one interferes in it. We do not have any political bias".

Representatives of Tbilisi District Boards note that they work closely with non-governmental sector and their representatives are constantly present in selection committee, as it is defined by law.

Open and closed competitions

HRM representatives point out that they unconditionally give an advantage to a closed competition, when they have the opportunity to announce it, since as they consider, it is a means of ranking promotion and one of the fundamental tools for motivating servants. Moreover, this practice is encouraged in civil service reform as well.

According to HR analytics, the real picture of the competitions in the municipalities involved in the study is as follows:

Table 3. 1   ***Number of vacancies announced for the position of professional civil servant in 2018-2021***

		2018	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*
Total number of competitions		**161**	**201**	**63**	**84**
Between them	Open competitions	92.4%	85.3%	73.7%	62.1%
	Internal competitions	—	—	16.3%	14.7%
	Closed competitions	7.6%	14.7%	10%	23.2%
	Failed competitions	11.4%	21.8%	13.7%	14.7%

Figure 3. 3   ***Competitions for the position of a professional civil servant***

	2018 year	2019 year	2020 year	2021 year
Failed hirings (all)	11.4%	21.8%	13.7%	14.7%
Public vacancies	92.4%	85.3%	73.7%	62.1%
Private vacancies	7.6%	14.7%	10.0%	23.2%
Internal vacancies	0.0%	0.0%	16.3%	14.7%
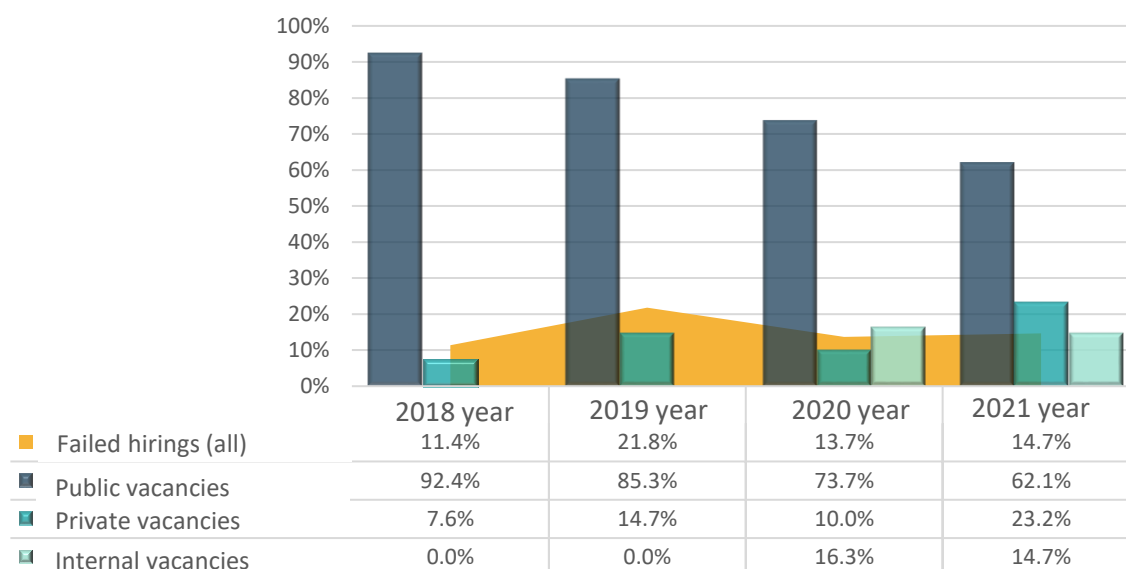
It is clear from these data that the number of open competitions is declining in percentage from 2018 to date. However, it still plays a dominant role. At the same time, it is obvious that the number of internal competitions has increased compared to 2018, 2019, and the number of closed competitions, during the reporting period, has reached the maximum rank in 2021.

Many civil servants are in favor of giving preference to internal competition – "*You should announce an internal competition before announcing the open competition*", "You should also give an incentive to employee. If you work for 5 and 7 years and have no chance to move forward".

Despite the fact that City Hall civil servants are not restricted from participating in competitions and they also have relevant work experience (which is one of the important requirements in the selection process) and thus they have a superior position with other candidates, employees rarely take this step. *"Internal competition is rarely announced. When an open competition is announced, employees do not participate, because they think they would have been offered the position before the open competition was announced, if they had been considered for this position".*

The selection system is still very fragile, since the competencies of civil servants responsible for the process still require support in terms of professional development.

Reform achievements

Civil servants **cite the creation of legal leverage for their protection as the most positive part of the reform.**

This issue raises a lot of skepticism among the population, especially among representatives of non0governemntal sector: "*After the elections we will see a total dismissal of employees – the question is why so many people for some reason refused to work in civil service?*" It was noted that they have such expectations not only in case of changing the ruling party, but also in case of its stay, since new candidate has his/her own team and professionalism and qualification are not highly valued. "*And under these circumstances, all the progress and achievements of the civil service reform will be put under a big question mark, in terms of transparency, justice, etc.*"; "*Participatory democracy that hears well is a fiction – when changes happen and everything starts from scratch, we will become witnesses to these processes*".

The fact is that the sense of protection of civil service employees is substantially increased. Such negative expectations in the population are most likely based on past vicious experiences. Guarantees created by law should be the best mechanism to prevent such processes. However, this will be shown more clearly in the post-election period.

Challenges

Attraction of qualified staff, recruitment

Recruitment is the first, important link in the whole chain of human resource management strategy. Recruitment can be defined as a set of practices and activities whose main purpose is to identify and attract potential employees (candidates) (Barber,1998).

Attracting qualified staff is usually influenced by the organization's reputation, the organization's compensation system, career advancement and professional development opportunities, and other

benefits offered by the organization. However, the discussion of practical strategies for attracting staff without contextual implications is not justified. This is also evident in the case of municipalities – due to the shortage of qualified candidates, the selection process faces certain barriers in the municipalities. However, together with the limited choice of qualified candidates, the interest and attraction of applicants is also a rather big problem in the municipalities.

Attracting staff is a kind of challenge for the City Hall. As HR representatives point out, the main problem is attracting new and qualified staff.

The main reason for the problem is the low salary and requirement of several years of mandatory experience, which makes it difficult to employ young and competent staff in the City Hall. Respondents believe that the requirement of mandatory seniority is a significant barrier for the young staff.

"The City Hall needs new staff, with a new vision, the old experienced professional should have his/her place and the new staff should have a completely different place".

"After graduating from higher institutions, many young people return back to their municipality. It is difficult to hire them because the first, second and third ranks require experience, and the relevant functions of the City Hall are mainly in line with these ranks. It is possible to add a fourth rank, but in this case the employee will not be assigned the important functions that are most needed for the effective work of the City Hall".

One of the first and most important barriers for those interested in vacancies at City Hall, is the need for work experience. In small municipalities there is no space, opportunities to accumulate work experience; This especially hinders the attraction of young, motivated staff.

The study revealed that avoiding any procedural irregularities in practice is a higher priority than hiring a highly competent, or even high-potential young people.

The desire to alleviate these rather strict (according to respondents) requirements for a civil servant was also expressed:

"This law allows a new graduate to do an internship, but if he/she does not have work experience, it will be impossible for him/her to enter the civil service. He can never grow in career if he/she has not worked and where will he/she work for gaining 1-year experience? He/she has just graduated from higher institution … Iy should be rather easy for young people to enter the civil service, where he/she will develop and meet these high demands. Somehow there must be any means of maneuvering. It would be good to change this condition".

The main and irresistible problem is the lack of applicants / job seekers and / or low qualifications. It has been pointed out that there are some positions where many applicants meet qualification requirements (e.g. lawyer), although there are positions that require specific education or experience. Finding such staff is especially difficult in some regions. It turned out that attracting qualified staff is a challenge for Tbilisi District Boards as well. *"The civil sector can no longer compete with the private sector and this is the reason for the scarcity of qualified staff".*

on the one hand, requirements related to work experience and experience in the managerial position create a certain barrier of young staff in the City Hall and on the other hand, promotion of qualified

staff to the managerial position (without work experience in a managerial position, an ordinary member of a department with many years of experience is not able to replace the head of the same department even if he or she leaves). The issue of attracting specialists and qualified staff is especially acute in small municipalities.

According to respondents, the second factor that working in the City Hall is not attractive, is **a low salary**. *"Remuneration is very low and thus, good applicants do not participate in the announced competitions and competitions are failed".* It also happens that you have to close eyes on the demands of the job. *"Let someone come"* and they have to make choice between bad and worse. Of course, there are cases when they find very good staff, but not long after another problem arises – usually good and promising young people use the position at the City Hall to improve their skills and experience and move to another, higher-paying job at the earliest opportunity. This problem is particularly acute in the area of infrastructure (e.g. qualified architect, builder, tec.). City Hall is not able to compete with the private sector, especially in districts, where the tourism business is developed. Respondents believe that the reason of the problem of attracting qualified staff is a low salary range and lack of career advancement opportunities.

"We face difficulties in attracting highly qualified staff. Remuneration for people with high qualifications and experience is low, opportunities of moving forward is low, which hinders their interest".

The reasoning is quite logical. Usually, competition and career advancement are important motivators to start and continue working in an organization and is one of the factors by which candidate make choices between organizations, especially highly skilled workforce.

Municipalities face significant challenges in attracting highly qualified staff, mainly due to low salaries and lack of career advancement opportunities. This situation is relevant not only in terms of personnel selection, but also in terms of retention and for all positions. HR specialists recall cases where personnel on high positions leave their jobs for similar reasons.

"I would not say that we have lower salaries compared with other civil service organizations in Georgia, but it still does not correspond to the fact that qualified staff and they will no longer leave the system".

"During the last month, 4 people left the job and went abroad to work. For example, the head of one of the departments, who is responsible for providing public information, has gone, for whom I have done everything in terms of trainings, in terms of support. But he is a father of 3 children, he faced financial and physical difficulties and had no other choice".

Due to respondents' opinion, one of the challenges of the reform is the abolition of the rule of replacement of the personnel on maternity leave. It complicates and negatively affects the work process.

Challenges of Ethnic minority municipalities

In municipalities inhabited by ethnic minorities, ignorance of the state language creates certain barriers to both, employment and subsequent staff training and retraining. According to the respondents, it is desirable for the City Hall employee to speak both languages, since written and oral communication with population is often required in both languages. Consequently, preference is given

to state language proficient staff, although finding qualified staff to meet these requirements is even more difficult in such municipalities.

Summary

Overall, standardization of the selection process and a free access to information about it is a step forward, which promotes increasing trust among employees in the selection process. Despite the challenges, HR specialists are more positive about civil service reform in terms of personnel selection – *"the changes performed within the framework of the reform are well formulated and flexible".* They also appreciate the role and support of the Civil Service Bureau – when they face a certain problem, they get in touch with Bureau, get help and are confident that they will receive the help they need in the future.

The selection process is an important factor in shaping an organization's reputation. Looking at this issue from a different perspective, the population critically evaluates the selection procedures in the City Hall, which is reflected on the population's trust and reputation of the City Hall.

Studies on organizational justice reveal that unfair selection procedures (procedural fairness) have a greater impact on the perception of fairness than distributive fairness or selection results. (Dipboye and de Pontbriand 1981; McFarlin and Sweeney 1992). At the same time, fair procedures can lead to an applicant's fair perception towards the decision even when there is an unfavorable personal result for him/her (J., 1990). The negative consequences of unfavorable decision-making also reduce the perception of interactive justice (Bies, 1986; Tyler, 1990), which is reflected not only in the degree of explanation and feedback given to applicants, but also in the nature of interpersonal treatment during in the decision-making process. The nature of the relationship with the applicants during the selection process is of great importance – fair selection processes and a positive communication with job seekers (regardless of the outcome) should increase population's confidence towards the City Hall, which, according to this study, is in most cases is on the verge of a critical mark.

It is hard to evaluate how well the selection process is conducted. Although the respondents believe that all the details provided by the law are taken into account and meticulously completed, however there is a need for more autonomy and flexibility in the selection process. There is some kind of attempt (e.g. tests developed by City Hall staff, structured interview format, etc.). However, the extent to which the methods developed for selection and the selection process as a whole meet the established standards, require a different type of expert evaluation.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is the process of obtaining, analyzing and evaluation information about work performed by employees. Performance appraisal is one of the most important mechanisms for increasing personnel efficiency and productivity (Hameed, 2011).

Evaluation data offers valuable information to both employees and managers. Evaluation systems facilitate the process of reviewing and planning growth strategies, provide a solid foundation for

payroll and remuneration policies, and provide a database for making decisions about human resource management, including career advancement.

Existing performance appraisal practice

The evaluation system is unified and quite centralized in municipal City Halls. Resolution #220 of the Government of Georgia defines the rules and conditions for the evaluation of professional civil servants – evaluation methods, structural units involved in the process and their rights, evaluation areas, duration, terms and ways of using the evaluation results. The performance appraisal process is conducted in accordance with the standard set by the Civil Service Bureau and mainly (or fully) according to the instructions of the Civil Service Bureau – the Bureau indicates / recommends the methods, provides information on how the evaluation criteria should be defined, etc.

Such high involvement of the Bureau is primarily due to the novelty of this "mandatory norm", as well as the complexity of this important process and the lack of knowledge and competencies in the municipalities. Accordingly, employees are evaluated by their managers once or twice a year (appointed for a probationary period – after 3 months).

In some municipalities, only the competencies set by the Civil Service Bureau are used as evaluation criteria, while in others a mixed evaluation system operates – the work performed is evaluated not only by competencies, but also by the quality of performance of functions and a quality of achievement of set goals.

In general, the evaluation process, especially at the implementation stage, is accompanied by certain types of difficulties related to the formal side of the process, design, implementation. These difficulties were also highlighted in the study.

First of all, we note that the information obtained on performance appraisal system by the help of qualitative and quantitative methods is less consistent. The complex analysis of the results shows that performance appraisal process in municipal City Halls is associated with many challenges and its effectiveness is minimal at this stage.

One of the main findings of the study is that the performance appraisal system is of a formal character in municipality City Halls.

Most of HR representatives involved in the qualitative research state that the evaluation process is still more formal, it is impossible to differentiate the employees according to the performance appraisal and thus, it is impossible to link the results with important personnel decisions and incentives. The same opinion is shared by 35.8% of civil servants involved in the **quantitative study**. According to them, the performance appraisal is formal, only due to a legal obligation. In contrast to qualitative research, positive evaluation of the performance appraisal system still prevails in the quantitative research.

Figure 3.4 **Performance appraisal: formal character**

„I have a feeling that performance appraisal in my organization is conducted formally, only due to the law"
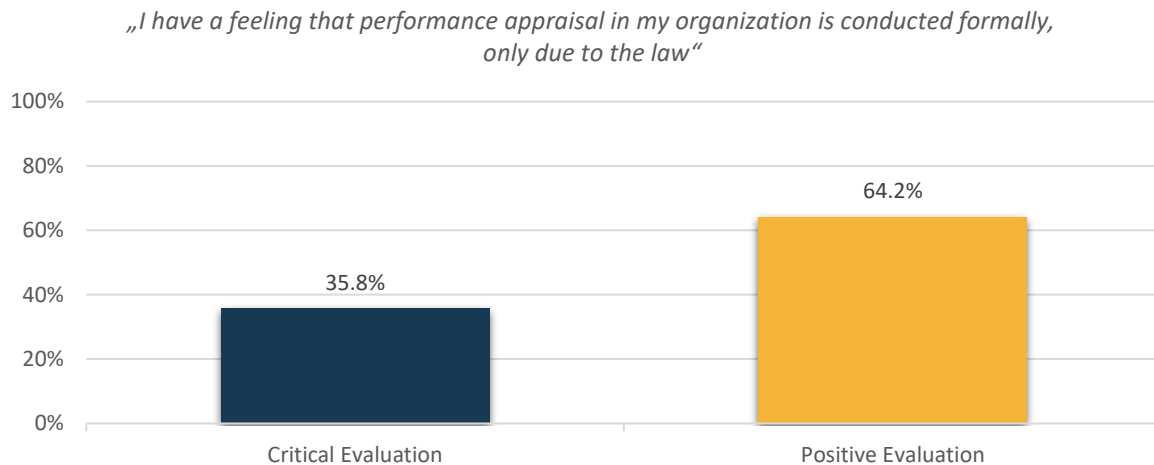
 *Critical evaluation reflects an agreement to the presented statement

One of the most important factors that often leads to the formation of a negative attitude towards the system is the fairness of the performance appraisal – how fairly the evaluation process is perceived by employees. The subject of employee resilience is often perceived bias in the appraisal system, or simply, inappropriate appraisal.

Since the fairness is a fundamental principle in the implementation process of performance appraisal system, in order to study the relationship between evaluation systems, field experts specified "invalid source". They combined different forms of organizational justice into one, integrated, conceptual framework:

- *Procedural justice*: Perceptions of individuals on the fairness or unfairness of decision-making processes related to performance appraisal;

- *Distributive justice:* Fairness in the distribution of resources (career advancement, extra remuneration and other benefits), based on the results of performance appraisal;

- *Interpersonal justice:* Perception of fairness, directly related to aspects of relationship between appraiser and employee;

- *Informational justice: it refers to the level of awareness of employees about all stages of the evaluation process; e.g. criteria, feedback, etc. The results of the study are presented within this conceptual framework.*

Distributive justice

The study reveals that one of the most problematic issues in terms of reform implementation is the formal, "fictitious" implementation of performance appraisals. One of its several prerequisites is that, according to employee evaluations, the performance appraisal results do not have visible results. Due to the existing regulations, performance appraisal results are reflected in the extra remuneration and class assignment. However, due to perceptions of those involved in the study, performance appraisal

results are not used to make important career decisions and/or to motivate professionals. According to the performance appraisal results, the extra allowance (a certain percentage of salary) is so small that, in the opinion of civil servants, it cannot stimulate and motivate employee in the future (on the contrary, according to the respondents, it can become a reason for demotivation). HR representatives point out that they are limited in terms of promotions and awards, especially during the pandemic period.

Employees believe that the performance appraisal results are fictitious, formal (*"at least it is a fictitious and it does not matter to whom we assign what"*). Granting ranks is also not perceived as a significant reward, so that within the study, personnel needed to be reminded by HR specialists who belonged to which rank.

Usually, one of the most important characteristics of effective performance appraisal systems is the correlation of specific personnel decisions with the evaluation results. The fact that performance appraisal is conducted and is not accompanied by any changes casts doubt for the respondents on the methodological correctness of the evaluation process. All these circumstances together probably lead to the fact that the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system is critically evaluated by the respondents.

Interpersonal justice

As for the aspects of the relationship of employee directly with the evaluator, probably, given our cultural and national characteristics, the evaluation process is essentially oriented on maintaining a positive interpersonal relationship. "*We do not hurt anyone and assign them high marks – this is the main motive of the evaluators when evaluating the subordinates".*

A number of HR specialists point out that the idea and real objective of the performance appraisal is very important, although its implementation in practice appeared to be very hard. The subject of their concern is mainly the attitudes of departments and the heads of departments towards the evaluation of employees.

Respondents point out that despite many detailed explanations of how scores should be assigned during the evaluation, direct managers still prefer to "reward" all the employee with high scores. The reason for such an attitude is informal relationships, intimacy, friendship or modesty with the employees being evaluated, as well as the desire to have a less dissatisfied and offended subordinate in the department. "*This evaluation process is the most painful. Nobody likes it, it's fictitious. Evaluators assign scores in vain. You should understand, there is also some kind of awkwardness, …*"

In some cases, the fact that most managers evaluate everyone equally with maximum scores, has an objective reason – employees do their best under high workloads ("*I tell my employees to assign high scores to themselves and I approve it, because I have very smart employees*").

In some cases, managers "make concessions" so that they will not be able to continue working with offended employees. There is still an expectation that only in the case of poor work, the evaluation results can be reflected on working conditions: "*more for punishment purposes …*".

It was mentioned that the law and the manual clearly describe the purpose and rule of the performance appraisal, and almost everyone agrees with these rules, but it appeared to be difficult to

put them in practice – "*I think we should understand that this is related to my work performed and we should not take it personally*".

Procedural justice

International practice also indicates that the evaluation process is often cause of dissatisfaction and frustration of employees. Criticism is mainly oriented towards procedural parts of the evaluation.

According to civil servants, the ambiguity and general nature of the criteria, along with cultural peculiarities, make it impossible to distance oneself from personal attitudes and evaluate performance objectively.

The method used in the evaluation process is considered as a problem. The head's interview with the employee is fictitious and actually serves to fill in the protocol ("*Even without that interview, I know pretty well how my employee is doing all year round*"). Under the conditions, when the evaluation criteria are very general, the interview leaves a large space for the expression of personal attitudes, subjectivity and bias. Despite the fact that homogeneous evaluations discourage hardworking and diligent employees, such practices still prevail. However, there are also objective evaluators who differentiate and evaluate subordinates based on objective criteria. "*However, the members of departments are dissatisfied with such leaders, since in another department almost all receive maximum score, which is an injustice*".

Several representatives of civil servants (two of them hold the position of the head of administration of municipality City Halls) stress **the importance of having a comprehensive evaluation**: they believe that it is important to include evaluation of heads of departments and managers by employees in the existing performance appraisal system. "*I may say something unpopular, but why shouldn't employees evaluate their head?*" Such an evaluation process would give employees a greater sense of involvement and participation in the process. "*It is important that employees also have a sense that they contribute to the development of their manager's qualification*".

Respondents recalled several cases, where an employee, dissatisfied with an appraisal complained to the appraiser, strictly requesting for a score change, and even litigating. Therefore, managers and heads of departments avoid objective evaluation.

Perceptions of procedural injustice often become the subject of employee complaints and litigation. What is the current situation in the municipalities in this regard? The study reveals that in relatively large municipalities there are cases of appeals. There is also a precedent for filing a lawsuit in court.

However, these are only isolated cases, since in most cases there is no need to appeal the fictitious procedure. Consequently, lack or absence of complaints hardly can be considered as an indicator of the fairness of procedures.

Informational justice

Another circumstance that causes critical attitudes towards the performance appraisal system is the lack of information about the criteria of the evaluation process.

The human resource management service is responsible for the organizational support of the performance appraisal process, which mainly involves the role of mediator in communicating with the

target entities and exchanging information, as well as monitoring the process to ensure that it is conducted in accordance with the law. According to the majority of HR representatives, despite an intensive communication with heads and employees about the performance appraisal process, criteria, goals and outcomes, an objective, fair performance appraisal system has not yet been fully implemented.

As revealed by interview with HR staff, they sincerely strive to achieve objective evaluation from heads of departments. This is illustrated by a number of examples of steps undertaken to improve the process – a detailed conversation with the appraisers, introduction of an electronic evaluation program, which allows the employee to be informed in advance of the evaluation criteria (three components and three functions, that should be jointly agreed upon, are proposed within the law), meetings with employees, presentation of detailed performance descriptions or other attempts clearly indicate the willingness of the respondents to achieve an objective performance appraisal in their organization.

HR managers point out that just at the start of introducing the performance appraisal system, they often conducted training on the objectives and process of performance appraisal, which is considered to be a cornerstone of effective evaluation, but as a result, they still get a biased picture. It should also be noted that here we described the best practices. In some municipalities, explanatory meetings with personnel regarding the performance appraisal system were not carried out. More communication with employees, an increase in the level of information and an understanding of their own responsibilities are critical to the effective implementation of the performance appraisal system in municipal City Halls.

Despite the efforts of **HR representatives, general criteria that are not operationalized still pose problems in the evaluation process.** One of the respondents mentioned that it is difficult to justify to an employee what he / she did not perform "well" when he / she does not know what is meant by "well" in doing the job.

It became evident that civil servants do not appear to have a clear idea of the criteria, nor do their heads have operationalized, detailed descriptions of the criteria on which to base their evaluation. In some cases, due to the lack of information related to the performance appraisal process, the target of criticism is the HR service: "*HR itself does not have a complete, full understanding of what we need to share from them*", "*Something like booklet or reference book, where we will learn in detail what to do and why, … we do not have anything like that …*"

Since the performance appraisal is focused on the evaluation by the direct supervisor of his / her subordinates, the awareness of the appraiser is of special importance. The study clearly reveals that the main motivation of the leader is to avoid conflicts and maintain good relations. This indicates that managers do not realize the role of performance appraisal in the process of achieving organizational goals. The study also shows that leaders who do not possess comprehensive information about the performance appraisal system, its importance and the challenges associated with the evaluation process, consider the target of dissatisfaction the performance appraisal system itself.

In such circumstances, in order to maintain the status quo, they give the fictitious form to the performance appraisal process and try to reduce the negative reactions of the employees in this way (McNall & Paul W. Thurston Jr, 2010).

In light of these evaluations, a quantitative research results seem inconsistent, according to which 81.8% of respondents do not question the objectivity of the process of obtaining information, analysis and evaluation, while only 18.2% of respondents confirm the existence of shortcomings. I may be assumed that evaluations in a quantitative research are hyperbolized, although we think, according to common practice, a more adequate explanation is that mostly personnel are assigned high scores, and thus employees do not expect any kind of "sanctions". There are no risks to employees' self-esteem and self-assessment (*"I know I was really objectively assessed"*), so the process as a whole is viewed positively from their perspective.

Figure 3.5   *Objectivity and fairness of the performance appraisal system – attitudes of civil servants*
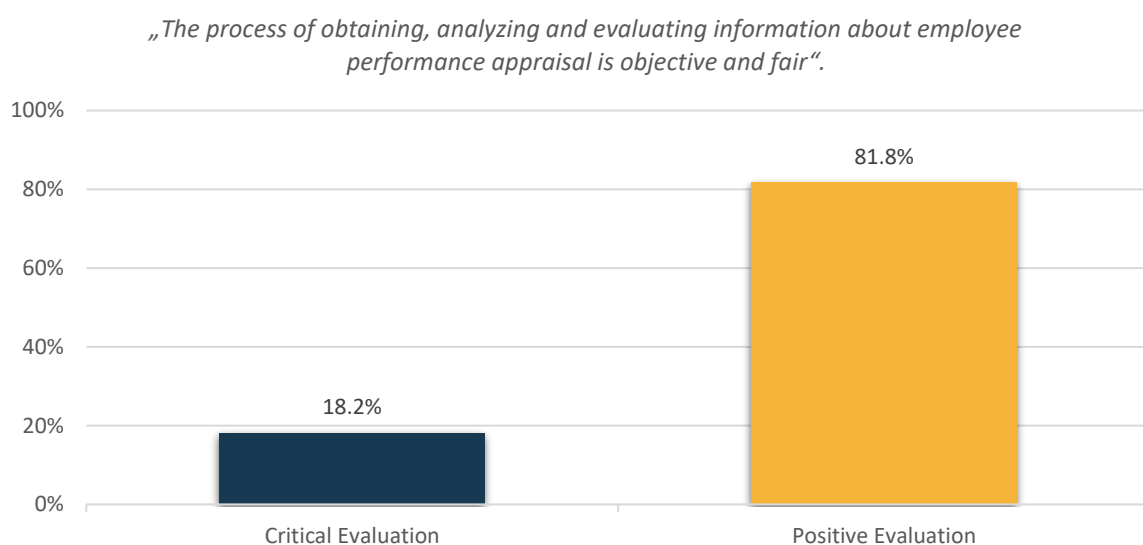
„The process of obtaining, analyzing and evaluating information about employee performance appraisal is objective and fair".

*Critical evaluation reflects the percentage of applicants who disagreed with the statement.

The performance appraisal system is functional if it is related to important personnel decisions. As soon as the question focuses on the relevance of the performance appraisal system to career advancement and other important personnel decisions, employee evaluations are substantially more critical than in the case of the previous question.

There was a question in civil servant's questionnaire: ***"promotion in my organization is fair – it is based on the results of employee's performance appraisal"*** (M = 3.73; SD = 1; Std. Error of Mean = 0.05).

36% of civil servants critically evaluate the process and believe that there is no connection between the performance and the promotion. Contribution of the performance appraisal results to the promotion, despite the records in the law, is less functional in practice.

Assuming that usually, an extra remuneration is given equally to all employees, it will become even more apparent why the performance appraisal system is considered as a fictitious instrument in organizational reality.

Figure 3.6   *The role of performance appraisal in promotion – attitudes of civil servants*
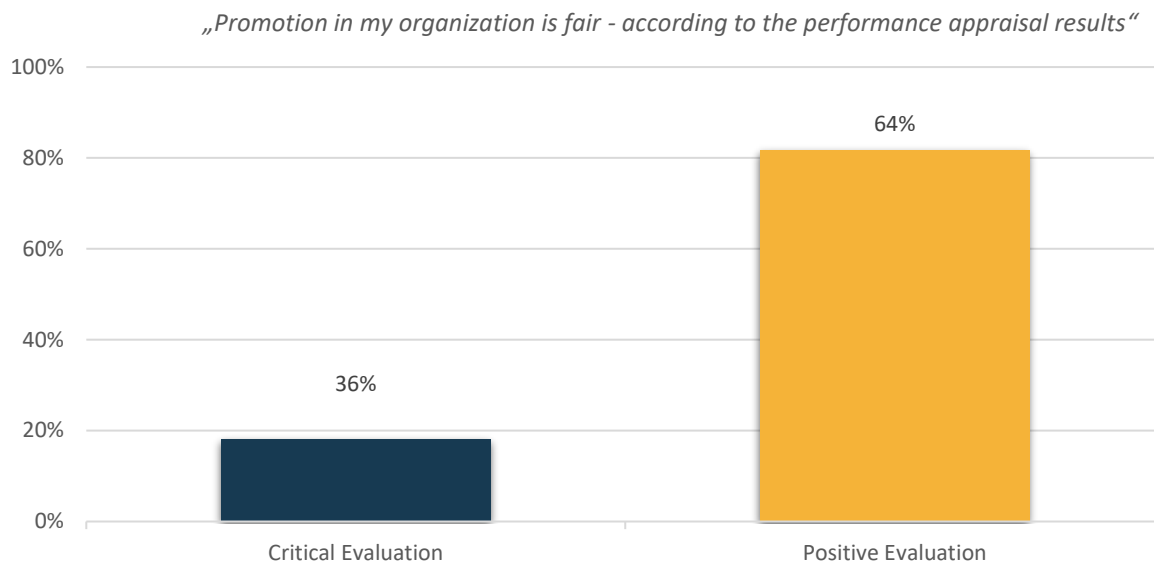
„Promotion in my organization is fair - according to the performance appraisal results"

* Critical evaluation reflects the percentage of applicants who disagreed with the statement.

Successful practices

It should be noted that we also find successful practices in implementing a performance appraisal system (if we trust respondents in critical evaluations, we should also trust their positive evaluations). Part of HR service representatives say that they have managed to successfully implement the system – the performance appraisal is carried out fairly, transparently and objectively. Evaluation criteria are transparent for all employees – "*they have the opportunity to talk to their direct supervisor and get an explanation of their evaluation criteria*"; "*if there was any misunderstanding about the evaluation, this problem was resolved during the interview*".

According to their opinion, the performance appraisal is fair, objective and flawless. Each employee understands the purpose of the evaluation and therefore no problem arises. Each appraiser (heads of departments) is recommended to inform subordinates in detail about the criteria according to which they will be evaluated.

There have also been cases where the scores have changed. Successful implementation of the performance appraisal system was achieved through the active involvement of employees in the process. They can get a detailed feedback on their own evaluation. Cash rewards are awarded based on the performance appraisal results.

Some civil servants point out that they take into account evaluation results in order to better guide the work process. We also found other positive opinions: "*The performance appraisal motivates the employee to develop, to learn something, …*".

The majority of HR representatives note the positive dynamics in the implementation of performance appraisal process and the support provided by the Civil Service Bureau for the development of the

competencies. They already know what method is to be used and in what sequence to follow the process.

Over time (from 2018) they managed to figure out "*what and how to do*" and the employees of the City Hall perceive "*what is happening*". Nevertheless, it is clear that HR management specialists need special support in this area; it is necessary to develop competencies and methodological support for the performance appraisal system. However, according to expert evaluation, it is less likely to achieve a tangible result without redesigning the system.

Summary

Resolution 220 says that the purpose of the evaluation is to determine the preconditions for the career development, improving professional skills, incentives, needs for professional development and other legal consequences provided by law, as well as the organizational development of public institutions.

A performance appraisal system in its current form fails to ensure achievement of these goals.

Civil servants themselves elaborated some recommendations for improving this system. These recommendations are as follows:

One way to effectively implement the performance appraisal process is **further differentiation of criteria.** The criteria should be more tailored to the specifics of the certain work; Alongside with the general criteria that is probably relevant to all civil servants, there should be in-depth evaluation criteria developed and approved at department levels ("*It would have given a more realistic picture*"). On the other hand, elaboration of such specific criteria is a big challenge – The issue of involvement of employees and heads of departments, as well as specialists in this field raises in this case.

In order to reduce the subjectivity of evaluations by the heads of departments, it is important to **elaborate instruments (questionnaire) on a highly professional level**, which would take into account the specifics of employees' work and will be oriented on establishing an objective picture. The current questionnaire is somewhat general.

According to some opinions, shortcomings of the **performance appraisal, as well as other HRM processes, is caused by the maximum centralization of the process**; therefore, decentralization is considered a way to solve the problem: "*The main thing is that the law should be legislated in the country … We adopted a good law, everything is provided there – encouragement and training, but in reality?! Therefore, the self-governments should be given the rights provided by the law and not everything should be so centralized*". However, it should be noted that the decentralization process also carries certain risks due to the lack of competencies. Therefore, important steps should be carried out in three directions:

- Redesign of the performance appraisal system, perfection of evaluation criteria and methods;
- Fundamental training of HRM specialists, deepening knowledge in the implementation and management of performance appraisal systems.
- Raising civil servants' awareness on the importance of the performance appraisal system.

Overall, it can be considered that the performance appraisal (along with promotion and career advancement) is quite critically evaluated by employees. The attitude towards the process is

skeptical, significant shortcomings are observed at all stages of the process. Consequently, in order to make the process functional, a necessary condition is to implement substantial changes in the process.

Career advancement, remuneration and awards

Career development in modern organizations is an important function of management. Effective career development programs are oriented on the goals and plans set by the organization. At the same time, it takes into account the personal goals, needs and career plans of employees.

According to Social Exchange Theory, employees invest their time and efforts, as well as competencies – knowledge, abilities and skills in their work. In return, they expect certain benefits from the organization, which they usually receive in the form of monetary compensation or a change in career portfolio (increase in competencies and status). The implementation of career management programs in the organization has a positive effect on the quality of working life of employees, attracting and retaining staff, promoting the introduction of innovation, and in general, on the competitiveness of the organization. The contribution of compensation systems to the effectiveness of the organization and the successful completion of its mission is special. Fair administration of compensation and benefits ensures *adequate* remuneration and benefits for the work performed. In ideal cases, like career management programs, compensation systems should balance the link between individual goals and the organization's important strategic tasks.

One of the central goals of a civil service reform is to establish a stable, unified civil service, based on career advancement, good faith, impartiality and accountability, and to establish the legal basis for its effective operation.

What is the obtained result in this direction? What era the attitudes of civil servants towards existing career development policies and practices? How fair is the existing compensation system?

First we present the formalized data obtained through quantitative research, and then, based on qualitative research, we will try to delve deeper into the existing career development practices, compensation and benefit administration.

The evaluation of the current policy and practice of employee promotion in the organization is based on two statements: **1.** *"Promotion of a civil servant in my organization is based on fair and objective competition"; **2.** "Promotion in my organization is fair – according to an employee's performance appraisal results".*

A positive evaluation of a City Hall promotion policy and practice, according to the first statement, is 77% in average ou of the maximum possible score (M = 3.86; SD = 1; Std. Error of Mean = 0.05); According to the second statement, the respondents are slightly more critical (M = 3.73; SD = 1; Std. Error of Mean = 0.05). The practice of promotion according to the performance appraisal results, deserved maximum rate from relatively few respondents.

 Since respondents rated each statement using a frequency scale, we were able to evaluate the common practice of promotion in the context of fairness and objectivity. About a third of those involved in the study were critical of City Hall promotion practices (rating the statement by the

following categories of scale – *almost never, rarely, or sometimes*). The percentage of ratings for both statements is presented in the following figure:
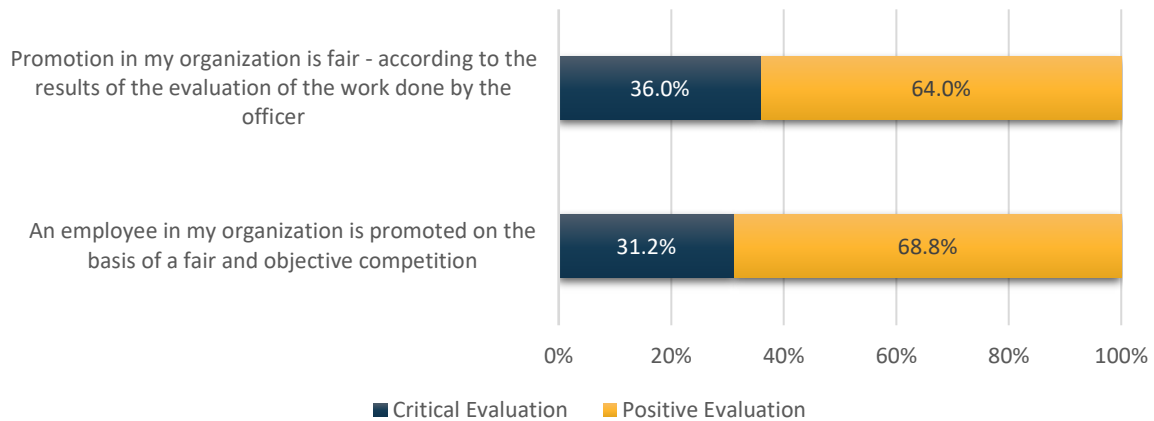
The results of the analysis show that the evaluation of the objectivity and fairness of the promotion is consistent, both in terms of a category of City Hall employees (civil servants, administrative and labor contractors), as well as party affiliation (neither party member, Georgian Dream party member) and a managerial position. These differentiated groups equally rate the practice of promotion in municipal city Halls. In all three cases the differences between the groups are statistically insignificant.

While evaluating the promotion policy, a different trend was observed according to the work duration in the current position. Despite the fact that generally positive evaluations prevail in all categories of work experience (under 1 year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, more than 10 years), the analysis reveals that newcomers (employees from 1 to 2 years) more positively rate promotion policy than those with three years and longer experience (statement 1 – (F (4, 531) = 4.55, $p < 0.001$); statement 2 – (F (4, 531) = 4.78, $p < 0.001$).

The longer they work in the same position, the less they perceive that the promotion policy is fair in the organization. This may also be explained by the fact that newly appointed civil servants see more opportunities for career advancement in the organization, while those who have held the same position for years in an anticipation of promotion (maybe deservedly, but this is a separate research issue), question the fairness and objectivity of promotion policies.

 For visualization, the percentage distribution of responses for both statements is presented in the following figures:

Figure 3.8   ***Promotion of civil servants based on the competition according to work experience***

„Promotion in my organization is conducted based on fair and objectieve competition "
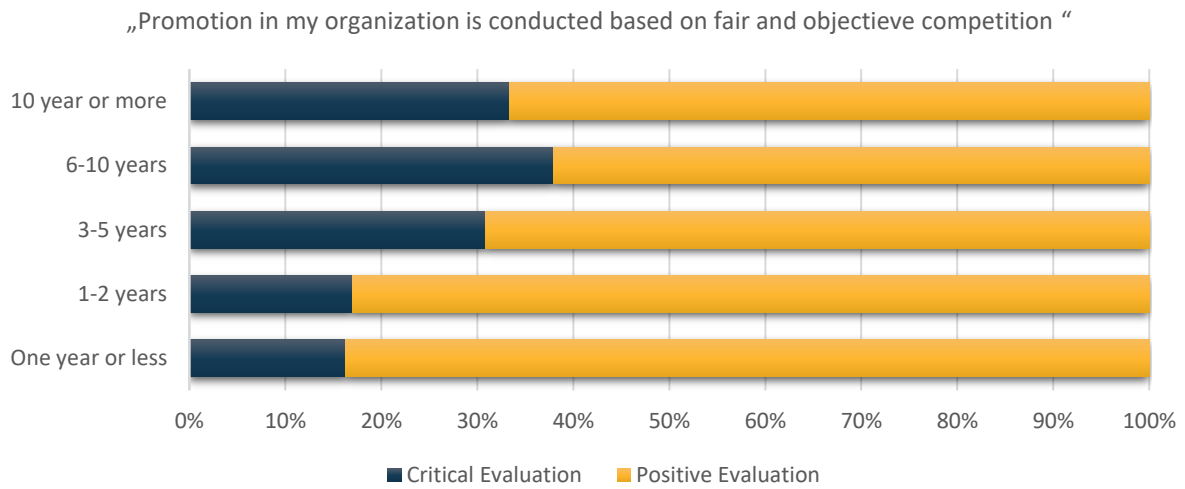
Figure 3.9   ***Employee Promotion based on the performance appraisal according to work experience***

„Promotion in my organization is fair - according to the performance appraisal results "
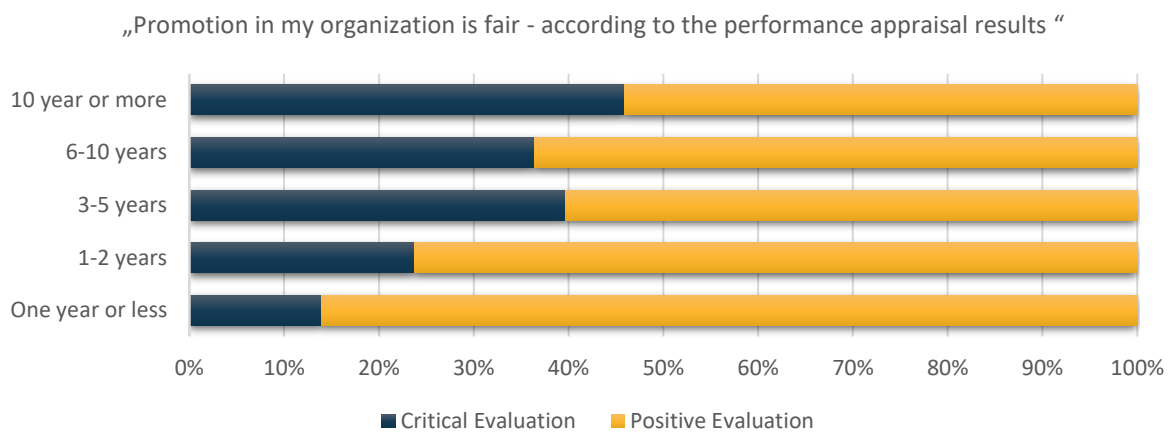
It should be noted that according to the results of a qualitative research, the possibility of promotion in civil service is **criticized not because the competition is biased, but because of the lack of promotion perspectives.**

One of the central aspects of civil service reform is to support and encourage professionalism. 62% of City Hall employees believe that City Hall has a positive practice of appreciating and promoting professionalism; 38% of respondents are critical of the efforts made by the City Hall to support professionalism. The question is formulated as follows: "**Professionalism in my organization is encouraged, promoter and valued**".

„Professionalism in my organization is promoted, supported and valued"
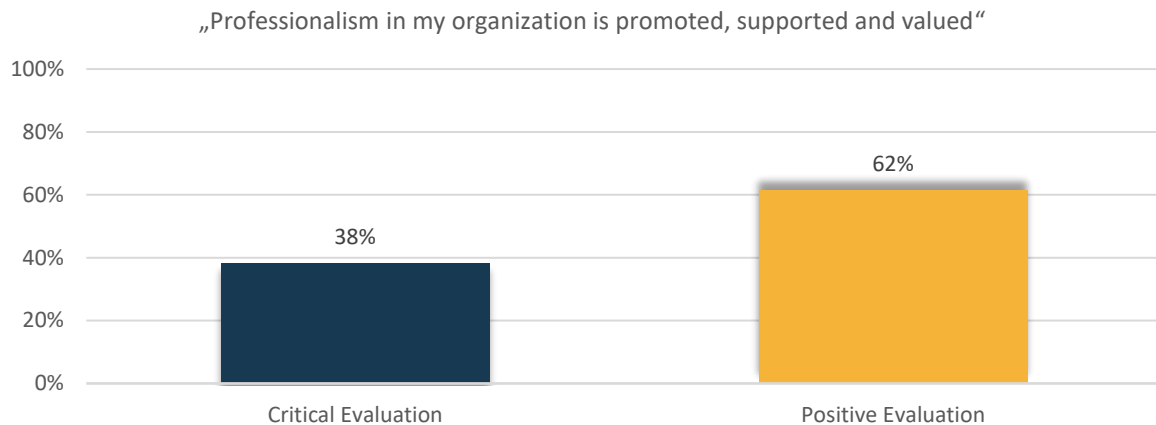
Positive rating includes responses – often, very often and almost always

The analysis of the city hall employees' ratings did not reveal statistically significant differences, according to the party affiliation or contract category of respondents. Weak but statistically reliable correlation is observed between the duration of the employee's current position and the evaluation of the promotion of professionalism in City Halls (r (534) = -0.10, $p < 0.001$).

The correlation is negative, which means that the greater the duration of work experience in one (current) position, the more critical employee evaluations are. Which is a logical result. This trend can be clearly seen in the following figure:

Figure 3.11 **Promotion of professionalism according to employee work experience**

„Professionalism in my organization is promoted, supported and valued"
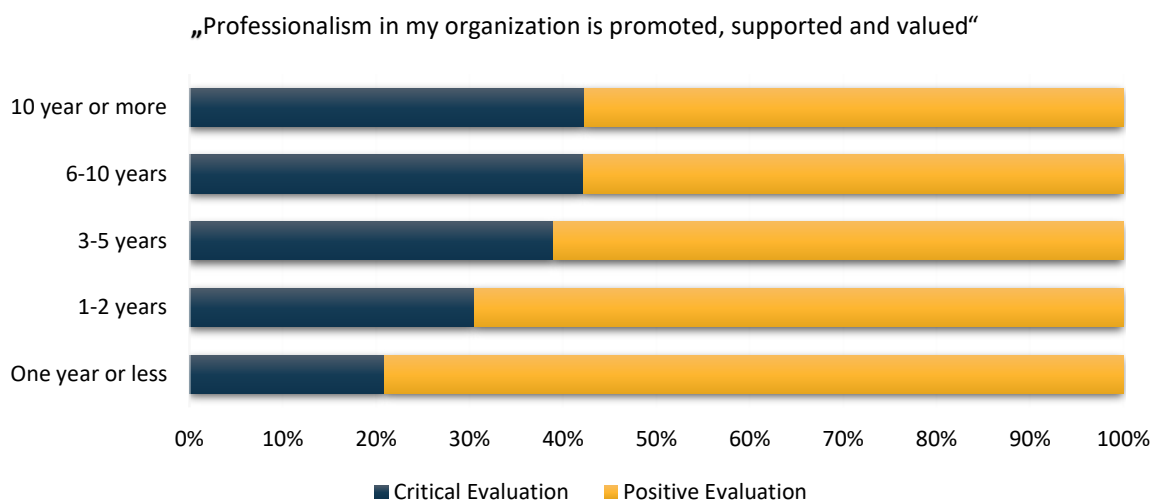
According to the results of the quantitative research, a positive evaluation of the existing career advancement practice prevails, although the evaluations of a third or more or the respondents are critical. Qualitative research gave us an opportunity to analyze the existing legal basis and practice for the effective operation of career advancement processes from different perspectives.

In this regard, particularly noteworthy are the evaluations of HRM specialists. Evaluations from the perspective of civil servants and population associated with career management was also interesting.

Career advancement – opportunities and challenges

In terms of career development, the City Hall faces significant challenges; According to the target groups involved in the study, one of the key factors in the outflow of competent and qualified staff from the system is limited career advancement opportunities. HR staff in City Halls, generally positively evaluated new regulations – new rules for career advancement and promotion, internal competitions, have replaced the practice of individual decision making and created a sense of fairness. However, alongside with the increase in the degree of fairness and objectivity, the **opportunities for promotion of civil servants are limited.**

Most of respondents recalled few and rare cases of civil servants' promotion. As one of the respondents pointed out, the word "promotion" is no longer a relevant name for this process; As defined by the civil service law, promotion of a civil servant is possible only through competition. Participation in the competition – selecting application forms and going through the interview stage are the same procedures as in the case of and open competition; So, respondents believe that it is very difficult to consider this process as a promotion. There are also other circumstances that make it almost impossible for a person to move up the career ladder. These are: surplus of staff, small budget of the City Hall and lack of vacancies (for promotion).

Respondents believe that there is a surplus of staff in City Halls – some employees have very few functions or cannot perform their duties at all. For organizations with the small budget, it is a financial burden: "*You have to hire only those you need in the organization. All the problems come from unnecessary positions*". Switching to remote work in pandemic conditions has made this problem visible.

"*One can deserve the promotion in all means, having relevant experience, but if someone does not leave the job, no one can be promoted*".

"*Career advancement, according to the performance appraisal results is unrealistic. The number of jobs here is so scarce that once a person is employed in any vacancy, for sure, he / she will sit here before retiring. Moreover, he / she may retire, but he / she will not leave. The only thing that might happen, is the small salary supplement*".

"*If you want to promote anybody, either someone has to be fired, or you have to invent a new position and announce the competition. So this is the way for one's promotion*".

In order to promote career growth of employees, the administration has to overcome many barriers – make changes in the staff list, move staff unit form one department to another, announce vacancy, etc. The employee has to re-participate in the competition. "*The law on civil service is oriented towards professional growth – is that so? But in reality, it is a barrier to professional growth*".

Instead of regulating this issue at the legislative level, "*the law on the 2021 budget states that changes in the staff list that will lead to an increase in the salary fund, are not allowed. We have not promoted any employee in 2021*".

The link between performance appraisal results and employee promotion is critically evaluated. Normally, heads of departments always include comments as part of the performance appraisal, about the need for promotion of high-performing employees, although these comments have long remained just comments. The existing records in the law in this direction also mostly reflect only theoretical possibilities.

It is considered that one of the forms of career advancement is to assign a class to civil servants, but this is also a significant barrier at the legislative level: while assigning a class, personnel's work experience is not taken into account. At the same time, in order to be promoted to on class within existing 12 classes, it is necessary to perform a high level of work within 2 years. Therefore, the employee, in fact has to work for 20 – 24 years to achieve the highest class, "*with all 24 years at best*".

In some municipalities, are being talked about unhealthy career advancement practices, including cases of promotion on political grounds. The population in the municipalities also does not rule out political influences in the process of career growth. "*Employees are promised promotion if they support the ruling party during elections*", mentioned a resident of one of the municipalities.

In summary, several important factors that hinder the introduction of career advancement and employee promotion practices, can be formulated as follows:

- Although promotions are often seen as a mechanism for ensuring fairness by respondents, they advocate the possibility of "opening the window" to promotion of the personnel with distinguished qualification and / or achievement without any competition.

- Limited career advancement opportunities at City Halls is one of the most important reasons for employees to decide to leave the system. Scarce opportunities for career advancement also hinder the process for attracting and hiring new, competent staff.

- The contribution of the performance appraisal results to the promotion of an employee is minimal – the existing records in the law in this direction are less functional in terms of implementing them in practice.

- Respondents, as heads of HR departments, do not see their role in making careers advancement decisions and performing this important function for staff.

Employees see the solution to the current problem in optimizing staff and refining the legal base, appreciating professionalism in the basic concept of the reform, and taking effective measures to actually implement the idea of supporting career advancement.

HRM specialists note that the **City Hall HRM policies and practices are centralized**, everything is performed according to the instructions – according to the Civil Service Bureau and the City Hall management, "*they are the decision-makers, we are the executors*".

Remuneration and incentives

Remuneration is the investment made by the employer. It contributes significantly to the competitiveness of the organization and to the successful completion of its mission. For this purpose, in addition to **direct compensation** / remuneration, organizations use **indirect**

compensation, under which they offer various types of benefits to the employee: paid holidays, vacations, health insurance, free transportation, free meals, free phone calls and more. The compensation system should be designed in such a way that the organization can attract, motivate and retain qualified personnel. At the same time, it should ensure internal equality – employees need to feel that remuneration, according to the performance appraisal, is fairly distributed. The study shows that the existing pay system does not achieve these goals.

The compensation system should be based on the principles of fairness and consistency, which requires a proper comprehension of the relevant values of the position held, both in the internal and external markets.

Remuneration is the most painful problem for City Hall employees. In conditions of high inflation, unchanged pay for years fails to act as a motivator that would affect the quality of work performed. This, in end, becomes a problem for the citizens, as it puts under the risk of providing them with timely, quality and efficient services. Existing remuneration limits the attraction of experienced, qualified staff in the organization. Young people also work mainly temporarily for internships and gaining experience at City Halls – "*Talented young people use civil service positions as a springboard and soon leave their jobs*". The civil service sector cannot compete with the private sector in terms of remuneration and incentives, therefore lose professional staff. The turnover is very high – "*due to the remuneration, the civil service sector is in danger of being completely emptied of professional staff*".

Small remuneration and its inconsistency with the work performed was noted even by employees who positively evaluated all aspects of HRM policy and practice. According to the respondents, the responsibilities and obligations far exceed the salary. "*Older employees recall with regret the period when their salary allowed them to feel more dignified*".

The luxury of financial incentives based on the performance appraisal results is less in civil service organizations even if a distinguished and special work was performed by an employee.

Incentives are made once a year, for the New Year and are usually given to all employees. Certificates of appreciation are also received, however, respondents consider only an increase in remuneration or monetary reward as an acceptable form of incentive. It is believed that today, as a result of new regulations, employee rewards are only symbolic and cannot become truly motivating mechanism until salary increases.

There are different opinions among City Hall staff regarding the abolition of the bonus mechanism. According to the majority, the main thing is to increase the remuneration to the appropriate level, and the award of a bonus or a supplement salary should be made only for special merits ("*incentives must be, this is an additional motivation for any civil servant*").

While the heads of departments have the right to assign bonuses to employees for special merit, based on the performance appraisal results, they refrain from giving bonuses to only some employees, and the bonuses are given to all employees, which raises question about fairness, both within the organization and society, especially in politicized and oppositional part of the society. Employees only in some municipalities confirm the existence of the practice of unfair distribution of bonuses and its underlying political, nepotistic or other influences.

There is a high sense of injustice among employees due to the lack of appreciation and incentive perspectives for the work performed. There is also a sense of injustice that remuneration is equal

for all departments, regardless of their responsibilities and functions, although the law provides the possibility of differentiating remuneration within one position according to functions. The central executive (relevant service of the Ministry of Finance) refrains from using this mechanism. Therefore, the law allows for maneuvering, but in reality the municipality does not have the opportunity to use this opportunity.

Given that the City Hall does not have virtually any employee motivation mechanisms (remuneration, rewards / incentives, career growth), civil servants remain in their organization mainly because they cannot give up the sense of civil service is a difficult socio-economic environment.

Within the framework of the study we tried to answer two main questions:

1. How do employees react to direct compensation – remuneration they receive for their work (distributive justice)?
2. How employees react to the procedures used to determine compensation (procedural justice)?

The answer to these questions is that civil servants have a sense of injustice in both aspects, although the main dissatisfaction and a sense of injustice is still related to the amount of remuneration. They consider that taking into account the current situation, it is impossible to value the diligent professional work of an employee in the civil service sector with adequate remuneration or to encourage materially.

Real picture in the researched municipalities, based on HR analytics:

Table 3. 2   Career development of a civil servant

	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Closed competiti	Internal competio	Closed competiti	Internal competio	Closed competiti	Internal competio	Closed competiti	Internal competio
Ambrolauri	1		7			2	2	
Martvili								1
Tkibuli	1							
Khulo			2		2			
Borjomi		2		1		1		5
Vake district board								2
Batumi			4			1	1	
Telavi	1		2		8		4	
Marneuli					6	8	22	8
Kutaisi							2	4
Zugdidi			4		2	9	1	3
Lagodexi	2						1	
Dusheti							4	
Axalqalaqi	6		5				4	
Tetritskaro								
Ozurgeti								
Gori								
Isani district board								

Figure 3.12   *Number of promoted civil servants (2018- 2021)*
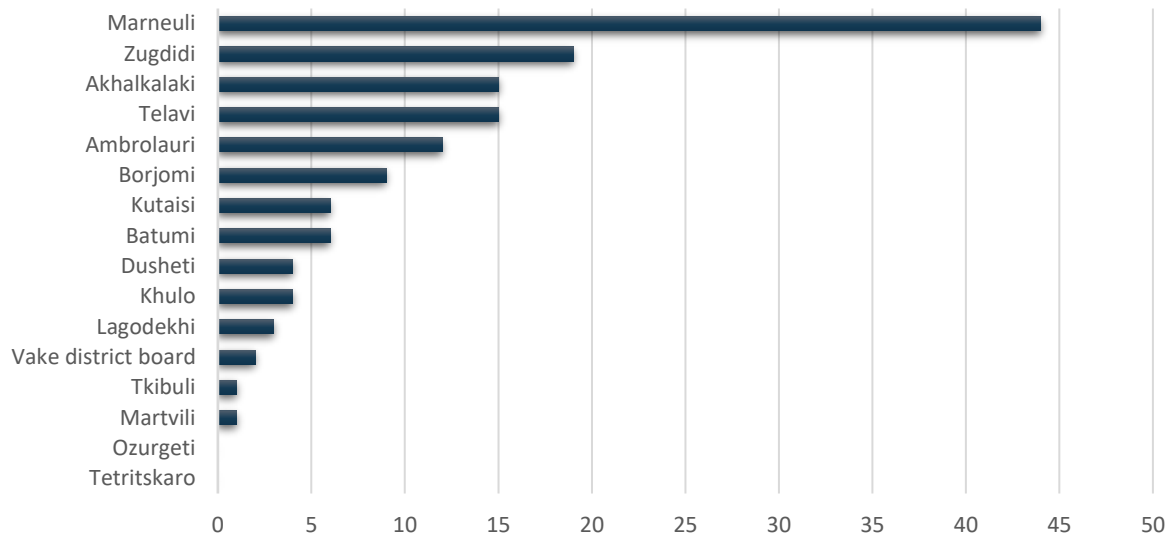
Figure 3.13   Career development of civil servants
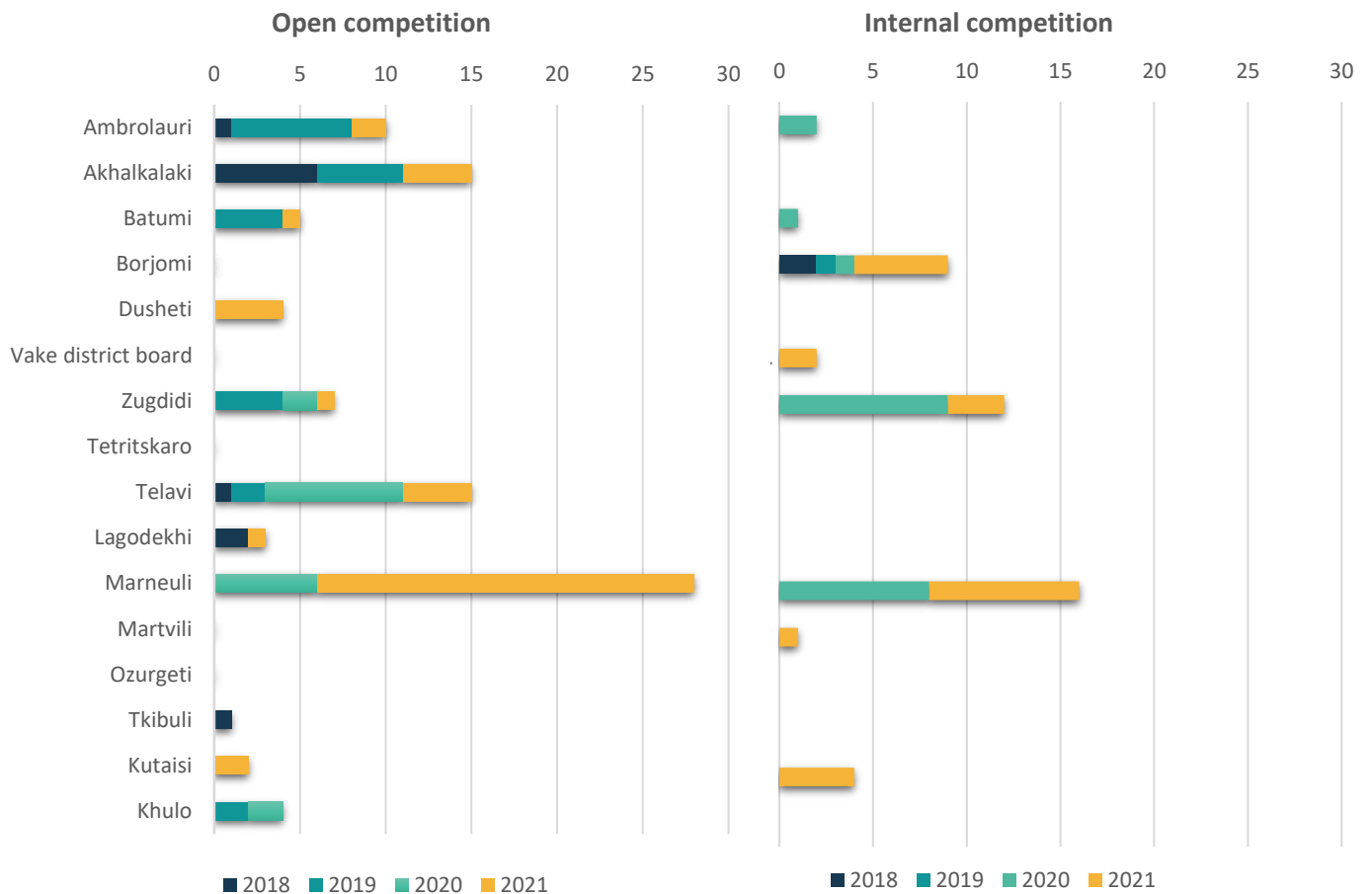
Reform achievements, challenges

Reform achievements

Along with strict critical evaluations, the protection of the rights of civil servants at the legislative level is considered a significant achievement of the reform in almost all municipalities: "*we are not afraid that someone will come and fire us before or after elections*"; "*Since 2014, we are no longer afraid that we will be fired along with the change of government*".

The feeling of job unsafety is a subjective perception of the threats to employment continuity and stability (Shoss, 2017), which is manifested in the personnel's psychological and behavioral reaction, such as emotional exhaustion, deviant behavior (deviation from normal organizational behavior), low motivation … It negatively affects the employee's well-being, the quality of work performance at both the individual and organizational levels. Consequently, the fact that civil servants have a sense of safety can be seen as the most important, key achievements of the reform.

Challenges

- Civil service reform has failed to introduce objective and transparent promotion or incentive schemes. Existing legislation has also restricted opportunities to promote and encourage qualified personnel with a merit-oriented (competition, etc.) mechanism to prevent nepotism or political influence.

- Due to the hard work and effort, the low degree of employee differentiation, the unification of compensation mechanisms (the principle: equal for all) creates a sense of inequality in those employees whose contribution to the achievement of organizational goals is distinguished.

- Low salary, lack of material incentives and career growth opportunities make it difficult to attract qualified staff and at the same time, lead to high staff turnover.

Undoubtedly, the necessity for incentive and promotion policy changes has emerged. However, these changes must be made with great caution in order to avoid adoption of a vicious system, where nepotism and political influence play a greater role than fair decisions based on employee qualification and successfully performed work.

The incentive should be based on the performance appraisal results; therefore, first of all, the performance appraisal system should be refined; Only after that we can talk about a fair policy of incentives and promotions.

Training is a systemic process of changing employee behaviors that supports increasing an organization's productivity and efficiency. The main purpose of organizational training is personnel development, which increases their competencies, enabling professionals to be trained in solving work-related tasks (Weinert, 2001). Training is widely used as a coping strategy for change. Consequently, activities focused on the professional development of employees acquire special value within the framework of any reform. Training and development programs have a dual responsibility: the organization's duty is to provide an atmosphere that supports and encourages change and development, and staff are required to get the most of the opportunities offered by the training for themselves (professional development) and the organization (efficient performance). Institutional development, capacity building and competency development are vital to adapting to change and organizational development. Consequently, the introduction of changes in the framework of civil service reform significantly increases the importance of training and development activities. The study evaluated the professional development policies and practices of the employees in the municipal City Halls.

Training and development activities: analysis of existing practices

1% of the salary fund is allocated to support the professional development of employees in City Halls; This approach demonstrates the importance of supporting the professional development of civil servants. Here we note that according to the results of the study, compared to other HRM processes, training and development practices were evaluated more positively, although critical views were also expressed.

In the process of organizational change, special importance is assigned to the organizational culture oriented towards learning and development. Accordingly, the study evaluates the extent to which municipal City Halls support employees acquire new knowledge and skills they need to successfully perform their assigned duties and adapt to change.

The statement we used in quantitative research to indicate a learning and development – oriented organizational culture is: **"My organization supports all employees develop the skills (e.g. training, conferences, …) they need to succeed in their assigned tasks"** *(*M = 3.99; SD = 1; Std. Error of Mean = 0.04).

The analysis shows that 74.4% of the civil servants involved in the study, positively evaluate the steps taken by their organizations in this direction, while 25.6% were relatively critical.

Figure 3.14 **Professional development support**

„My organization supports all employees develop the skills (e.g. training, conferences, …) they need to succeed in their assigned tasks "

25.6%

74.4%

■ Critical Evaluation ■ Positive Evaluation
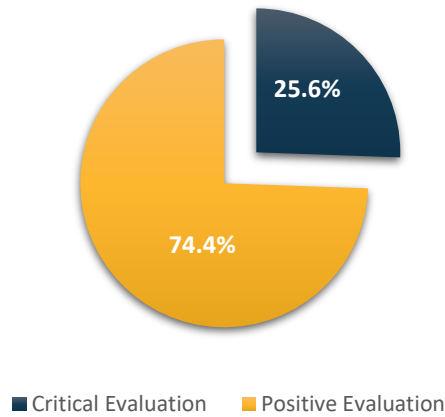
For comparison, this result is also presented according to municipalities.

Figure 3.15 **Professional development support – by municipalities**

My organization supports all employees develop the skills (e.g. training, conferences, …) they need to succeed in their assigned tasks "

■ Critical Evaluation ■ Positive Evaluation
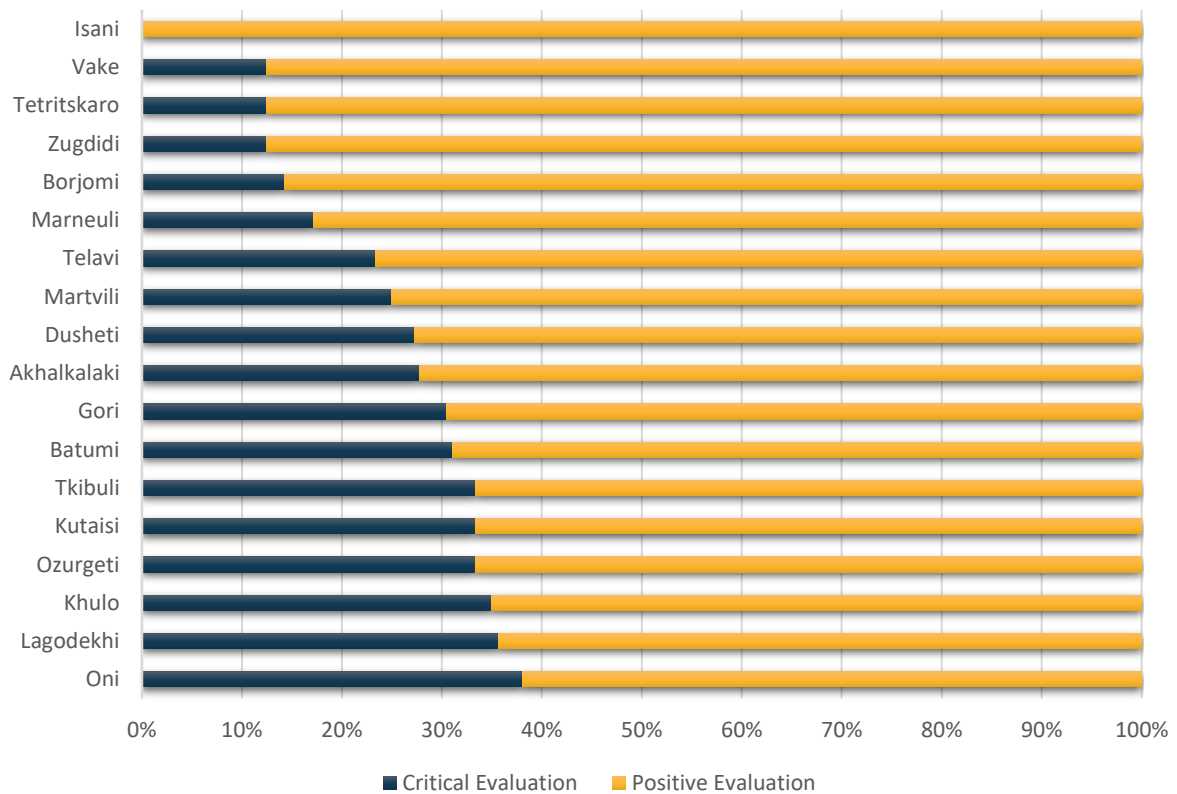
The results of analysis show that the evaluations related to the organization's contribution to employee development are consistent and are no statistically significant differences between different groups (according to current work experience: $F_{(5, 530)} = 1.11$, $p = 0.35$; according to managerial and non-managerial work: $F_{(1, 534)} = 0.71$, $p = 0.35$; according to category of civil servants: $F_{(2, 533)} = 0.20$, $p = 0.82$; according to political party affiliation: ($F_{(1, 528)} = 0.17$, $p = 0.68$)).

Within the framework of the qualitative research, we evaluated the existing practices aimed at the development of civil servants in two directions. These are:

⌐ Methodologically proper training and development practices (training needs analysis, evaluation of training effectiveness, etc.);

⌐ Equal access to professional development activities, equity and fairness.

Methodological aspects of training and development practices

Planning phase: training needs analysis

Needs analysis is considered as a fundamental step in training planning. By the help of comprehensive assessment of training needs, it is possible to relate the organization's strategy, goals and objectives to training outcomes (organizational analysis); In addition, the performance appraisal results determine whether the employee possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the work; whether the training can improve the conditions (operational and individual analysis).

Decisions on the need for professional development of civil servants are made mainly on the basis of two approaches:

⌐ **The need for personnel training is determined by the heads of departments –** such an approach is implemented in most of City Halls involved in the study. Information about the needs is accumulated in the HRM service. After that a decision on what trainings to offer to employees is made with the head of administration. *(„Based on this joint research, the need for training in the organization in general is determined").* According to some respondents' views, decisions about the need for training are also based on the performance appraisal results. However, given that the performance appraisal system is, in most cases, perceived as a fictitious procedure, it is unlikely to be a common practice.

⌐ **The need for training for employees is determined by the heads of departments together with subordinates –** at the beginning of the year a list of trainings is prepared and offered by HR to the City Hall departments. The heads of departments together with their subordinates, decide who has to receive what training. These trainings are conducted due to elaborated plan (the plan is elaborated without formal needs analysis procedures).

Part of HR representatives positively evaluate this practice: "*the coming year's training schedule is prepared in the previous year. It works properly and is quite efficient*". Respondents note that it is possible to choose relevant and necessary topics from the list of training modules offered.

If any problem arises during the year, the need for another, new training module may be on the agenda: "*Each employee draws up an individual plan, then individual plans are joined and submitted to the management, after which modules are drawn up*". This is relatively outdated practice that was relevant before the introduction of mandatory performance appraisal system.

It is common practice to use the performance appraisal results in order to analyze training needs.; At the same time, it have been adjusted to the relevant regulations and seems to be functional in most of large municipalities (Zugdidi, Batumi, etc.). This approach is effective, provided that the performance appraisal is methodologically sound, objective and fair.

Respondents noted that NGOs often offer support to City Hall staff in variety ways (HR representatives attributed these trainings to so-called spontaneous trainings). The role of the civil service in terms of supporting the professional development of civil servants was especially emphasized.

We note that training in basic and managerial skills as part of the civil service reform is mandatory for newly appointed staff. It seems that at this stage a lot of emphasis is made on mandatory trainings.

Evaluation of training effectiveness

Developing effective quality control mechanisms for trainings is important in order to ensure whether investment in training and development activities actually reflects the effectiveness of the organization and the achievement of organizational goals. For these reasons it is necessary to evaluate and constantly monitor the training in relation to the goals and objectives of the training – to what extent the training has changed the work practice and behavior of the staff, how this change will affect the performance of the work.

The most valid mechanism for evaluating the training effectiveness is to assess **the extent to which knowledge / skills acquired during the training were transferred to a real work situation,** resulting in improved job performance. No systemic approach in this regard is found in any of the municipalities. Respondents not that mainly the training center itself evaluated the satisfaction of the participants with the training. According to the common practice in the municipalities, those receiving trainings do not formally evaluate effectiveness or satisfaction. Only during informal conversations express their attitudes the attendees. Employees participating in the training and their supervisors simply express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the training. As an exception, a few respondents mentioned that the effectiveness of the training is evaluated by their direct supervisor, observing how much the employee has improved the quality of work performed after the training. One of the HRs mentioned that they usually get interested with the results achieved by the trainings and talk about it with HR representatives of other municipalities. However, no official evaluation is conducted in this case either.

This practice is negatively evaluated by the City Hall staff. In their opinion, the fact that the effectiveness of trainings conducted at the City Hall is not evaluated, is a significant shortcoming for the planning process of further trainings and makes the proper use of resources (time, financial, human) suspicious.

Professional development motivation

It is noteworthy that a certain part of civil servants has a high motivation to acquire and develop skills that will help them to solve their work tasks effectively. According to them, the employee him / herself should care continuously for professional development and this is also his / her responsibility.

Employees declare request on upgrading their skills and participate in relevant activities ("*We want to learn more, we will not be able to cope with our work, if we do not grow constantly*").

Opportunities to develop the City Hall employees' competences should not depend on the initiative of the head of a particular department ("*The City Hall employee must meet modern requirements and if he / she does not have an appropriate motivation, he / she must be instructed to undergo the training*").

However, some employees seem more inactive. They seem to recognize the need for training in terms of system reform, are satisfied with the quality of the training and knowledge and skills acquired, but at the same time, the study revealed that HR specialists find it difficult to make managers interested in trainings related to performance appraisal.

Participants' attitudes toward training

The need for timely measures related to the introduction of innovations (trainings or other types of explanatory meetings) is especially important in the context of legislative changes. HR representatives expressed a positive attitude towards existing training and development practices in City Halls. They emphasized both content value and informal "benefits" – Employees are in favor of participating in trainings, are happy to change the work environment and communicate with colleagues and professionals in this environment. They, as those responsible for these activities, point out that staff training policies and practices have recently changed for the better, both in terms of planning and content. "*In general, staff are very satisfied with the interesting topics of the training*".

"*Until 2015, the trainings were held in a very unreasonable way. HR training could have been conducted for a completely different staff and there was a lot of uncertainty. A lot has changed in recent years, people themselves have changed in the direction that if they do not learn something, if they do not develop, their performance will be evaluated unsatisfactorily. Now the Civil Service Bureau does its maximum to support civil servants in training attendance, in development to perform better*".

City Hall staff is also largely satisfied with the quality of the training, but they also note that in many cases the training **is focused on general topics** and hardly can the acquired knowledge be transferred to daily activities.

Trainings on general topics are considered to be less effective and it is believed that specialized, field-specific trainings would greatly contribute to the increase of staff qualifications. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the format of the trainings, the lack of interactions, which was mainly considered to be a shortcoming of distance trainings. They also mentioned a lack of training duration ("*how can you manage retraining with 2- 3 days, maximum one-week training?*").

The format of professional development activities significantly determines the effectiveness of the activity. The format can determine the degree of involvement of the training participants and, consequently, the outcome. Training is an optimal means of disseminating information and communication vocabulary in large groups. However, training in its current form does not allow the transfer of acquired knowledge into practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2006; Gallimore et al 2009; Little, 2003; Grossman et al, 2009). Consequently, when aiming at disseminating new information, the lecture-delivering format is effective, whereas interactive training in small groups should be given obvious preference for developing practical skills.

As the respondents point out, high-quality trainings are often expensive and their purchase is hardly possible by the City Hall budget ("*We do not have the luxury of good trainings*"). Ways to solve the problem are seen in consolidated tendering or certification of training providers. However, the problem of purchasing trainings tailored to the needs of individuals will remain ("*You cannot announce a tender for one person, we always have to carry out group trainings. It is impossible to train a single person in a specific field. And we were not able to overcome this problem, all our attempts failed*").

Accessibility and fairness

HR representatives as well as other City Hall staff note that professional development is free from bias, is fairly organized and equally accessible to all civil servants. Evaluations are consistent: the training and professional development process is equally accessible to all employees of City Halls, regardless of different demographic characteristics and political views. The involvement of employees in trainings is not affected by their political preferences and political party affiliation, gender, etc. However, in the context of accessibility, respondents noted that it is also desirable to add interpreter services for ethnic minorities in order to **increase access to training for representatives of different ethnic groups**.

Critical evaluations were also expressed. According to one of the HR representatives, the main obstacle to equal access to professional development is the budget. At the initial stage, so called basic trainings (because it is a mandatory component) are conducted for all employees, and, and further, as needed. Additional trainings are related to finances. However, relevant training may not be available for all positions and this might be the reason why some staff are left without training ("*I have been working in this field for years and nothing has been relevant to my work*"). Municipalities nearby the capital or large cities have more access to training (in case of physical attendance). A municipality with a specific terrain, where access to training is very low ("*there are a few things, but it is completely insufficient*") faces more difficulties in this regard.

Some of the training is paid, while some require travel, overnight stays in another city, and other expenses that civil servants can hardly afford ("*You have to leave all your salary there. The question is whether training is better or bring home salary*").

The quality and accessibility of trainings (number of offers) varies according to the City Hall departments. For example, supervision, financial, procurement, social services have more offers, while PR, archive training, materials, literature are not available.

Professional development support of HRM specialists

HRM structural units comprise of a small number of employees (3 – 4 people). Part of the respondents mentioned that due to the lack of relevant education in the field, a lot has been learned in practice and they need serious support in terms of professional development.

It was noted that the civil service plays a positive role in the professional development of HRM specialists: "*HR specialists are very pampered by training offered by the Civil Service Bureau; absolutely on all topics … As soon as the uncertainty arises around any issue, I immediately get in touch with them and they help me; they also send necessary materials*".

Challenges

Tenders and related regulations create special difficulties in the training and development of employees: approval by the City Council, market research, preparation of tender documents is quite time-consuming and extensive work; At the same time, the "*announcement of a tender for specific content training*" may not coincide with the priorities of a particular municipality.

The municipalities with a small population and, consequently, with a small number of City Hall employees, face particular challenges. There is a high risk of tenders being failed, since "*no one will conduct the training for two people*". All of the study participants positively evaluate the opportunity to participate in trainings without a tender.

There are organizations (training providers) to which the Procurement Law does not apply and service contracts are signed without a tender. Basically, City Halls choose these organizations for conducting trainings, in order to avoid the rather time-consuming tender announcement procedures.

It is important to mention the cases of municipalities populated by ethnic minorities. The announced trainings are conducted in Georgian and, consequently, an attendance on trainings is possible for only Georgia-speaking staff. Many employees do not even want to attend the training.

Another challenge that HR representatives have underlined is employees being passive. Actually, they do not or very rarely take the initiative to be involved in any training / learning course.

During the pandemic, the trainings were completely transferred to the online space, which, according to HR representatives, is less effective, because the attendance is very formal and the trainer can hardly make the participants be involved in the training behind the switched off microphone and video surveillance. This in turn affects the effectiveness of the training. For this reason, some municipalities, despite the criticism from the non-governmental sector, refuse to purchase online trainings ("*they are not effective and thus, we did not spend money on ineffective trainings*").

Summary

In general, it should be noted that the professional development of City Hall staff is encouraged and supported. Within the framework of the Civil Service reform, the promotion of professional retraining,

the amount provided from the salary fund and mandatory basic training courses, in general, can be positively evaluated.

The obligation to announce tenders creates difficulties and barriers for both City Halls and organizations that offer training courses to customers. At the same time, it is very important to have clear requirements for providers – while preparing a training module, they should take into account that the training has to be planned in such a way as to ensure not only the deepening of knowledge, but also the effective use of knowledge, gained during the training, in practice. The training format, content and teaching methods should be selected in such a way as to ensure the effective transfer of knowledge gained during the trainings to the work situation.

It should also be noted that it is necessary to introduce methodologically sound practices for training needs analysis and evaluation of training effectiveness. This will increase the motivation of the employees to attend the training, will support to implement the acquired competencies in the work process. It will also increase the competition between training organizations and improve the quality.

It is unlikely that imposing a training commitment will substantially change personnel attitudes towards raising qualification activities. Offering specialized training tailored to the real needs of employees (along with developing proper training quality control mechanisms), or implementing other formats of activities related to raising qualification (mentoring), can be a way to overcome existing problems.

As a conclusion, it should be noted that the shortcomings identified in HRM process, according to respondents, significantly depend on the fact that municipalities cannot implement real self-governing, as they have no way to determine organizational structure themselves (lack of autonomy is the problem in many other areas). **"*There is no real self-government at all. I have been working in the civil service for a long time and it has never been, everything is centrally governed*"**. Organizational structure is elaborated by the Civil Service Bureau and takes little account of the specifics of the municipality. Planning of staff units without taking into account the specifics of a particular municipality and a particular department, hinders the process of providing high quality and timely services to citizens.

Job Analysis

HRM involves making optimal and effective decisions regarding the planning of work to be performed, selection of employees, the performance appraisal, training and development, and making optimal end effective decisions in regard to regulating the existing work environment and work relationships. Job analysis is of utmost importance in achieving this goal. It is a systemic job research process that aims at obtaining specific information about the job; Job analysis identifies the knowledge, skills, abilities, or other important characteristics needed to effectively perform the duties and responsibilities assigned to an employee.

Usually, staffing decisions, such as planning training and development activities, or a performance appraisal system, compensation, etc. is based on job analysis.

Interviews with HR representatives revealed that, as a rule, job descriptions for all positions are accessible in City Halls. The content of the documents, the procedure for their development and approval are similar in all municipalities and are implemented in accordance with existing regulations: the job descriptions of deputy mayors and heads of structural units are determined and approved by the mayor, while job descriptions of other civil servants of City Halls are determined by heads of relevant structural units and approved by the mayor, upon their submission. Approved qualification requirements define qualifications, work experience, education, knowledge and skills required for the position. As a rule, job descriptions are created based on the charter of a particular service – according to the functions and duties described in it. The role of City Hall HR staff in this process is mostly limited to technical support and resolving procedural issues. Namely, they can act as mediators in the information dissemination process. The job descriptions are mainly handled by the need of a particular structural unit together with the staff in that position, while HR specialists ensure that the developed versions are technically validate and handed over for approval. On the other hand, there are municipalities (e.g. Zugdidi) where HR specialists are more involved in shaping the content of the document. Initially, the qualification template was elaborated by the HR specialists and was handed over to the relevant structural units for review and comments. Based on these drafts, job descriptions were developed. They have been updated several times in accordance with the changes in the law and not for the sake of modifying the job itself. Updating is not a permanent process. It became very clear that none of the respondents carried out a job analysis (in the classical sense). Moreover, they believe that work undertaken in this direction in the past is quite enough and they do not see the need for any kind of activity in this regard. In most of the cases, when the respondents started working, these documents were already in place. They use what they find. Only in rare cases, when a new position is created, they simply edit the document created for a similar position. HR representatives note that each civil servant gets acquainted with the job description and confirms their acquaintance with a signature, which to some extent ensures the involvement of civil servants in the process, though still formally. If evaluated expertly, descriptions (in the form in which they exist today in municipal City Halls) **are not a functional tool for achieving the important goals of job analysis in the administration of various HRM processes.** They are general in nature and the functions are not well operationalized. At the same time, as HRM specialists have pointed out, **job descriptions are mostly tailored to the employee rather than the position,** so it might happen that distribution of functions are different in content for similar positions.

As a summary, we can conclude that job analysis in its traditional, methodological form and function, is not performed in HRM services of municipality City Halls. The need for professional development and qualification is evident in this regard.

Summary of chapter 3

The reform has both achievements and challenges in terms of human resource management. The most important achievement is **the development of legal leverage for the protection of civil servants.**

At this stage, the main challenges of the reform are: the fictitious nature of the implementation of the performance appraisal system and the limited opportunities for career advancement.

The civil service reform has not yet been able to introduce an effective performance appraisal system and effective advancement and promotion-based schemes based on it. Fictitious nature of performance appraisal, unification of compensation mechanisms (the principle: equal for all) is a common practice in municipal City Halls.

Existing legislation, with its focus on mechanisms to prevent nepotism or leverage of political influences, which itself is an extremely important factor, has also limited the opportunities for promoting and encouraging deserving, qualified staff. At the same time, low salary, lack of material incentives and career advancement opportunities make it difficult to attract qualified staff, and moreover, lead to high staff turnover.

Responding effectively in a systemic way to these challenges, is a prerequisite for achieving the goals of the reform. Here we will focus on one important fact.

HRM processes are quite centralized in municipal City Halls. Paradoxically, the processes designed to ensure neutrality, transparency and fairness, in some cases reduce the chances of municipalities responding effectively to their own, sometimes specific needs.

Civil service regulations should leave room for flexibility. Municipalities differ from each other in their demographic profile or needs. The challenge of the new reform is to take into account this diversity and, at the same time, maintain the strengths of the equal opportunity approach.

Chapter 4. Assessing political neutrality in the context of civil service reform

Introduction

For Georgia, as well as for the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe, reducing and eliminating political influence remains one of the main challenges of the civil service.

The problematic segment of public administration transformation is precisely the political influences to which civil services are easily vulnerable. Therefore, in accordance with the concept of Good Governance in modern European countries, the formation of a **politically neutral civil service** is one of the most important principles set out in the Georgian Law on Civil service.

The extent to which civil service reform has ensured the reduction of political influence at the municipal level; How free are the personnel decisions and management practices made in municipal City Halls from political and other influences (eg, nepotism) - in this chapter we will try to answer these questions. The chapter consists of several parts: first, the views of the two main target groups - City Hall employees and the population on the political influence on personnel decisions are discussed, then the empirical evidence obtained on the involvement of officials in the pre-election process is presented (HR analytics results are used in the analysis); Finally, the results of evaluating the direct and indirect links between the degree of political influence and the target factors of the research are described.

The research was conducted during the local government elections, which allowed us to monitor and assess the situation *in terms of political neutrality of the civil service* at the municipal level. Data collection for this part of the study was associated with certain challenges. People employed in the City Hall refrained from expressing their views on the matter, or denied the existence of political influence. The complexity of the research, the involvement of different methods and the target group, despite the difficulties, allowed us to assess the current situation.

Assessment of the degree of political influence on a particular human resource management process

To reflect the political impact on human resource management processes, a number of questions have been integrated in the questionnaires to assess the political influences. The Servant Questionnaire assesses the degree of political influence on career advancement, remuneration and reward distribution, access to professional development activities for employees with different political preferences, political influences on the performance appraisal process, etc. The population questionnaire is more general in nature, it is less focused on certain processes of human resource management (training and development, performance appraisal, etc.) and is mainly oriented on the evaluation of politically motivated personnel decisions in the City Hall. Both questionnaires include questions to assess the involvement of civil servants in the pre-election process.

Qualitative research assessed the attitudes and perceptions of the population, public officials and HR representatives to examine the political influences on City Hall personnel decisions. This means that assessing the political impact on human resource management processes based on the results of a

qualitative research can be done in three perspectives - on the one hand, the vision of the two working groups in the institution is evaluated: process implementers (HR specialists) and process target group (civil servants); On the other hand - users of the institution's services (population, so-called external observer / evaluator). In this part of the report, we present the results of triangulation of information obtained from different target groups through qualitative and quantitative research. First we will talk about the political influences on the HRM processes, then we will discuss the issue of citizen involvement in the pre-election processes.

Personnel Selection

About a third of civil servants believe that personnel decisions are not politically neutral.

Figure 4. 1   **Political influences on HRM decisions**

„Personnel decisions made in my organization are free from political influences"

Political influences on the selection process were assessed with the question: **"Personnel in my organization are selected on the basis of professionalism, not party affiliation."** (M = 3.87; SD = 1.18; Std. Error of Mean = .05). 28% of civil servants estimate that politically motivated personnel decisions are made in the City Hall.

Figure 4.2   **Political influences on selection**

"Personnel in my organization are selected on the basis of professionalism, not party affiliation"
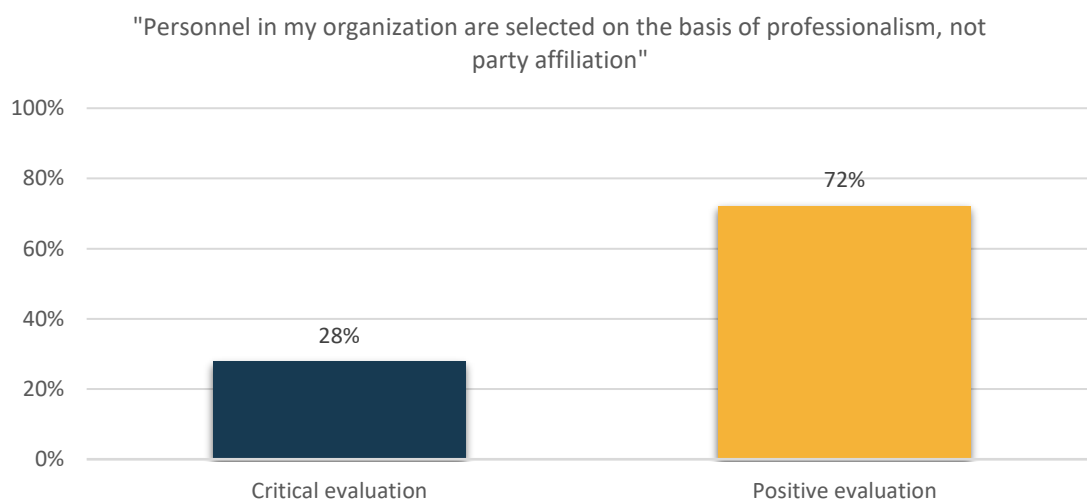
An interesting opinion was expressed about the selection process in the focus group of Civil servants - *an objective and fair selection procedure is an important guarantee of a neutral civil service.* According to the respondents, selection is a mechanism to prevent political influences, including the forced involvement of civil servants in pre-election processes. According to the respondents, people who were employed in the City Hall not based on their own competencies, are vulnerable to such influences; Employees selected through an objective and fair selection procedure are even more confident and less subject to such impacts.

According to the population, employment in the City Hall is influenced not only by political but also nepotistic connections - often the candidate is pre-selected before the vacancy is announced, therefore, the requirements are artificially met by these candidates. Because cases of nepotism are common, there is a feeling that "vacancies are announced formally." For example, in one of the municipalities, most of the participants talk only about nepotism, the appointment of candidates on a clan principle. According to them, political support in a particular municipality is not enough to be employed in the City Hall. In their opinion, you can be hired temporarily for political and party support, but employment in the City Hall, especially in a high position, requires a very strong political lobby. As for nepotism and clan governance, participants cite examples of families, relatives who work in this agency.

The influence of nepotism on personnel decisions has also been revealed in quantitative research. The question was formulated in this way

- *For Civil servants: "Personnel decisions (recruitment, promotion, etc.) in my organization are influenced by kinship and acquaintance"*

- *For the population: "Employment and promotion in the City Hall is done through kinship and acquaintances"*

20.7% of the officials surveyed believe that such practices are found in City Hall (sometimes, often or very often). 82.6% of the population surveyed believe that HRM decision-making through nepotistic connections is a common practice at City Hall (converted scale: sometimes, often, very often).

Figure 4.3   **Nepotism in City Hall**

80
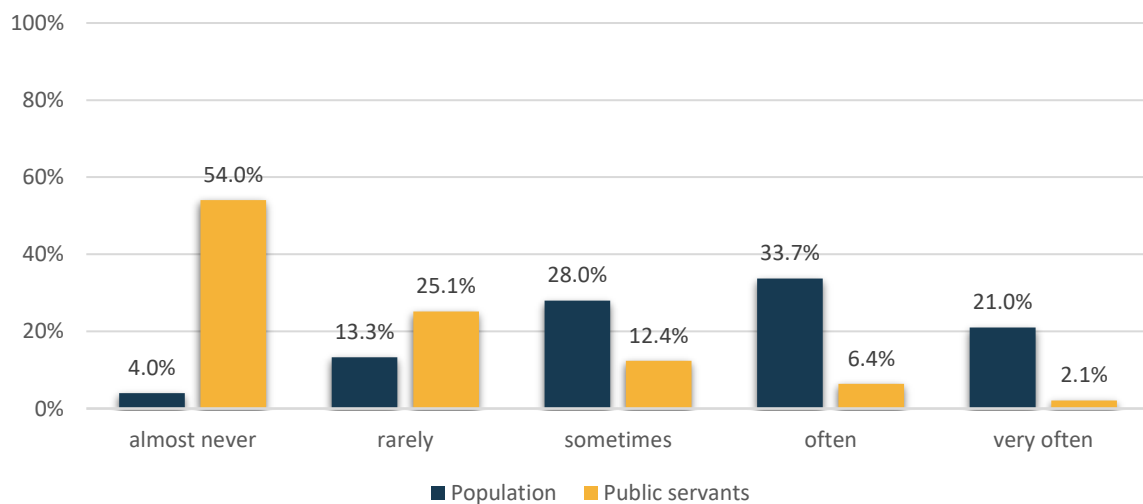
Career advancement, pay and rewards

Although career advancement opportunities in municipal City Halls have been assessed quite critically by City Hall staff, **most deny the political impact on career advancement** in quantitative research.

The degree of political influence on the benefit distribution and promotion process was assessed by the following two questions:

- *"The promotion of an official in my organization is conditioned more by party affiliation than by the competencies and work achievements of the official"* - (M=4.16; SD=1.17; Std. Error of Mean=0.05)

- *"My organization offers additional benefits, mainly to those employees who are affiliated with the ruling party"* – (M=4.47; SD=1.02; Std. Error of Mean=0.04)

* During the analysis the questions are reversed / inverted in a positive direction

The chart below shows the percentage of civil servants on these provisions according to both critical and positive evaluations. *Here we explain that a positive assessment reflects a denial of political influence.*

Figure 4.4   *Political influences on the process of benefit distribution and promotion*
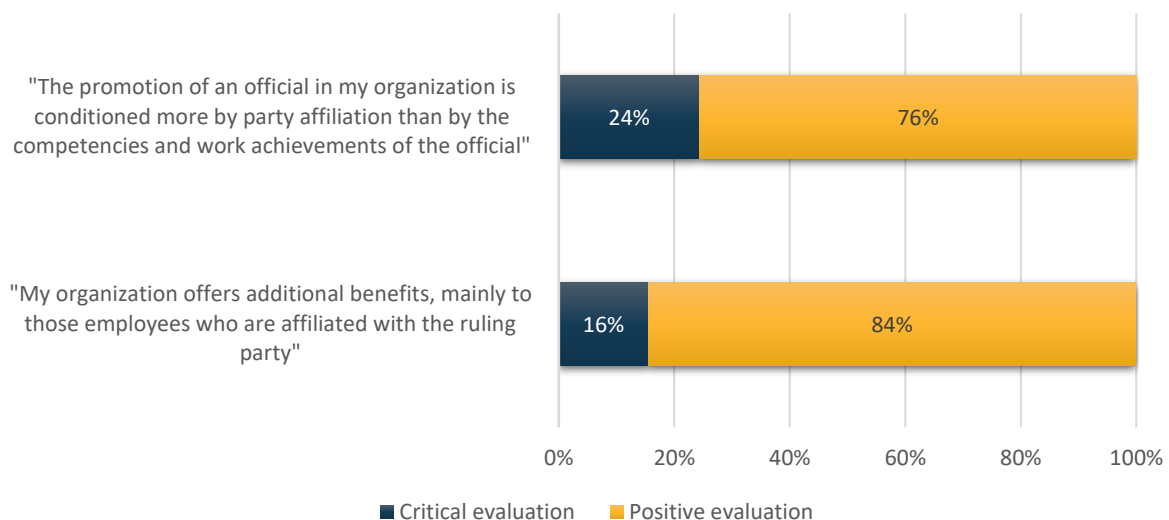
The graph shows that the percentage of employees who consider decisions related to career advancement, incentives and benefit distribution to be politically neutral in municipal City Halls is significantly high; Differences in terms of work experience, category of City Hall staff and managerial position on these questions do not reach the level of statistical significance. These questions were also assessed on the basis of party affiliation: no sharp asymmetry is observed between critical and positive assessments on the basis of party affiliation. This means that regardless of party affiliation, public officials similarly assess the degree of political influence in the process of career advancement, remuneration, and award distribution.

"My organization offers additional benefits, mainly to those employees who are affiliated with the ruling party"

"The promotion of an official in my organization is conditioned more by party affiliation than by the competencies and work achievements of the official"
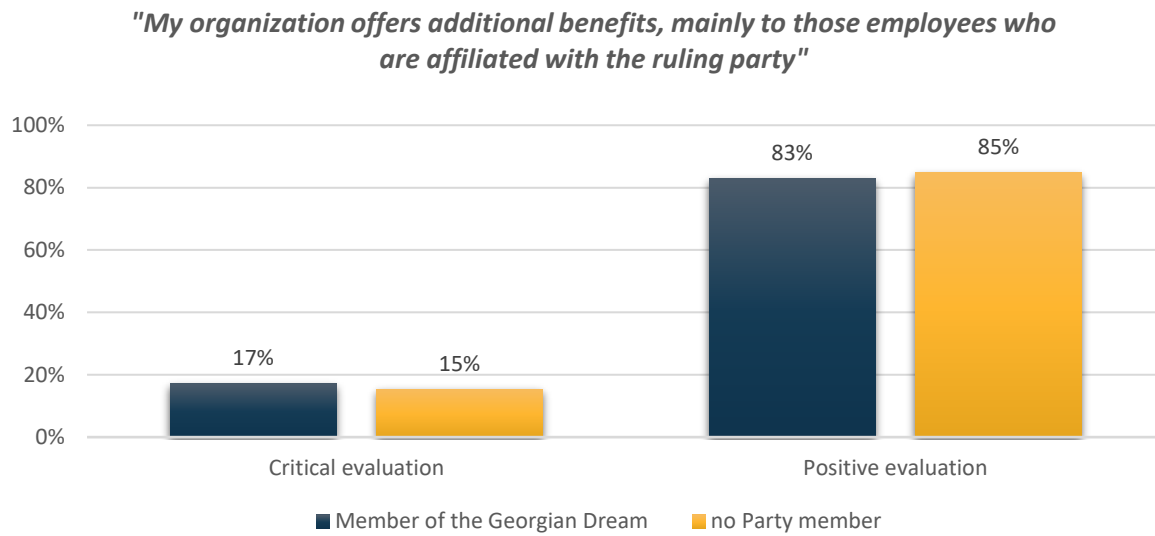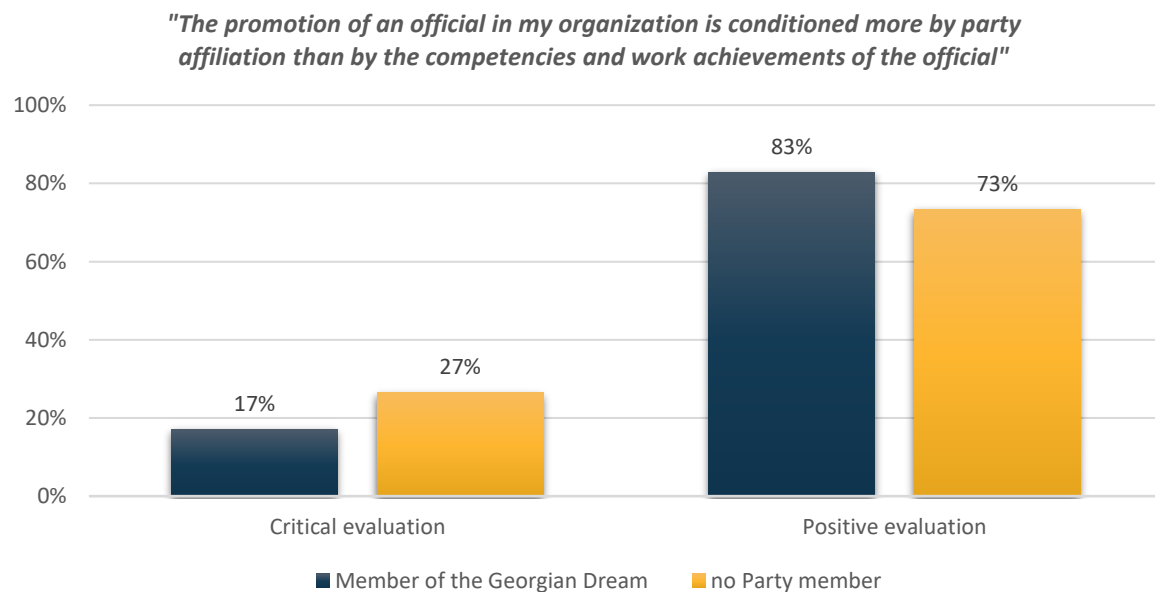
A different vies was expressed in the **qualitative research**. Some of the opinions expressed are consistent with the results of the quantitative research; The assessments of civil servants in the qualitative research were quite cautious and hasteless. Part of the officials avoided discussing this issue and / or limited themselves to such assessments - politically neutral decisions are made in the City Hall. To illustrate political neutrality, officials emphasize the fact that the City Hall has employees with different political orientations ("employees with different political orientations work in our City Hall"). To illustrate freedom from political influence, one example was cited in one of the municipalities as аб employee running for the City Council in an election for a candidate from an

opposition party. "*What more democracy do they want ?!*" "*Without any fear, he publicly expresses his political views, posts photos of opposition party events on social media, which he attends during non-working hours.*" Despite the existence of similar precedents in other municipalities, some employees still talk about politically motivated **HRM decisions**:

"You can come in from the street as a specialist, based on objective selection process, but if you do not have the support of a political organization, you will not be able to become a deputy, for example. There is no other way for the civil service to raise (career) someone. "

"We all know that in order to satisfy party assets after each election, they need to be housed in their main employer - the civil service."

The Population view of political influence on personnel decisions are much more critical. The reality they perceive is fundamentally different and more dramatic - employees are promised promotion if they support the ruling party during the election. Emphasis was placed on the influence of the central government or a political party on HRM decisions, and examples were cited - *"None of the deputies was appointed by the mayor, they sent him without knowing"; "One deputy was appointed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs."* Examples of political influence are the non-renewal of contracts for employees, which mainly occurs in the case of opposition-minded employees (mainly contract employees are meant).

Trainings and Development

The degree of influence of party affiliation on the professional development of employees was assessed. 8% of civil servants indicate that in their municipality no matter which party member or supporter they are, organization equally supports the professional development of all employees. Only 25.6% indicate that the organization sometimes, often, very often or almost always invests more in the development and education of employees who are associated with the ruling political force.

Figure 4.7   *Assessment of the impact of employee political preferences on access to professional development*

25.6%

74.4%

■ Critical evaluation   ■ Positive evaluation
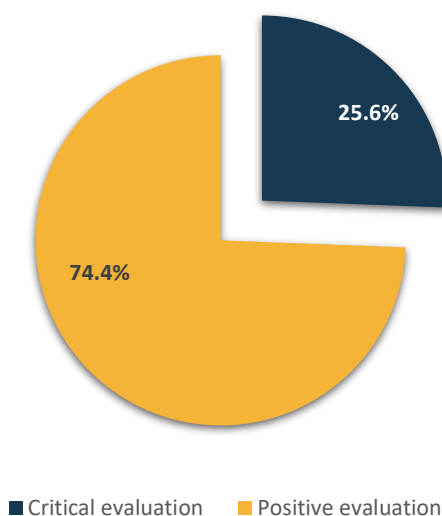
Below are the evaluations of Civil servants by municipalities/districts.

Figure 4.8   *Distribution of civil servants' assessments by municipalities*

- Critical evaluation
- Positive evaluation
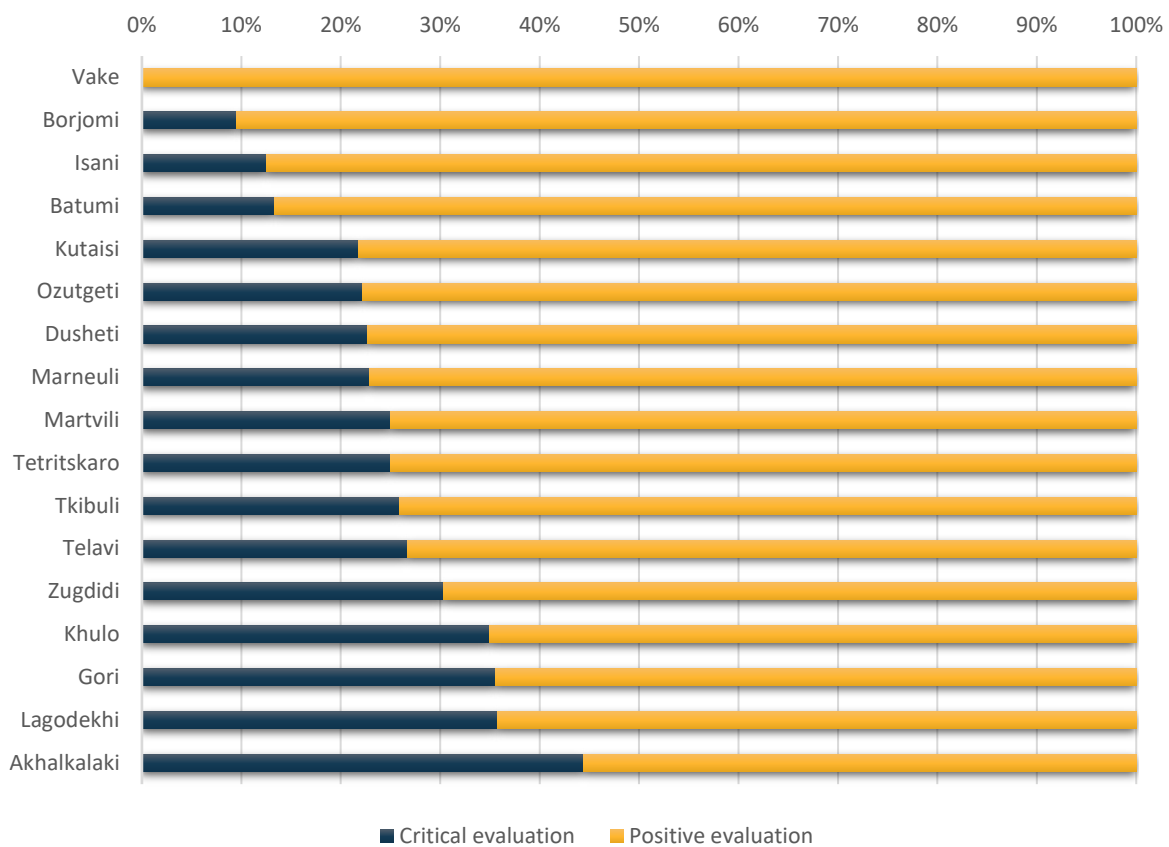
Performance Appraisal

Many critical views were expressed in the study regarding the performance appraisal system. The criticism was mainly directed at its formal nature. It seemed that the performance appraisal process did not affect the formation of organizational justice perceptions of the employees, which suggests that this process is predominantly formal. However, the attached graph shows that approximately 28% of the researched Civil servants believe that the performance appraisal results in the organization is influenced by the political affiliation and / or sympathies of the evaluators. This result can be interpreted in two ways: (1). Political influences are observed even in the municipalities where the evaluation is not formally conducted and the employees are not evaluated homogeneously (all high evaluations). (2). The second explanation is of a more technical nature: the question was formulated reversibly, such questions are often associated with perceptual difficulties, which increases the assessment error. Consequently, we treat this result more carefully and refrain from generalizing.

Here we note that regardless of party affiliation, most employees believe that political sympathies do not affect the evaluation of the results achieved by employees.

Employees' views on political bias in the performance appraisal process

"The evaluation of the results achieved by the employees in my organization is not affected by their political affiliation and / or sympathies"
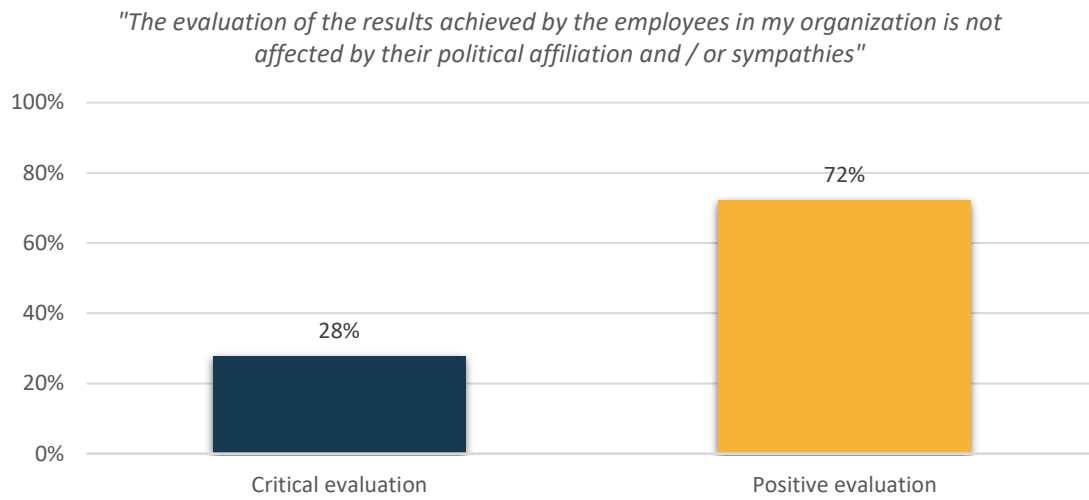
Figure 4.10   **Political influences on the process of performance appraisal by party membership**

"The evaluation of the results achieved by the employees in my organization is not influenced by their political affiliation and / or sympathies."
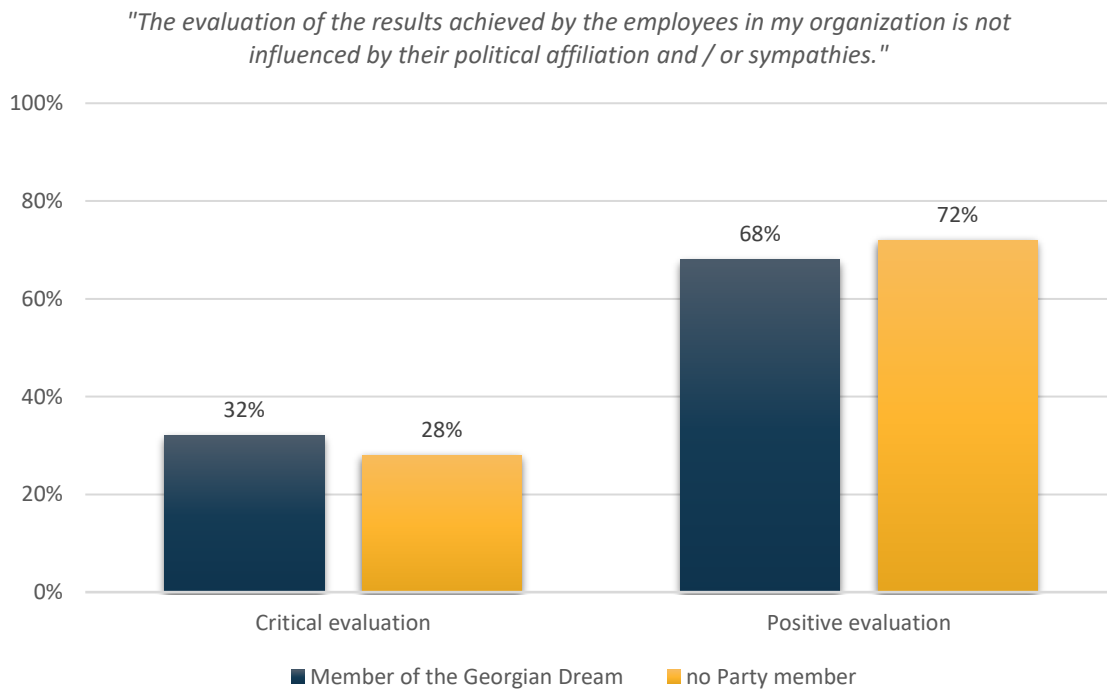
Assessment of HR Processes and Political Influences- HR department Representatives and Population

Those responsible for human resource management categorically deny political influence over these processes. We also note that most of the interviews with human resource management specialists were conducted in a period quite sensitive to political influences, before the elections, and some 2-3 days after the elections, when the degree of politicization in the society reached its maximum.

Most HR representatives note that employees' political tastes do not influence HRM decisions. In their view, all civil servants are equal before the law. He/she has the right to express his/her opinion freely and discrimination due to different views is not noticed in the practice of the City Hall.

Identified HRM processes that, in their estimation, are completely free from political influence. These are: training and development, performance appraisal and incitement. As for the selection and dismissal of personnel, specific cases of political influences are recorded here, however, it was emphasized that only a few cases were mentioned and some of them remained as attempts.

The lack of political influence over the selection and dismissal may have two reasons: first, **the legislative changes made in the civil service reform, which protect the Civil servant from illegal personnel decisions.** This fact was mentioned by many respondents as an important merit of the reform. Civil servants obey the law, no longer fearing that they will be threatened with dismissal when a change of leadership takes place. The second reason may be that most of the personnel is already staffed by a party. Major changes in this regard were made in 2012-2013 and since then the reorganization of the City Hall has been a rare event. Individual cases may still occur during the internal party controversy or a change in party course. The vast majority of respondents categorically deny the existence of any sign of political influence in his organization.

As mentioned above, **the population considers politically motivated personnel decisions to be a common practice.** They are especially dissatisfied with the employment process in the non-profit legal entities of the City Hall. **According to participants in several municipalities, NPOs (Nonprofit organization) have become a "*refuge*" for relatives of the government and activists of the ruling party.**

Positive assessments were expressed in the focus groups of the population as well as criticism. **The position of civil servant has acquired some stability. The population considers this as a positive change in the personnel policy in the City Halls. Political changes will not be followed by massive staff layoffs. *"[The situation] is getting a little better and why: in the past all Civil servants used to change, but now the main part remains, you do not need to develop staff from the beginning, the level of qualification is gradually increasing."*** This circumstance contributes to the increase of institutional memory, at the same time, people hone their competencies by working in the City Hall for a long time.

Within the quantitative research we assessed the dynamics of the two factors describing the degree of political influence by districts, which is presented in the attached graph.

Figure 4.11   Political influences by municipality
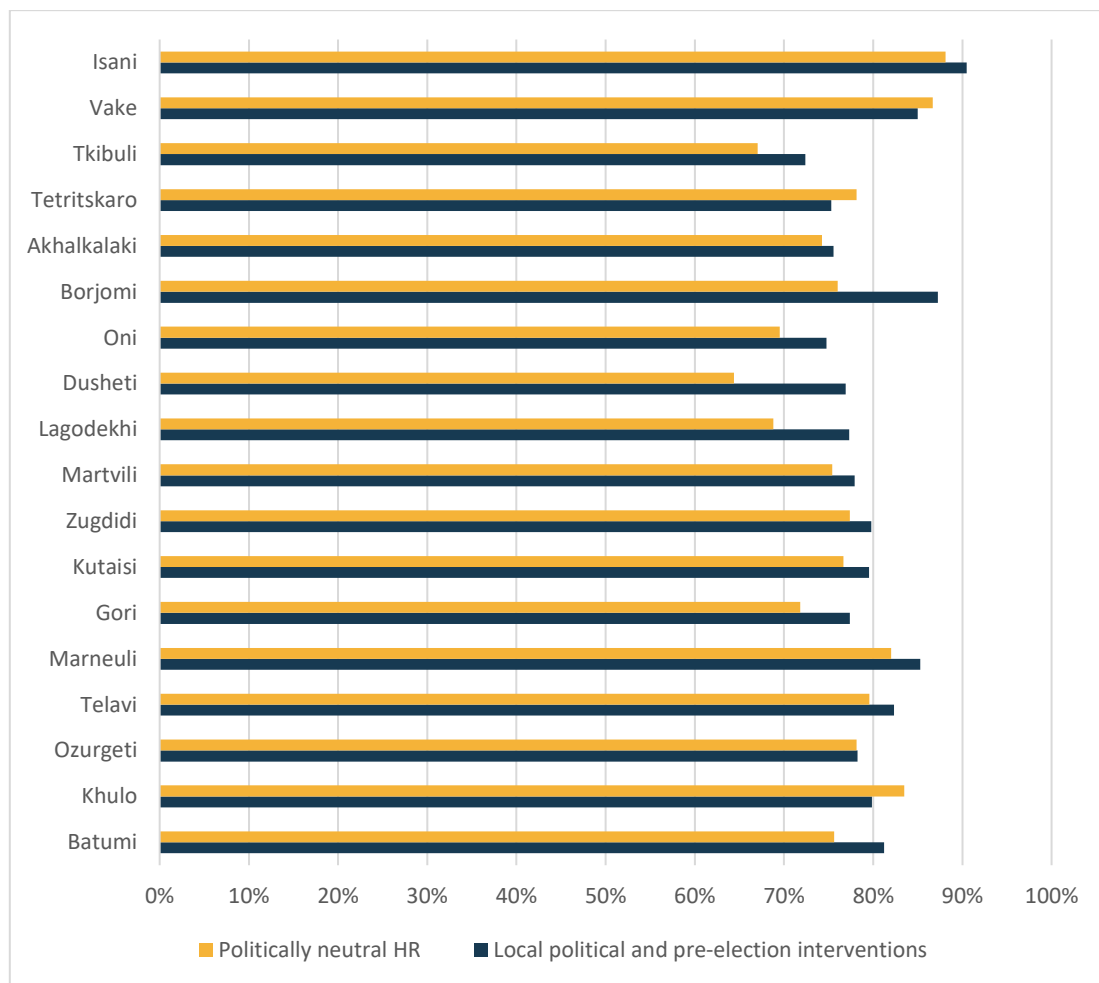
The figure shows the dynamics of two factors describing the degree of political influence by districts; A different number of questions were combined in these two factors, hence the maximum scores are different from each other. In order to make these indicators comparable, we calculated them by the following mechanism: we assessed what percentage of the maximum score is the average score of the districts on each factor; This principle made it possible to compare them with each other.

The complete denial of political influence by some public officials does not objectively reflect the existing trends. Perceptions of the population may even be hyperbolized. One can say that political influences on HRM decisions still remain a significant challenge in civil service, at the same time the practice in some municipalities shows that we also have positive dynamics. In this regard, new regulations are important to provide greater protection for civil servants from such influences. However, as noted in the second chapter of this report, public officials are adapted to political influences and to the existing reality, and for the most part these influences do not create a sense of injustice and protest or, despite legal protection, give them a sense of individual political accountability (Regardless of which political force is in government), which, among other circumstances, hinders the achievement of the reform goals.

Involvement in pre-election agitation and activities

The attitudes of the population towards the institution are significantly influenced by the degree of political activity of civil servants, which in the research is reflected by the involvement in the pre-election agitation.

The majority of City Hall employees indicate that they have never been involved in pre-election agitation and activities. It should be noted that according to this factor, individuals in different groups (e.g., those who have never been involved in agitation and those who are currently involved) similarly value the degree of freedom from political influences in City Hall. According to the results of the one-way analysis of variance, both factors describing political influences (local influences and politically neutral HRM policies) are evaluated similarly. The difference is not statistically significant.

Even in the *population survey,* the degree of political activity of the respondents (eg, involvement in pre-election agitation) does not affect the assessment of the degree of political influence in the City Hall. Politically active and neutral respondents assessment of the degree of political influence in City Hall is the same.

Figure 4.12   *Involvement of the population and City Hall employees in pre-election activities*

„Do you participate in pre-election agitation or other pre-election activities? "
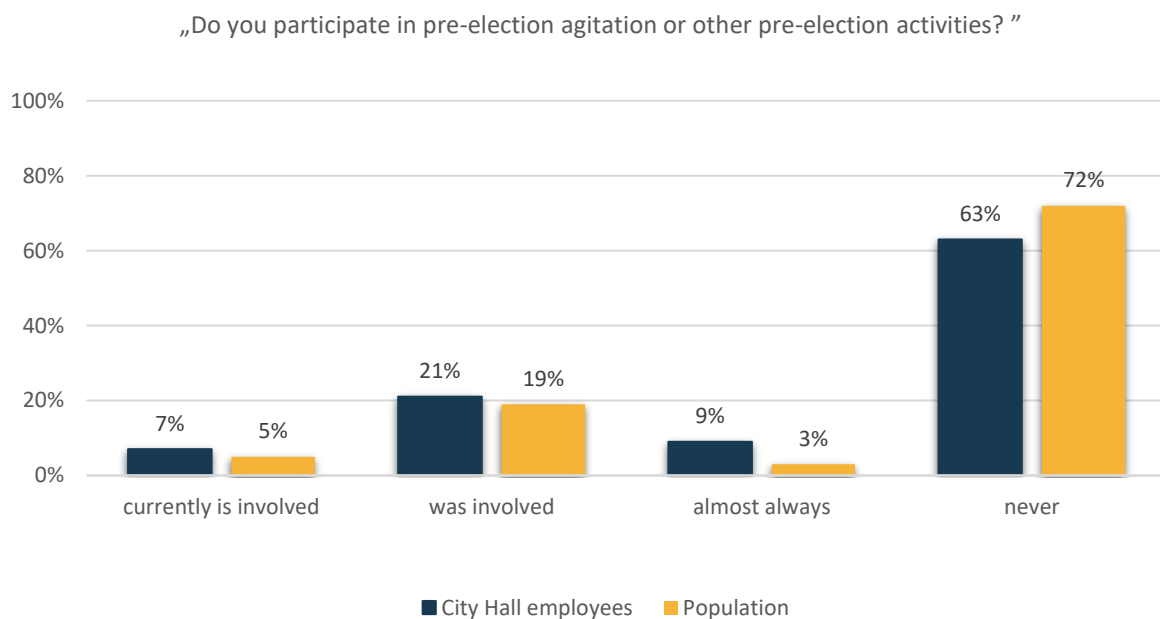
When we changed the focus of the question and asked how much *other civil servants* are involved in the election process, we got the following picture: a quarter of civil servants think that City Hall employees are directly or indirectly involved in agitation during the pre-election period; In this case, too, the population's assessments of the same issue are substantially more critical.

Figure 4.13   *Involvement of civil servants in pre-election processes*
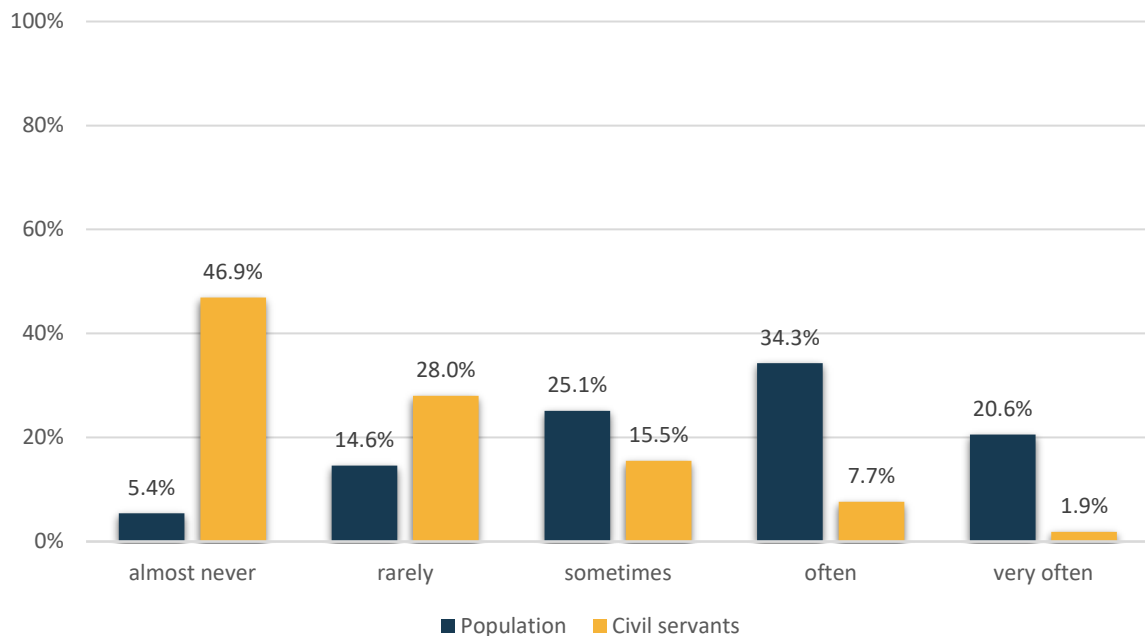
The majority of City Hall employees believe **that involvement in pre-election processes during non-working hours** is based on a free will / desire of a person. The opinion was also expressed that the City Hall employee should not express his / her political preferences, should not be involved in political activities, even in his / her free time. According to them, this will change the view of the population, the perception that the ruling party uses the staff of the City Hall as an "administrative resource" during the elections. City Hall employees are aware of the critical attitude of the population, however, they blame the politicized and oppositional media for the formation of such an attitude. According to them, the media does not cover the work of members of the opposition party in the City Hall, because it is unprofitable.

Most of the municipalities speak quite honestly and critically about the challenges in various areas of human resource management, and make unequivocal and unanimous statements about pressure and coercion during the pre-election period - *"We are the most free in terms of pressure ...", "No involvement, no demands, no missions...".* One thing that has changed substantially since the previous government is the lack of pressure and coercion. *"This is the greatest merit and achievement of this government."* An employee of the City Hall, who is an agitator of the opposition party, denies any kind of coercion regarding voting or involvement in the pre-election process *("No fear, no persecution - nothing like that").*

Such an opinion was also expressed: in terms of vulnerability to political influence, a lot depends on individuals (both superiors, ordinary employees and job seekers). If a person finds himself employed only on the basis of "flag waving", he will be tasked with involvement in political processes, but if a person deserves a place in the civil service with his competence and professionalism, he has the opportunity to protect himself from being involved in these processes. An important filter in this regard should be the personnel selection process. If people are not employed based on their own competencies, they run the risk of becoming a "consumption resource" in political processes. The use

of civil servants in political (pre-election) processes is done with "soft power" - it is not a direct coercion, and a lot depends on how "resilient you will".

Evaluations of HR department representatives

The assessments of the representatives of the HR department are as follows: in the City Hall they freely express their different political views and opposing opinions, without any fear or anxiety. Some of the respondents point to the law and note that according to the law on civil service, a civil servant is prohibited from political agitation during working hours. There is a rather high fine for this and all civil servants are well aware of this. The pre-election period is marked by political activism and, consequently, public officials are also involved in political agitation, however, in order to avoid breaking the law, they enjoy their own leave during this period. It should be noted that the first reaction of respondents to a question of political nature is a reference to the law, which they say restricts their involvement in political activities during working hours, although they also note that during non-working hours, everyone has the right to engage in activities they deem necessary.

There is an opinion that public officials use paid or unpaid leave to participate in pre-election processes. It is noteworthy that some of the potential respondents were not able to participate in the research during the pre-election period due to their leave. Below is the number of employees on leave in 2020 (parliamentary election period) and 2021 (self-government election period) by months. See the following graphs.

As can be seen from the graphs, on the one hand, the number of vacations increases in the summer, which is quite logical; Second, the highest coefficient is observed in the pre-election and direct election months (September, October).

HR Analytics

Figure 4.14   Distribution of leave of civil servants employed in the City Hall in 2020 by months

90
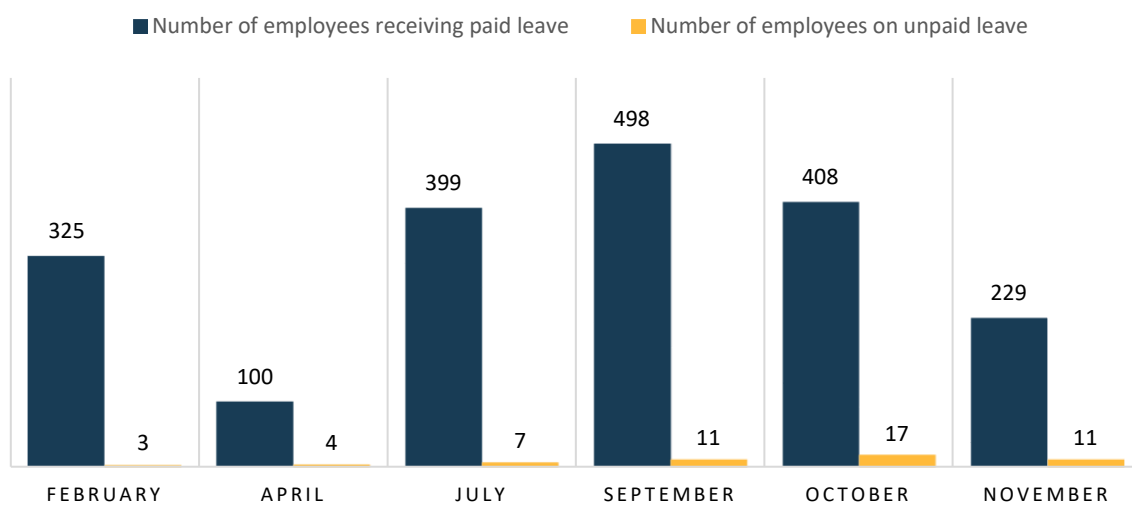
Figure 4.15 *Distribution of leave of civil servants employed in the City Hall in 2021 by months*
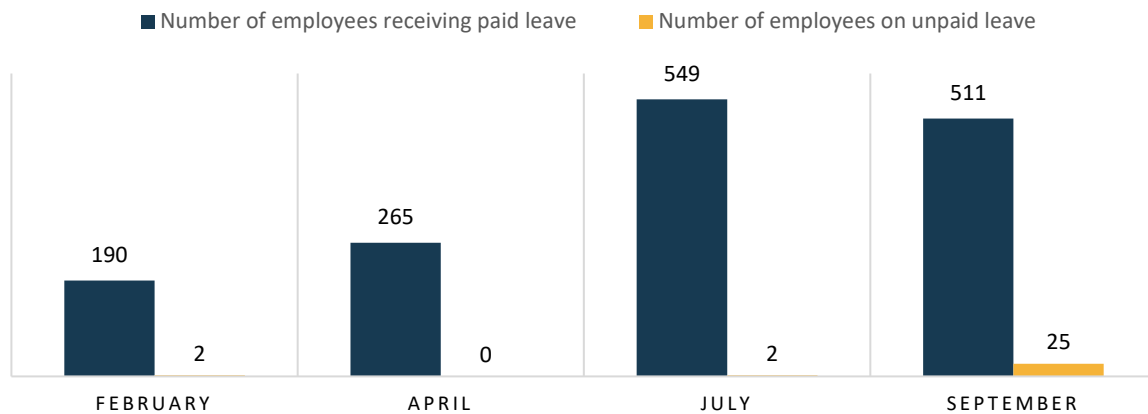
As the respondents noted, involvement in agitation is voluntary and no kind of coercion really takes place - *"What is the result of forced agitation, the agitator must be imbued with those ideas ...".* Perhaps it is important to note that in small municipalities, more personal relationships or kinship takes place than political influence, hence agitation also makes no sense, everyone is well aware of each other's political sentiments and views.

If we summarize this part of the research, we can say that the cases of *forced* involvement in the pre-election process are substantially reduced. However, public officials are involved in these processes voluntarily, or out of individual responsibility to the ruling power, and, for this purpose, the practice of taking leave is also quite common.

Political configuration of civil servants

This time, we will discuss the political configuration of civil servants, which provides additional information on the political context of the City Hall.

Usually, in an organizational environment, personal preferences have a significant impact on employees' perceptions and attitudes. The civil service, according to the regulations, should be an institution completely free from political influence, however, the head of the organization, the mayor and the deputy mayors are political officials[4], which is why they are affiliated with a specific political force for the population. This to some extent causes dissonance both in the City Hall employees and the population. On the one hand, the City Hall must be a politically neutral organization, providing both employees and citizens with absolutely equal services regardless of their political tastes, and on the other hand, some leadership affiliation with a particular political force, regardless of official responsibility, towards them (especially City Hall employees) shows a sense of accountability.

The political configuration of employees and the population is an important factor in analyzing the attitudes toward the City Hall as an institution. 78% of public officials surveyed indicate that they are not members of any political party. 21% are members of the ruling party. The share of representatives

---

[4] Law of Georgia on Civil Service, Article 3, Subparagraph I.

of other political parties is 1%. Consequently, only the first two groups are used in the comparative analysis.

Figure 4.16   Political Configuration of Civil servants
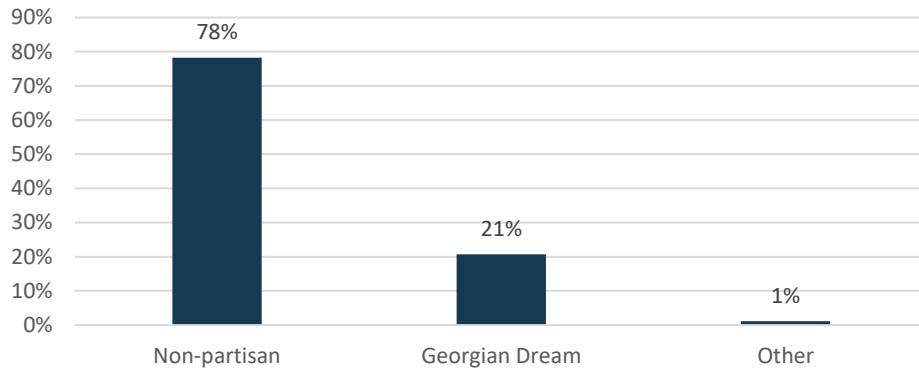
Political affiliation and differences in attitudes and perceptions of civil servants

How does the party affiliation of City Hall employees affect their assessments? The only factor that is different according to a civil servant's party affiliation is the perception of organizational reputation. Public officials who are members of the Political Party (PP) "Georgian Dream" value the reputation of the City Hall more positively (M = 25.44, SD = 3.9) than those who do not belong to any party (M = 24.47, SD = 4.3). The difference is statistically significant (t (528) = 2.17, p <0.05).

Factors such as perceptions of job meaningfulness, organizational commitment, attitudes towards HR processes, local political influences, and politically neutral personnel decisions are assessed similarly by all public officials regardless of their affiliation with political parties.

According to the popular opinion, the opportunity to be employed in the City Hall under a labor and administrative contract is mainly used for the employment of party assets. Based on the research data, we tried to find out whether there is a basis for this opinion - are administrative and labor contracts used to employ party assets? First, we present a sampling composition by the type of employment. As can be seen from the graph, the majority of respondents (83%) surveyed are professional civil servants.

Figure 4.17   Sampling composition by the type of employment at City Hall
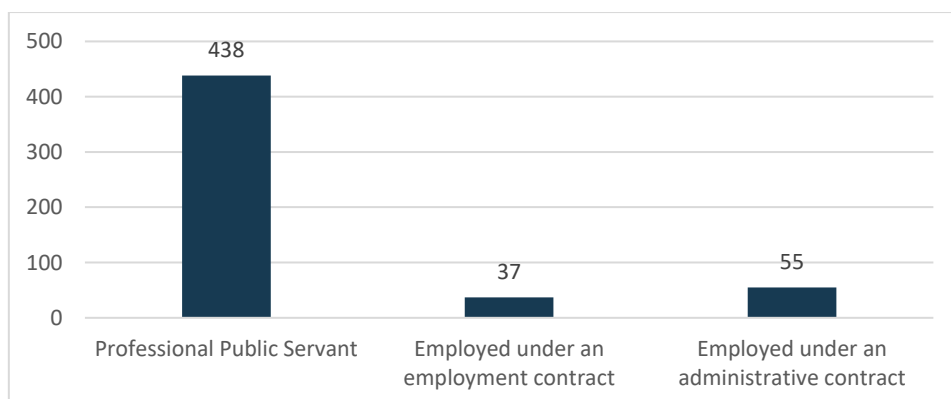
According to the affiliation of the political party, these data are presented in the following graph. As can be seen from the graph, most professional civil servants are not members of any party. In those employed under employment and administrative contracts, the asymmetry in associating with a political party changes in favor of the ruling force. This result can be considered as an empirical evidence of the above mentioned assumption.

Figure 4.18   Political configuration of employees in city halls / boards
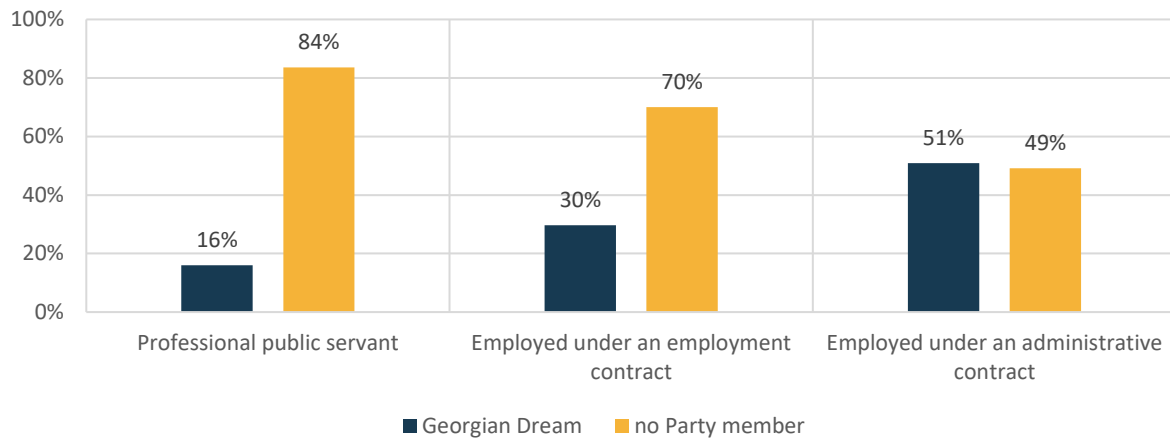
According to the form of employment in the City Hall (professional civil servant, employment contract, administrative contract employee), the difference between employees' perceptions on the degree of political influence in civil service and other target factors (organizational justice, organizational commitment, organizational reputation) was assessed. The results of the analysis show that the perception of these factors is not different according to the form of employment.

The questionnaire included several questions that indirectly point to employees' preferences for political neutrality. One such question concerns the employment of members of the opposition party in civil service. 11% of City Hall employees believe that representatives of opposition parties should not be employed in the civil service. However, in the two groups identified according to this view *(supporting or opposing the employment of opposition party members in the City Hall)*, opinions about political influence in the City Hall are similar.

Figure 4.19   Opinion of City Hall employees on the employment of representatives of opposition parties in the civil service
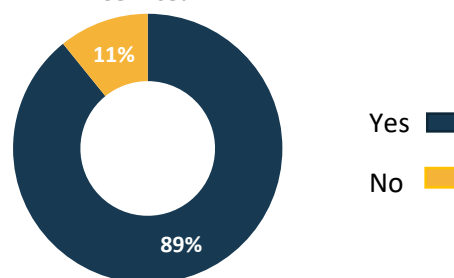
It should be noted that the perception of employees in the City Hall about the political neutrality of HRM decisions differs statistically according to length of service ($F_{(4, 531)} = 4.23$, $p < 0.01$). The trend is as followes: the longer an employee's experience at City Hall, the more critical he/she is. More precisely, a statistically significant different result is found between the opinions of the minimum and maximum duration groups of seniority. In particular, individuals with up to 1 year and 1-2 years of experience are more optimistic about the degree of political neutrality than those who have worked for City Hall for more than 10 years and are better acquainted with organizational policies and practices. The graph below makes this trend more visible.

Figure 4.20   *Politically neutral HRM decisions - average scores of the factor according to the length of service of the employees in the City Hall*
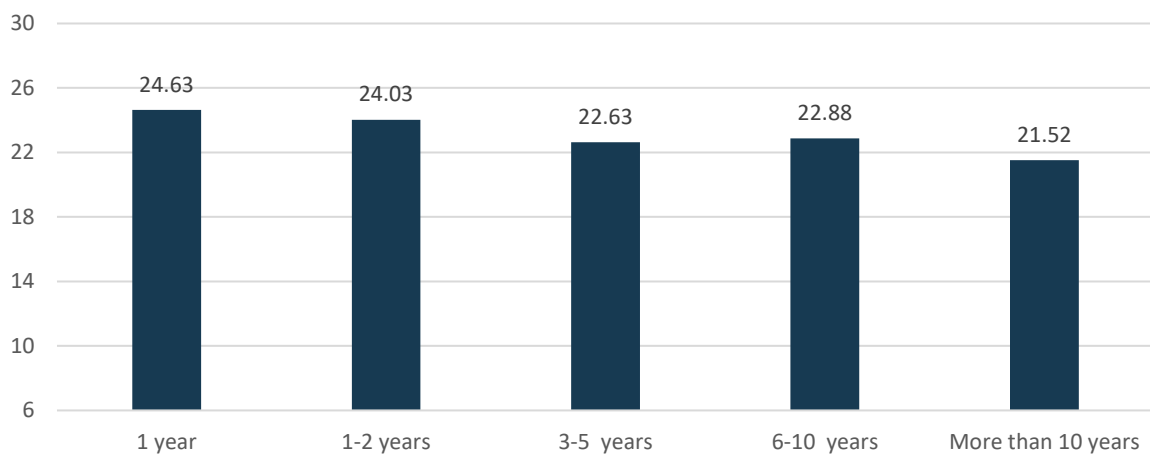
This result can be explained as follows: As the length of service increases, so does the expectation that the employee's hard work and dedication will be converted into a monetary or non-monetary reward. As experience increases, so does the ability to monitor and evaluate personnel decisions made each year. Individuals with relatively more seniority may not be declared, but latently still have the expectation that they will have an advantage over new employees when making incentive and promotion decisions. When these expectations are not met, one of the possible reasons for their own failure is the existence of a politically biased climate in City Hall. **We can not rule out the impact of the negative experience of politically motivated personnel decisions regarding employees**. And because of these negative experiences, their expectations and assessments may not change substantially in the wake of the decline in political influence. As for persons with less than 2 years of experience, during this period, usually, the employee has less expectations of promotion and rewards, beyond rare exceptions, the likelihood of achieving something special is also small. Consequently, they have less experience in evaluating important personnel decisions from their own perspective, and may have less information about them.

Comparison of the vision of the population and City Hall employees - intergroup analysis

A similar focus of the research tools used in City Hall employees and population groups allows for a comparative analysis of their opinion. It is doubly interesting how congruent two target groups evaluate the same institution. In one case, employees who are directly affected by the impact of the organization's human resource management policies and practices, and on the other hand, the population that draws conclusions about organizational practices based on the services received. Accordingly, the next section provides a comparative analysis of the vision of City Hall employees and the population.

The analysis of intergroup comparisons was done using an independent t-test. The attitudes of the City Hall employees and the population about how much they consider the City Hall to be an organization free from political influence were compared.

The results of the analysis show that the difference is statistically significant when evaluating political influences. **The population is essentially critical in these assessments** - they (M = 26.7, SD = 7.8) perceive the degree of freedom from political influence of HRM decisions in the City Hall much more critical than public officials (M = 48.4, SD = 9.2) (t (1025) = - 44.7, p <0.01). **According to officials, the political preferences of employees are not taken into account when making HRM decisions, and in this process all employees are equal, while the population believes that personnel decisions are politically motivated.**

Figure 4.21   The difference between the perceptions of public officials and the population on the degree of freedom from political influence of the City Hall
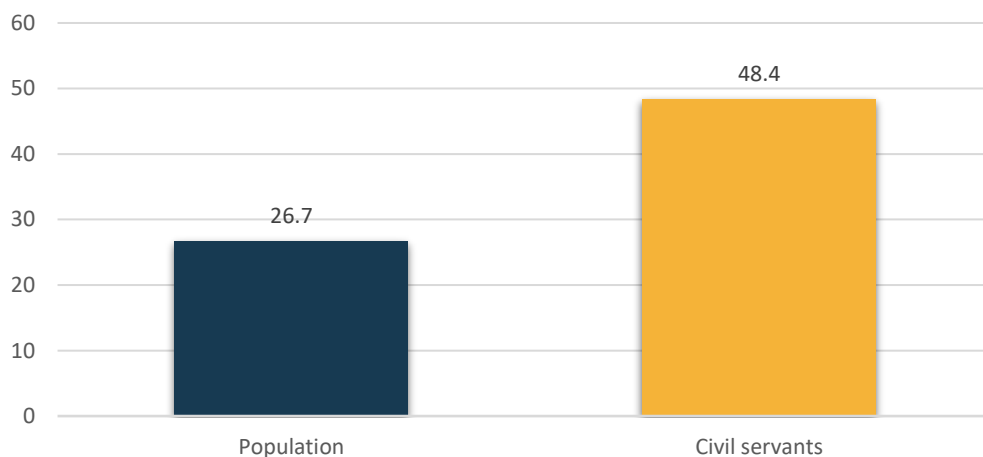
Population estimates are also very critical in qualitative research. According to them, the City Hall and the City Council are highly obedient to the central government. Therefore, the fact that the City Council (Sakrebulo) in one of the municipalities repeatedly rejected the request of the Ministry of Economy to sell specific objects was evaluated as a positive, unusual event. It was noted that there are cases when pro-opposition people are fired.

The quantitative research also assessed the differences between the opinions of the population and public officials according to the different items of the questionnaire. The trend is similar in all cases - public officials evaluate the HRM processes very positively and consider the City Hall as an organization free from political influence, while the assessments of the population are more critical. Below are graphical representations of these relationships.

Figure 4.22   *City Hall staff and population assessment of different processes*

	City Hall employees	Population
Relationships and acquaintances have no influence on employment and promotion in the City Hall	4.22	2.46
The promotion of an employee in the City Hall is determined more by the competence and work achievements than by his/her political affiliation	4.16	2.64
I appreciate the work of my municipality	4.01	2.66
In case of a change of government, the civil servants employed in the municipality will not change	3.58	2.54
Civil servants employed by the City Hall during the pre-election period are not involved in agitation	4.1	2.99
City Hall has a good reputation among the population	4.02	2.83

■ City Hall employees   ■ Population

Qualitative research has also confirmed that the population is more critical of the activities of the City Hall and civil servants than the employees themselves. If, on the one hand, public officials may be biased, members of the population have little information about what is going on within the organization. In addition to intensive, in-depth evaluation of both target groups, we tried to compensate for these shortcomings by triangulating a variety of research methods and analysis techniques.

Relation to organizational justice

Perceptions of organizational justice are presented in different forms in the study. One is the one-dimensional construct of justice, which describes the general perception of civil service employees about organizational justice; Also, there are three separate dimensions, distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, that address different areas of organizational practice. As described in the theoretical framework of the study, distributive justice describes the attitude of employees towards the fairness of the distribution of labor outcomes; Procedural justice assesses the fairness of organizational processes on the basis of which decisions about the distribution of labor outcomes are made; Interactional justice describes the attitude of employees towards the practice of communication between management and subordinates in the organization. Accordingly, in the data analysis process we use 4 different variables to describe the perception of justice: 1. General organizational fairness; 2. Distributive justice; 3. Procedural justice; 4. Interactional justice.

In this section, we will try to answer the question of how the perception of organizational justice is a function of an organizational environment free from political influence - how does the political neutrality of the organizational environment or politically motivated personnel decisions affect employees' perceptions of justice?

Analysis of Civil servants' View

Initially, using multiple linear regression analysis, we assessed the role of the three key factors identified in the Officer Questionnaire in the perception of organizational justice. These factors are: *politically neutral environment, local policy interventions and HRM practices*. Due to the complexity of the organizational environment, we considered all three factors together as a prerequisite for fairness. This result of the study is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. HRM practices have been found to make a significant contribution to the perception of organizational justice. It describes the poor practices of selection, promotion, incentives, performance appraisal, training and development at City Hall; A politically neutral work environment that assesses the degree of political influence on HRM processes also has an impact on the perception of organizational justice, although this influence is relatively weak; And local political interventions, which reflect the influence of the majoritarian, the governor, as well as the involvement of officials in the pre-election process, have no impact on the perception of organizational justice.

The conclusion is that the perception of organizational justice from the factors associated with political pressure is influenced only by a neutral political environment - *the more politically neutral and impartial employee considers the personnel decision-making practices and organizational atmosphere, the fairer the organization is in his/her eyes. The assessment of local political influence does not affect the perception of justice.*

The influence of these two factors associated with political pressure was also assessed in relation to the three types of justice (distributive, interactional, procedural). Similar trends have been identified. A stronger predictor in this case, too, is a politically neutral personnel decisions and the organizational environment. **The influence of politically neutral personnel decisions and organizational environment is on average 2 times stronger than the effect of the factor of local political influence.**

Relation to organizational commitment

Organizational commitment in the study is presented in the form of a composite variable, which is obtained on the basis of combining the scores of the four items assessing commitment. These items are: *"I feel comfortable in this organization"; "I believe that the success of the organization is my success"; "I defend my organization when it is criticized"; "I have a feeling that this organization is the same 'home' for me."*

Based on multiple linear regression analysis, we assessed which of the two factors of political influences was the strongest predictor of organizational commitment. Political influences were found to account for 28% of the variation in organizational commitment scores ($R^2=0.28$, $F(2, 533)=102.4$, $p<0.001$). This is less than in the case of the perception of organizational justice; It can be argued that predicting employees' perceptions of organizational justice based on information about the degree of freedom from political influence of the civil service is more reliable, with a higher degree of accuracy, than assessing the level of organizational commitment. However, after subjective perceptions of the meaningful work were added into the model along with political influences, the share of variation explained increased to 53% ($R^2=0.53$, $F(3, 533)=200$, $p<0.001$), **The strongest predictor of organizational commitment is the perception of the meaningful work** ($β=0.58$, $t=16.9$, $p<0.001$). The result is quite logical. The formation of a sense of commitment is influenced not only by organizational factors, such as the degree of freedom from political influence in this case, but also by personal preferences as to how valuable the work is perceived to be. It is a valid conclusion that belonging to an organization is conditioned more by the perception of the meaningful work than by the degree of perceived political influence. Organizational commitment can be defined as employee drive, identification with the organization. A sense of belonging and identification is usually formed on the basis of shared values and goals (Cohen, 2007).

Relation to meaningful work

Subjective perception of the meaningful work in the study is presented in the form of a composite variable, which is the accumulated score of 4 items. The questions are: *1. "I like what I do at work"; 2. "I feel I am doing a valuable job"; 3. "My work gives me hope for the future"; 4. "My work brings positive changes to the population."*

Like organizational commitment, the degree of freedom from political influence explains 25% of the variation in the meaningful work scale ($R^2=0.25$, $F(2, 533)=88.9$, $p<0.001$). A stronger factor in this case, too, is the politically neutral HRM processes and the organizational environment ($β=0.37$, $t=8.25$, $p<0.001$). We can conclude that the subjective perception of the meaningful work is influenced by how politically neutral the personnel decisions and organizational environment in the City Hall are, how much the employees think that the political preferences of the employees do not influence the incentives and relationships, trust and cooperation. There is a statistically significant relationship between the factor of local political influence and the subjective perception of the meaningful work, however, this relationship is relatively weak $β=0.2$, $t=4.48$, $p<0.001$).

Employees who believe that: 1. The environment in the organization is mostly stable; 2. Pre-election processes do not have a negative impact on the organizational climate, and 3. Workforce change does not depend on a change of government, they perceive their work as more valuable than those who negatively assess these factors. **The more politically neutral the organizational environment, the more City Hall employees believe they are doing a worthwhile job and their work brings positive changes to the population.**

Models representing complex relationships

Usually, the attitudes and moods of individuals in everyday life are determined by different combinations of factors and not any of them independently. This section assesses the relationship between the degree of freedom from political influence, the perception of organizational justice, the formation of organizational commitment and reputation, and the formation of a subjective perception of meaningful work. Below are the models of simple mediation analysis and serial mediation analysis.

Using simple mediation analysis, 7 models reflecting the relationship between target variables were tested. All of them were confirmed. In particular, the perception of organizational justice is a mediator in the relationship between the degree of freedom from political influence and, on the one hand, organizational commitment (model 1) and, on the other hand, organizational reputation (model 2). This means that the lower the perceived degree of political influence, the more fairly the employees perceive the organization. This has a positive effect on the formation of organizational commitment (model 1). Employees become more attached to an organization they consider fair. The perception of justice is conditioned by the low degree of political influence. The fairer the employees consider the organization, the higher the reputation of the organization in their perception (model 2). Below is a graphical representation of the relationships. Arrows indicate the direction of impact.

Diagram 4. 1 **Simple Mediation Model - Mediator: Organizational Justice**
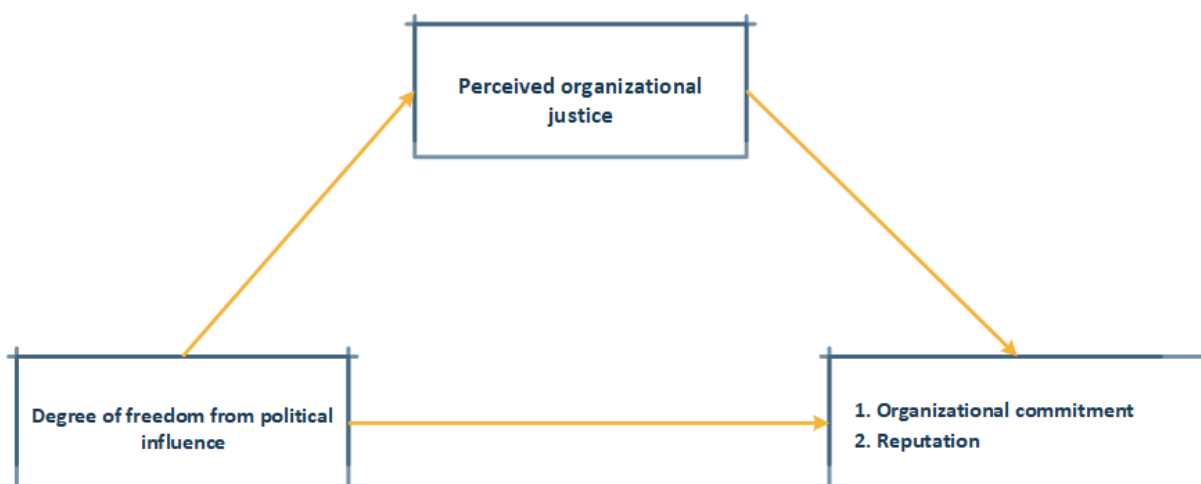
It is interesting to note that on the one hand, the link between the degree of freedom from political influence and organizational commitment and, on the other hand, the degree of freedom from political influence and organizational reputation is also mediated by a subjective perception of meaningful work. The less politically biased an organization is, the more an employee thinks he or she is doing something worthwhile, important, and beneficial to the community. This in turn increases

both the degree of identification with the organization as well as the organizational reputation of the employee.

Diagram 4.2 Simple Mediation Model - Mediator: A Subjective Perception of meaningfull work
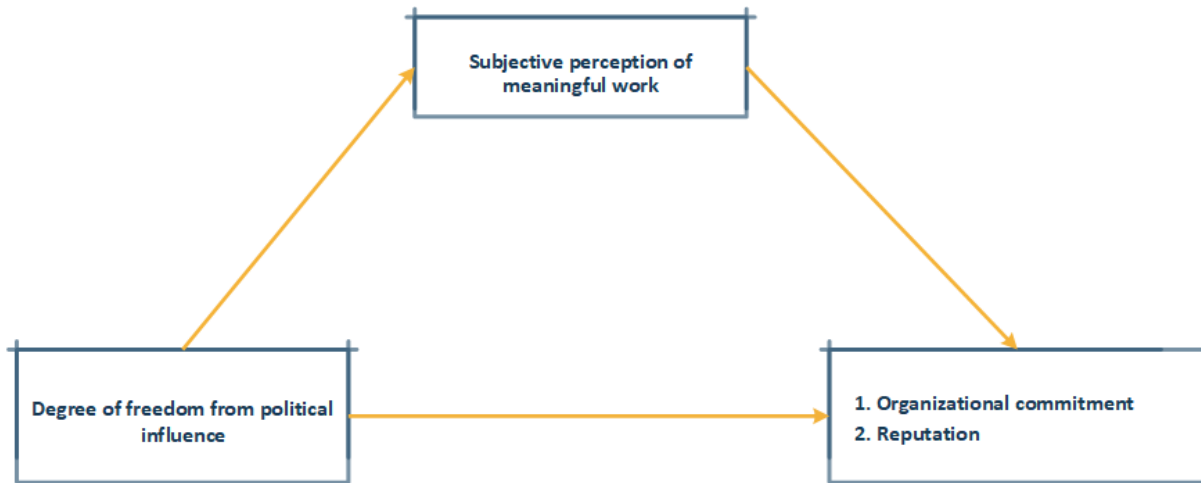
We also assessed serial (sequential) mediation relationships between the degree of freedom from political influence, organizational justice, commitment, and reputation. Within a serial mediation model, two (or more) mediating factors are represented between the independent variable and the dependent variable. This model actually assesses three different mediation approaches, namely: 1. The mediated effect of the perception of organizational justice on the relationship between the degree of freedom from political influence and organizational reputation; 2. The mediated effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between the degree of freedom from political influence and organizational reputation; 3. The influence of the perception of organizational justice and organizational commitment on the relationship between the degree of freedom from political influence and organizational reputation.

The results of the analysis show that all three mediated relations were confirmed. Organizational justice and organizational commitment serially, sequentially mediate the link between the degree of freedom from political influence and organizational reputation. The model explains 47% of the variation (R^2=0.47, F(1, 534)=486.96, p<.001), which is quite a high for a similar complex model. The results of the analysis show that the more politically neutral the employees perceive the organization, the more fairly they evaluate the practices, procedures and communication style within the organization. And the more fairly they perceive the organization, the higher the degree of their organizational commitment, drive, identification, which, in turn, improves employee perception of organization's reputation. The image below will help you to clearly understand the relationship between the variables.
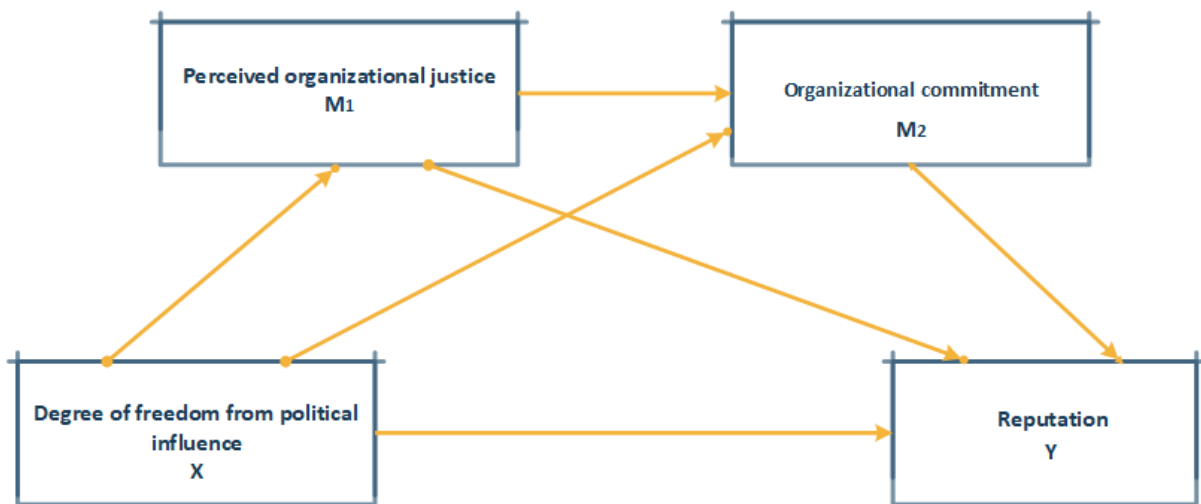
Table 4. 1 **Serial Mediation Model: The Impact of Perceptions of Organizational Justice and Organizational Commitment on the Relationship between the degree of Freedom from Political Influence and Organizational Reputation**

Dependent Variable: Organizational Reputation					
$R^2=0.47$, $F(1, 534)=486.96$, $p<0.001$					
Variables	***B***	***SE***	***T***	***p***	***95% CI***
Predictor (Direct Effect): Degree of freedom from political influences	.19***	.016	11.3	.000	[.15, .22]
Mediator 1. Organizational Justice	.10***	.02	5.1	.000	[.06, .14]
Mediator 2. Organizational Commitment	1.71***	.21	8.1	.000	[1.3, 2.1]
Indirect Effect	Effect[5]	*BootSE*	*T*	*p*	*Boot 95%CI*
Indirect Effect 1: Degree of freedom from political influences → Organizational Justice → Organizational Reputation	.11	.03			[.16, .17]
Indirect Effect 2: Degree of freedom from political influences → Organizational Commitment → Organizational Reputation	.11	.02			[.07, .16]
Indirect Effect 3: Degree of freedom from political influences → Organizational Justice → Organizational Commitment → Organizational Reputation	.03	.01			[.01, .05]
* = p < .05 **= p < .01 ***=p < .001					
A. F. Hayes "PROCESS", Model №6; (N=536)					

To summarize this part of the quantitative research, we will see that from two factors associated with political influences, a politically neutral environment plays an important role in the perception of organizational justice, organizational commitment, and meaningful work. The impact of local

---

[5] Completely standardized indirect effects of X on Y

interventions is statistically insignificant in most cases. In mediation models, it indirectly (through organizational justice or perception of meaningfull work) affects organizational commitment and reputation.

Summary of Chapter 4

The introduction of civil service free from political influence at the municipal level has some positive dynamics in the example of municipal City Halls, which is reflected in the prevention of coercive mechanisms for involving civil servants in the pre-election process and in reducing the practice of politically stipulated HRM decision-making (selection, promotion and dismissal); However, political influences remain one of the main challenges facing civil services at the municipal level. According to a large number of public officials and human resource management specialists, political influence in the municipal City Halls has been substantially reduced, however, the population is still critical and believes that the degree of politicization and nepotism in the City Hall is high. The positive results mentioned by public officials are less visible to the population.

The situation is different at the municipal level. In the municipalities included in the study, there are visible examples of reduced political influence, as well as clearly expressed negative practices. The high level of involvement of civil servants in the pre-election processes is maintained, however, in compliance with the law and regulations. This is evidenced by the growing number of vacations in the pre-election period and by the opinion of local experts and the population that the selection process in the city halls has become more meritocratic, although NPOs are still used to employ political supporters.

Legislative protection from political influence has partially and / or almost relieved public officials of pressure; Years of experience and collective memory, however, have made public officials less sensitive to political influence at the municipal level, as evidenced by the fact that local political interventions and involvement in electoral processes do not cause them to feel unfair. Whereas, the practice of human resource management in the City Hall and the degree of political influence on this practice (politically neutral environment) is an important determinant of organizational justice (especially the practice of human resources). We should not understand that local interventions have no effect on employee attitudes, they affect the degree of commitment to the organization itself, the subjective perception of the value of work (the less local interventions, the more valuable the work is perceived) and the quality of life of employees.

Legislative protection from political influence has partially and / or almost relieved public officials of pressure; Years of experience and collective memory, however, have made public officials less sensitive to political influence at the municipal level, as evidenced by the fact that local political interventions and involvement in electoral processes **do not cause them to feel unfair**. Whereas, the practice of human resource management in the City Hall and the degree of political influence on this practice (politically neutral environment) is an important determinant of organizational justice (especially the practice of human resources). We should not understand that local interventions have no effect on employee attitudes, they affect the degree of commitment to the organization itself, the

subjective perception of the value of work (the less local interventions, the more valuable the work is perceived) and the quality of work life of employees.

The fact that local interventions are not associated with a sense of injustice is the result of many years of experience, as well as a lack of autonomy - Part of the employees have individual political accountability to specific political forces, which is done in full compliance with the law, but still manifests itself in the involvement of public officials in the pre-election process. Consequently, liberation from political influence often leads to the free choice of the official, and for such a lack, the positive outcome of the reform is sometimes illusory.

Chapter 5. Diversity management

Cultural diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities

Promoting diversity, equality and equal opportunities in the organization is a key issue in human resource management. Effective HRM strategies focus on organizational learning, flexibility, knowledge creation, and development a work environment that fosters diversity management. The cultural diversity of the workforce implies the existence of employees with different characteristics in the organization. Diversity in an organizational context also implies different ways of working/ job performance (Cumming, 2004; Hofstede, 2001). Consequently, diversity has a positive impact on an organization's efficiency, innovation, quality, productivity and competitiveness. Studies show that organizations with greater cultural diversity are more successful in reflecting market specifics and have more complex social resources (Richard, 2000).

The notion of inclusion is often discussed in addition to diversity. If diversity implies the representation of different people in an organization *(gender, age, ethnicity, political views, physical characteristics and values, etc.)*, inclusion means creating an environment where all people feel accepted. Diversity management focuses on providing equal opportunities for employees, while inclusion is a system of practices that ensures that different people are involved in the workforce. Diversity management is different from providing equal opportunities. Providing equal opportunities ensures compliance with the law, while diversity management begins within the organization, and includes fostering an inclusive organizational culture and atmosphere.

The main function of diversity management is to create an environment in the organization in which each employee will be able to reveal their potential in the process of achieving organizational goals. In short, it is a kind of deliberate assimilation of employees to support the achievement of organizational goals.

Based on empirical studies, the main challenges in managing workforce diversity are gender discrimination, barriers to communication, ethnic marginalization, and age discrimination (Inegbedion & et al., 2020). Our study also focused on gender equality, as well as the employment of people with disabilities and the accommodation of the environment for them, which is an important precondition for their inclusion.

Gender equality

One of the most powerful predictors of human work and career development around the world is his or her gender. It determines many life factors, including where person will work (at home, outdoors or both), what job he/she finds suitable, what type of work others entrust him/her with, how high his/her career level will be, what his/her pay will be, what kind of work-life conflict he/she will have, what will his/her job satisfaction and quality of life be, etc. (Walsh & Heppner, 2006). A sexist society typically leads to the stereotypical socialization of the individual and determines the career path of the woman and men. In such an environment, a woman's career choices and career development opportunities are substantially limited.

Article 13 of the Civil Service Law, which states the basic principles of civil service, says that civil service should be equally accessible to the citizens of Georgia in accordance with their skills and professional

trainings. Also, the concept of civil service reform emphasizes that one of the principles underlying the new Civil Service Law should be to ensure equal opportunities for staff according to professional merit, at all levels of their recruitment and promotion. To what extent have these goals been achieved in the municipalities in terms of gender?

First, we present the results of the HR analytics, which reflects the distribution of City Hall employees by gender and legal status.

Figure 5. 1 Distribution of employees by legal status and gender
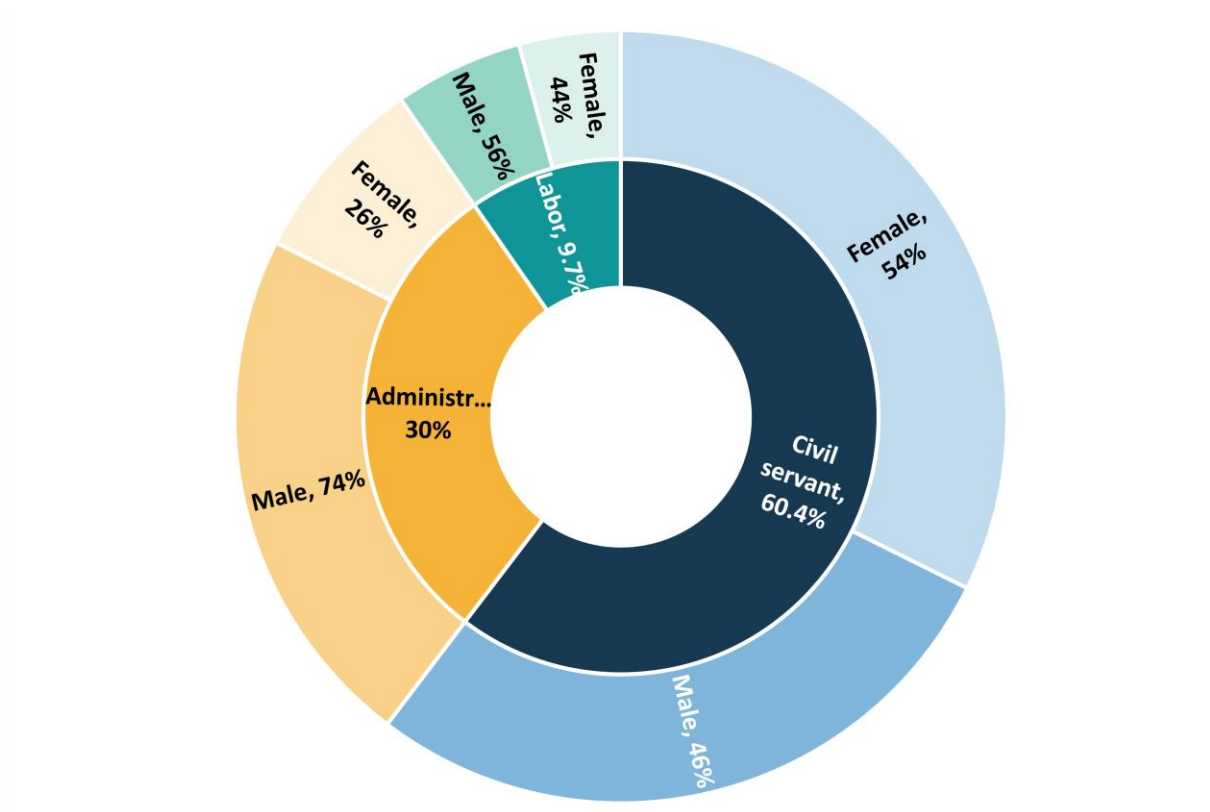
It should be noted that the purpose of the study was not to assess gender stereotypes. The focus of the research was on assessing women's employment and career development opportunities at the Municipal City Halls. The analysis of the data showed that a large proportion of the officials involved in the study (89.4%) positively assess the opportunity for career development of women in their organization. In their opinion, women in the City Hall can achieve career success just as much as men. Only 10.6% of civil servants believe that women have less chance of employment and career success in the City Hall.

The population is much more critical of the employment opportunities for women in the City Hall and their professional development. 53% of the population is more skeptical about *employment* opportunities for women. The equality of women and men in the city halls in terms of *promotion* is negatively assessed by 65.8% of the *population*.

Figure 5.2

Assessments of public officials and the population regarding the employment and career development opportunities of women in the City Halls
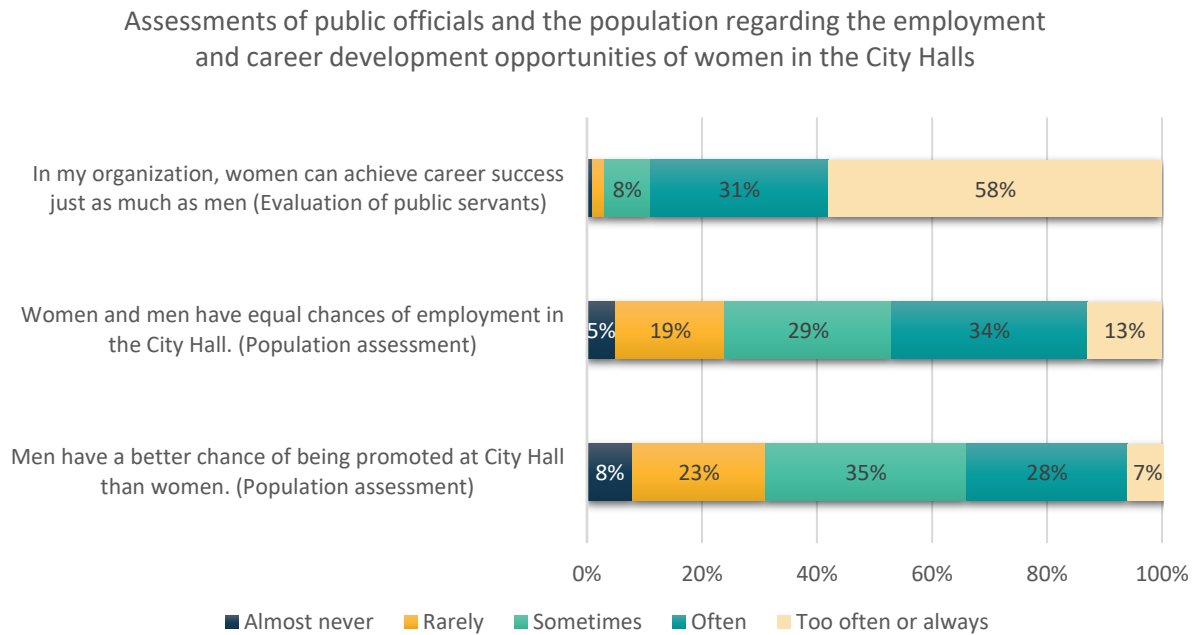
To compare the assessments of public officials and the population, we selected the municipalities where the in-depth survey was conducted. The selection of Civil servants by all municipalities / districts involved in the research is given in Annex 2.

The following graphs clearly show the differences in the views of public officials and the population.

Figure 5.3 *Gender Equality - Career Advancement*

In my organization, women can achieve career success just as much as men.
(Evaluation of civil servants)

Figure 5.4   *Gender Equality - Employment*

Women and men have equal chances of employment in the City Hall.
(Population assessment)
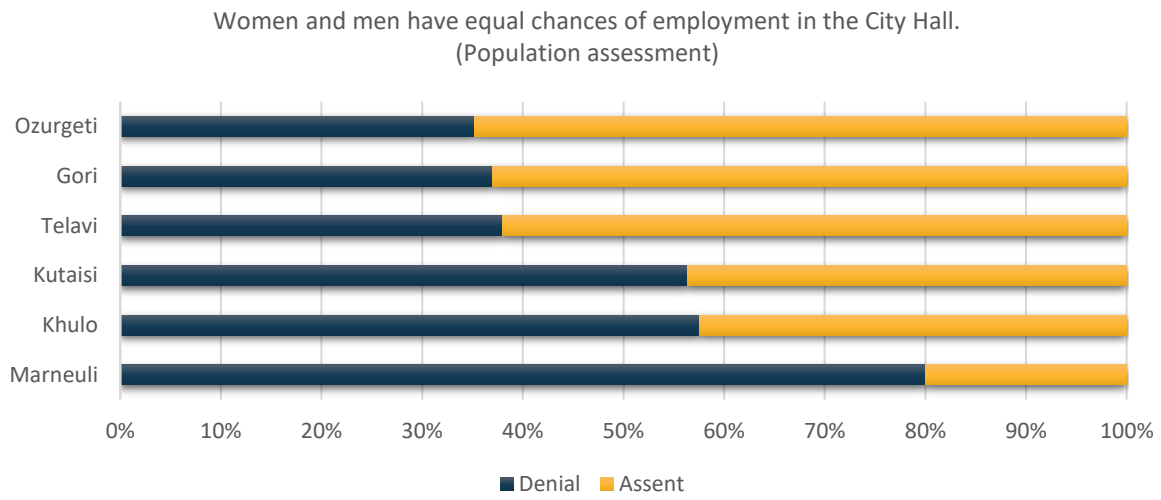
Figure 5.5   *Gender Equality - Promotion*

Men have a better chance of being promoted at City Hall than women.
(Population assessment)
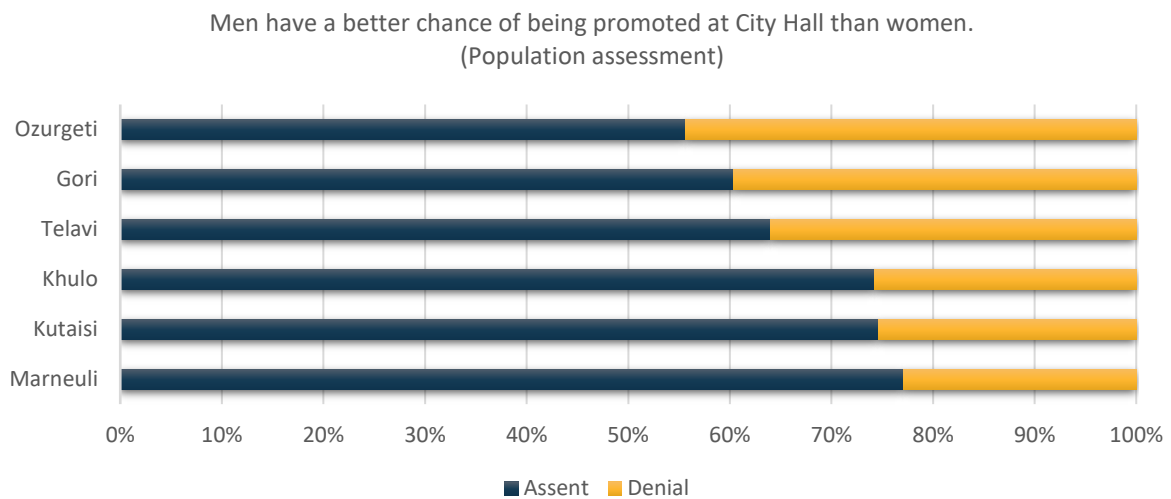
Below are the average scores for each item.

Table 5.1 *Avarage scores for each item*

Questions	Mean Score	SD	Std. Error of Mean
Civil servants			
Women can achieve career success just as much as men.	4.07	1.48	0.06
Population			
Women and men have equal opportunities for employment at City Hall.	3.30	1.08	0.04
Men have a better chance of being promoted at City Hall than women.	2.98	1.05	0.04

As can be seen from the table, according to *population view*, women have a higher chance of employment than promotion. The difference between the mean scores is statistically significant (t(774)=7.74, p<0.001). It can also be said that *civil servants* (M = 4.07) are statistically significantly more positive about the career opportunities of women in the City Hall than the population (M=2.98) (t(1295.4)=28.27, p<0.001).

There are no gender differences in assessments of women's employment and career growth opportunities - women and men alike assess the situation at the City Hall in terms of gender equality. Gender differences in the estimates are not revealed in the case of either officials or the population (Servants: t(534)=-0.52, p=0.60); Population: Statement on employment of women: t(773)=-0.35, p=0.73; item regarding the promotion of women: t(773)=-1.75, p=0.08).

In gender equality assessments, statistically significant differences were found between the following groups:

- Employees under employement contract are more likely to value women's career success at City Hall than professional civil servants *("In my organization, women can achieve career success as much as men").* Professional civil servants - M = 4.40; Employees under employment contract M = 4.72) The difference is statistically significant (F(2, 533)=3.14, p<0.05).

- Citizens with 3-5 years of work experience, on average, have a more positive assessment of women's career chances (M = 3.20) than people who have worked for more than 10 years (M=2.86) (F(4, 770)=2.93, p<0.02).

- Population assessments of women's career development opportunities are related to their political preferences.

We also assessed gender equality issues in terms of the political affiliation of the population. Georgian Dream supporters are more positive about the promotion of women in the City Hall than the opposition or politically neutral population, and these differences are statistically significant in all cases (p<0.05).

The trend in quantitative research that women's employment opportunities in municipal city halls are higher than their career advancement opportunities is also supported by qualitative research data.

The evaluations of civil servants and HR specialists in qualitative research are more optimistic and are consistent with the quantitative research results of the same target group. In the qualitative research City Hall staff also emphasized that women and men in the City Hall are equal in terms of opportunities ("In any case, we have no restrictions" - a woman quote). Among the stereotypes related to the role of women there is a stereotype related to professions (so-called masculine and feminine professions). It is believed that certain professions are more suitable for women. It was noted within the research that women are even employed in masculine positions and they do their best - *"the interview already shows who will do the job successfully, gender has nothing to do with it."*

City Hall staff and HR specialists point out that the selection, evaluation or dismissal of staff is not done on the basis of gender. Respondents could not recall the fact when, in the selection or promotion process, preference was given to men solely because of their gender.

City Hall staff (including representatives of HRM department) can not deny the fact that the number of men in leadership positions exceeds the number of women (as a fact, it can be noted that in all sixteen municipalities surveyed, men hold the position of mayor). However, according to them, there is a higher number of women among low-level employees.

If we rely on objective data, according to the information obtained by HR analytics, 55.5% of the people employed in the municipal City Halls are men and 45.5% are women. The distribution of employed women and men varies from municipality to municipality. The data are presented in the illustration below.

Figure 5.6   *Gender distribution of employees by municipalities*

Gender distribution of employees in each municipality)
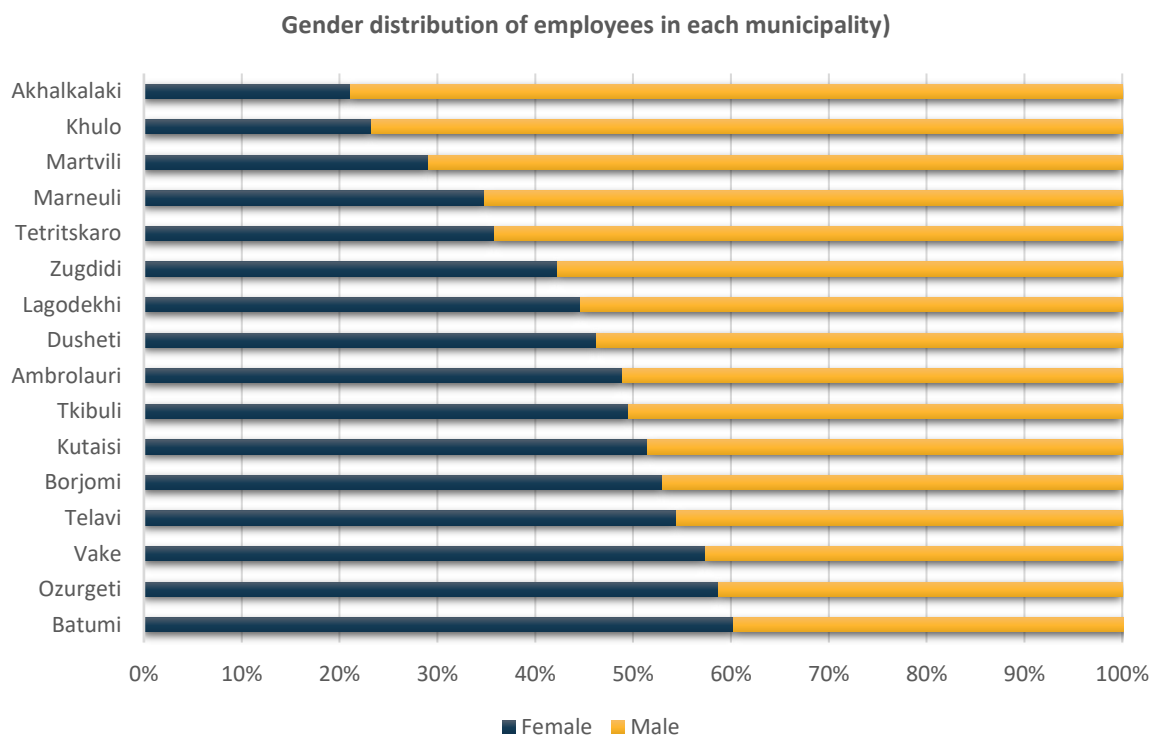
It should be noted that the gender distribution varies according to job categories: among professional civil servants there are more women, among those employed in administrative and labor contracts, men predominate.

Figure 5.7   *Gender distribution of employees by categories*
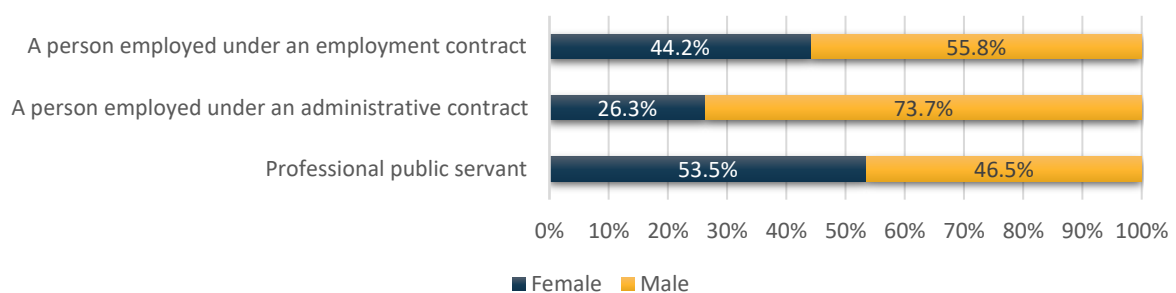
Although there are more women than men among professional Civil servants, data from HR show that only a few women are employed in high-ranking positions: 8.1% of professional Civil servants work in top-ranking positions (the number of women in senior positions is about 4 times less).). As for the lower positions, the share of men working in the third and fourth ranks is 27.5% of the number of civil servants, the same coefficient for women is 44.9%.

Figure 5.8   ***Gender distribution of employees by ranks***
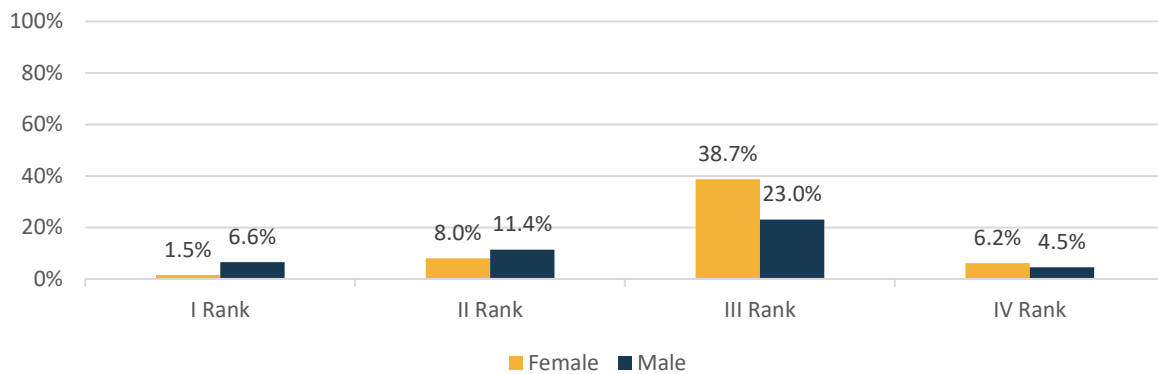
Also, in the last 4 years the number of women among the employees in the municipal City Halls is much lower compared to the men.

Figure 5.9   ***Staff selection and gender in the last 4 years***
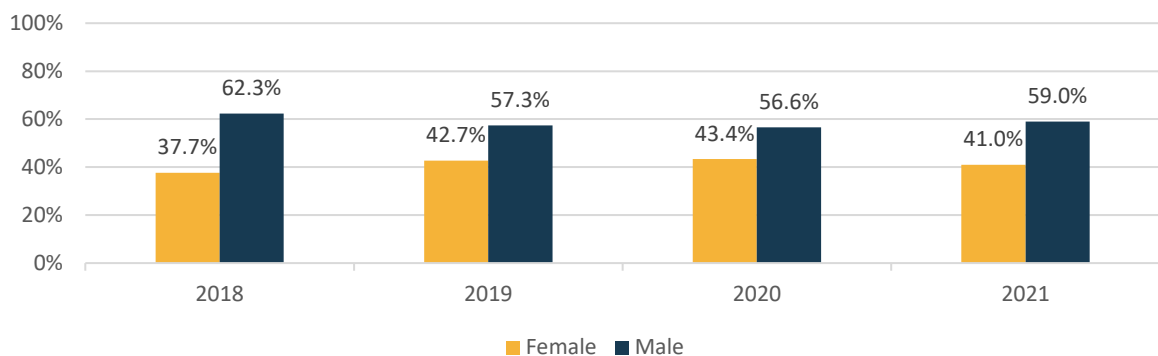
Based on HR analytics, it is clear that although the public officials involved in the study have a fairly positive assessment of women's employment and professional development in city halls, in reality there is no certain imbalance in terms of women and men employment. Contrary to the excessively positive attitude of public officials, the population expressed quite critical views about the employment of women in the City Hall as part of a qualitative research, which may also reflect stereotypes about a woman's job role and career.

Equal representation of women in civil service is an important indicator of progress in creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce; There are fewer problems in terms of women's employment in municipal halls, however, more attention should be paid to women's career advancement issues.

Equal accessability for persons with disabilities (PWDs)

The principle of equal accessability to civil service for Georgian citizens was also assessed in the context of access to employment for *persons with disabilities*. Caring for the elimination of barriers that hinder the equal participation and involvement of people with disabilities in public life should be one of the priority for municipal City Halls. In addition, human resource management policies and practices in the City Hall should provide support for the employment and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Georgia joined the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014, which is based on a social approach model. This model focuses on the barriers, stigma, systemic gaps in society that prevent persons with disabilities from realizing their potential. According to this view, the problem is not in human but in environmental restrictions. The social model focuses on the opportunities, choices, support in the workplace and the maximum realization of their potential (Unger, 2002). Therefore, it is important to implement interventions aimed at eliminating the environmental and social barriers. The environment should increase the physical accessibility and opportunity for the work and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. To overcome the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities, it is necessary, on the one hand, to remove to environmental and social barriers and, on the other hand, to provide accommodation for them. The study focused on environmental adaptation practices. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), adaptation is a change in work, work environment, work process or conditions that lowers physical and social barriers to equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in a competitive environment. Acommodation/Adaptation in a broader context implies adjusting the *environment in general* to ensure access to services for persons with disabilities.

The study assessed, on the one hand, the employment opportunities and practices of people with disabilities at the City Hall, and, on the other hand, the measures taken by the City Hall to adapt the environment for the smooth access of services for people with disabilities in the municipality, including the City Hall.

Employment of persons with disabilities and accommodation / adaptation of the environment

49.1% of civil servants are critical of the conditions required for employment of a person with disabilities in the City Hall (Question: ***"My organization has all the conditions for employment and adaptation of people with disabilities (e.g., for this purpose, the work environment is adjusted, etc.)."***

This result is consistent with qualitative research data. Theoretically, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in civil service is just as accessible as for persons without this status, although qualitative research has identified a number of challenges at the practice level that drastically change the real picture. Part of the respondents mentioned that they had or have employed persons with disabilities, however, the environment in most cases is absolutely inadmissible, which poses significant challenges to their labor process. We mean the infrastructure, most of the buildings are not equipped with ramps, elevators, which will allow the employee with disabilities to access the second and subsequent floors of the building. It should be noted that despite the large range of disabilities (hearing impaired, blind, etc.), the focus is only on the restriction of movement. Where some work has been done to

accommodate the environment, mostly only ramps are made at the entrance to City Hall, elevators and bathrooms are not arranged. However, there are also best practices. Some municipalities employ one or more people with disabilities, some of whom hold the position of manager *("selected according to exactly the same criteria as other employees." Marneuli)*; Such successful practices are undoubtedly a step forward, it can be effectively used to create more opportunities for people with disabilities in the future.

Efforts to create the necessary conditions for the employment of a persons with disabilities were also assessed in the context of municipalities. The results of the analysis are presented in the following illustration.

Figure 5.10 *Adapted environment - evaluation of civil servants*

In my organization, all the conditions are created for the employment and adaptation of people with disabilities (for example, for this purpose, the work environment is adjusted, etc.).
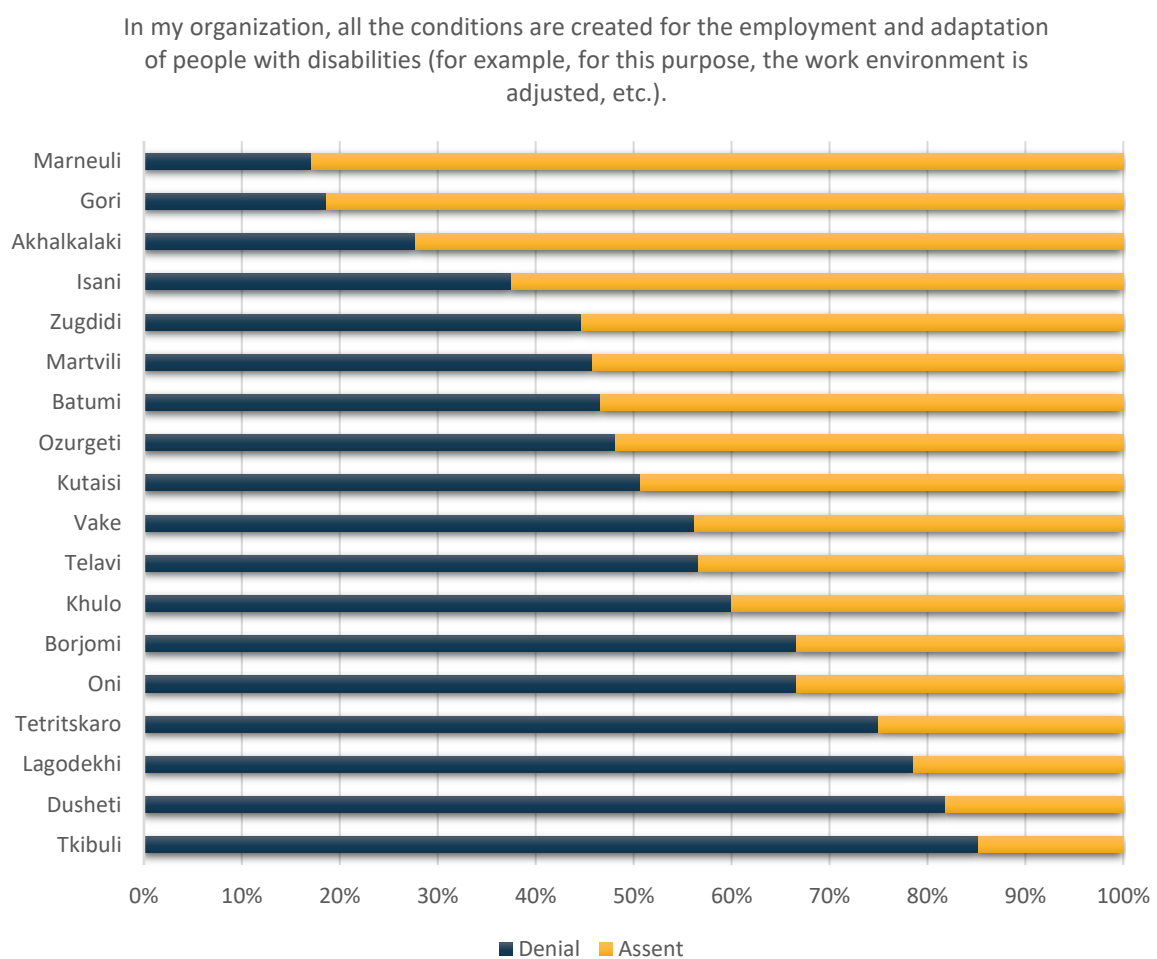
As for the efforts of the City Hall to provide uninterrupted service to people with disabilities in the municipality, as well as the efforts of the City Hall to adapt the building of the City Hall to the needs of people with disabilities - many more employees positively evaluate it. See the table below for the distribution of civil servants' responses to each question.

Responses to the questions related to the environment created for people with disabilities in the City Hall (assessments of civil servants)

Question	Positive Assessment	Critical Assessment
In my organization, all the conditions are created for the employment and adaptation of people with disabilities (for example, for this purpose, the work environment is adjusted, etc.).	50.9%	49.1%
My organization makes sure that people with disabilities can easily access the services they need.	84.1%	15.9%

Qualitative research reveals that currently a large part of City Hall buildings are practically not adapted for disabled customers either. As a rule, only the first floors of the buildings are partially adapted (there are ramps). "*he/she will come to the first floor, but will not come to the second*." As part of the adaptation, the placement of social services (most of which are for people with disabilities) on the first floor can be considered. In any case, this indicates an understanding of the problem by the administration.

According to the HR specialists, the environmental conditions have not created any inconvenience so far - "*the City Hall has not yet made any request on this issue." "The environment is not adapted. Neither need much. If a person with a disability comes to the City Hall, the officials themselves will come out to help the citizen. We have this reality in this minute. "Everything will be settled soon, they have already done it in the City Council." (Lagodekhi)*

The situation for people with disabilities is different and more critical from the perspective of the population. It should be noted that in order to assess the environment created by the City Hall for people with disabilities, we asked very similar questions to public officials and the population. As can be seen from the tables, their estimates are radically different from each other.

Only a third of the people surveyed answered the relevant questions positively. See the distribution of staff responses to each question in the table below.

Table 5.3   ***Responses to the items related to the environment created for people with disabilities in the City Hall (population assessment)***

Question	Positive Assessment	Critical Assessment
City Hall takes care that people with disabilities do not face obstacles in obtaining the desired service in the municipality (E.g., ramps, elevators, and adapted toilets, etc. are available or in preparation).	27.9%	72.1%
Everything is being done to adapt the environment in the City Hall to people with disabilities.	26.8%	73.2%

Quite critical opinions on this issue were expressed in the focus groups of the population. They think that City Halls do not have a systematic approach to this issue. However, a number of successful cases were noted, which could not be generalized to all municipalities included in the study. There were such extreme assessments that *"a person with a disability will not be employed, but will not even be able to enter the building."*

As part of the quantitative research, we created a composite score from the questions focused on assessing the employment accommodation of persons with disabilities and analyzed the differences between groups.

In the case of civil servants, the average composite score for the environment created for people with disabilities at the City Hall is 3.89, which is 77.8% of the maximum possible score (SD = 0.92; Std. Error of Mean = 0.04), and in the case of the population - 2.78, which is 55.6% of the maximum. Possible score (SD = 1.10; Std. Error of Mean = 0.04). The analysis shows that the difference between these two data is statistically significant ($t(1261.1)=19.8$, $p<0.001$).

The assessment of the environment created for persons with disabilities is consistent in the case of public officials and there are no statistically significant differences between different demographic groups. The situation is different in the case of the population. As we have mentioned, the population is quite critical of the efforts made by the City Hall for people with disabilities. The analysis of the data showed that their assessments are highly dependent on which political force they support. ($F(3, 504)=30.017$, $p<0.001$).

Age

To assess the age-related demographic trends in municipal City Halls, data analysis was also conducted in terms of age. The attached graphs show HR analytics data describing the age configuration of employees in City Halls. The trend of the workforce "aging" is evident in only two municipalities, where the number of Civil servants over the age of 60 is 10%.

Figure 5.11   Distribution of persons employed in the City Hall by age
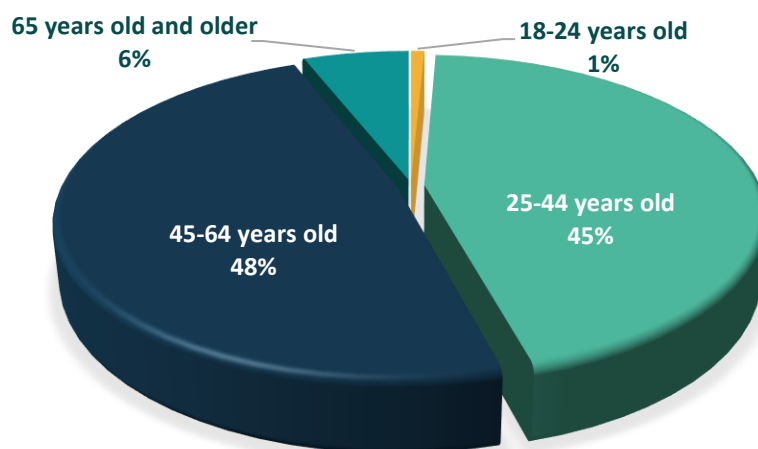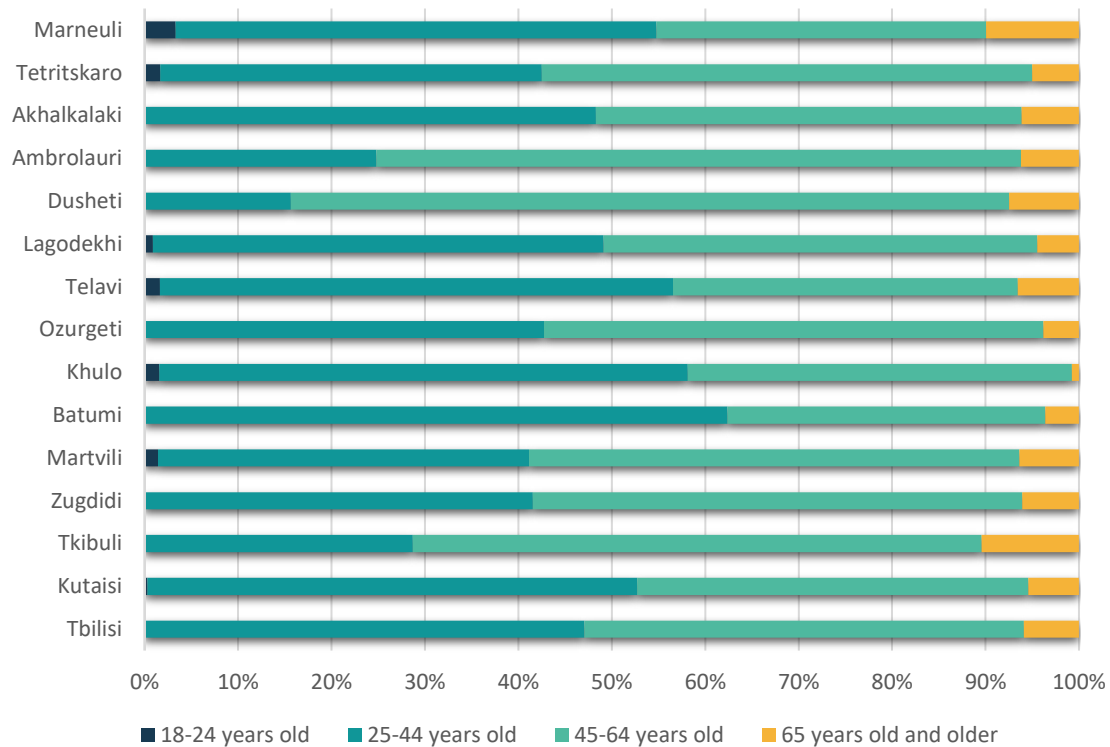
Gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities and perceptions of organizational justice

Through linear regression analysis, we assessed how gender equality in the organization and equal access for persons with disabilities affect the perception of fairness of employees in the City Hall and the level of organizational reputation

These two variables (gender equality and equal access for people with disabilities) account for 31.5% of the variation in the **perception of organizational justice** (R^2 = 0.315, F (2, 533) = 122.69, p <0.001). In the gender equality question, an increase of one standard unit is associated with an average increase of 0.45 points in the organizational justice scale (β = 0.450, p <0.001), while an increase of one standard unit in the composite score of equal access for persons with disabilities is associated with an increase of 0.6 points in the justice scale (β = 0.630, p < 0.001). The gender equality component has a greater share in shaping the perception of organizational justice than environmental adaptation interventions for people with disabilities.

These two variables are more strongly related to **organizational reputation** and account for 44.5% of the variance (R^2 = 0.445, F (2, 533) = 213.45, p <0.001). More important in shaping a reputation are *environmental adaptation interventions for persons with disabilities. The more that is done to adapt the environment at City Hall, the higher its reputation.* In the gender equality question, an increase of

one standard unit is associated with an increase of 0.28 points in the organizational reputation scale (β = 0.283, p <0.001) and an increase of one standard unit in the composite score of equal accessibility is associated with an increase in organizational reputation perception of 0.53 points (β = 0.53, $p < 0.001$).

We obtained similar results in the case of the population. The perception of the reputation of the City Hall by the population is related to how the population sees the situation in the City Hall, on the one hand, in terms of gender equality in employment and professional development opportunities, and on the other hand, in the environment created for people with disabilities. In particular, 41.4% of the variation in the City Hall reputation is due to the perception of gender equality and equal access for persons with disabilities in the City Hall (R^2 = 0.414, F (2, 772) = 272.63, p < 0.001).

An increase of one standard unit in the composite variable of welfare care for persons with disabilities is associated with an increase of 0.58 points in the City Hall reputation (β = 0.58, p <0.001), as for gender equality perceptions, the coefficient is lower (β = 0.13, $p < 0.001$). =

After reviewing the results of the study, we must mention the readiness to change the current situation and the existence of positive dynamics: Representatives of HR department announce positive changes and note that an adaptation of the environment is planned and actively talked about, however, effectively changing the existing reality requires more effort, a synchronized approach and operativeness.

Summary of Chapter 5

Equal representation of women in civil service is an important indicator of progress in creating a diverse and inclusive workforce; Research shows that women employment opportunities in municipal City Halls are higher than their career advancement opportunities; Among the first-ranking professional civil servants in the municipalities, the number of women is about 4 times less; Consequently, women's career advancement issues need more attention in municipal City Halls.

Notwithstanding the records in various regulations (such as the 2014 Anti-Discrimination Act), which prohibit discrimination and bias on any grounds, the practice involuntarily imposes inconsistent frameworks with the law: theoretically, employment of persons with disabilities is possible, but the environment is so unadapted and therefore unfriendly, that nilly substantially limits this possibility. More serious work needs to be done in the City Halls to facilitate unimpeded access to services and employment for persons with disabilities. Despite successful practices, in most cases, the problem remains unsolved. We can not say that the lack of efforts to promote the employment of persons with disabilities is a result of the stigma associated with disability, it probably indicates more of a lack of a systematic approach to this issue by municipalities.

We can not say that the lack of efforts to promote the employment of persons with disabilities is a result of the stigma associated with disability, it probably indicates more the lack of a systematic approach to this issue by municipalities.

Chapter 6. City Hall Reputation

Organizational Reputation: Purpose and Specifics of Evaluation

Reforms and organizational development programs are usually aimed at changing the whole organization or any of its important parts. The change process should be accompanied by monitoring of changes in the individual, group, or structural components of the organization. However, it is not easy to assess the wide-ranging and multidimensional effects expected (announced) as a result of reform or organizational development. Organizational *reputation* is a favorable construct for conceptualizing ongoing changes in an organization.

An indicator of a civil service effectiveness is its reputation in the community. Past and present activities create the reputation of the organization. The definition of reputation developed by Fombrun is most often used in academic circles today: "Reputation is a unified / summary representation of an organization's past actions and achievements (Arild Wæraas, Moshe Maor, 2014) [6]. The social responsibility of the organization plays a very important role in shaping the reputation of the organization. Consequently, establishing a proper reputation and protecting it is a particularly sensitive issue for public organizations, including City Halls.

The focus of public entities reputation research is on assessing how they cope with reputational challenges (Arild Wæraas, Moshe Maor, 2014). Our research has the same focus. The study focuses on the general nature of the reputation framed in the community about City Hall.

Because human resource management policies and practices, as well as justice, equality (including political neutrality) play an important role in building organizational reputation, the study assessed reputation as a dependent variable - the result of City Hall performance - from two perspectives:

1. ***Evaluations of civil servants*** - perceptions and attitudes of employees towards the organization;
2. ***Population assessments*** - the attitude of the population towards the City Hall as an institution.

The variables integrated in the quantitative research instruments allow us to determine the reputation of the City Hall in general (by a unified, summary assessment), as well as to discuss some of its interesting aspects.

City Hall Reputation: Research Results

Assessing the reputation of the City Hall among the population from the perspective of civil servants

Although the main target group in assessing the reputation of the City Hall is the population, it is the duty of public officials to adequately perceive and respond to public sentiments. In order to assess the congruence of the perceptions of the population and civil servants, we examined the perceptions and assessments of civil servants about the reputation of the City Hall among the population. The

---

[6] Despite the large number of published scientific papers on the reputation of the organization in general, researchers are still arguing about its importance. The definitions used are often quite different, as it is easy to replace / combine the term with concepts such as image, prestige, legitimacy and status. (Deep house and Suchman 2008; Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Rindova, Pollock, and Hayward 2006).

perceptions and assessments of the main target group - the population about the reputation of the City Hall were also analyzed.

First of all, based on quantitative research data, the answers of civil servants to the two most prominent questions on assessing the reputation of the City Hall are presented: ***"My organization has a good reputation among the population" and "The population trusts my organization."*** The assessments of civil servants are quite optimistic. Most believe that the City Hall's organizational reputation and, consequently, trust in it is high. Estimates are as follows: 77.4% of respondents think that the City Hall has a good reputation among the population, 70.7% believe that the population's trust in the City Hall is high.

Figure 6. 1   *„My organization has a good reputation among the population"*
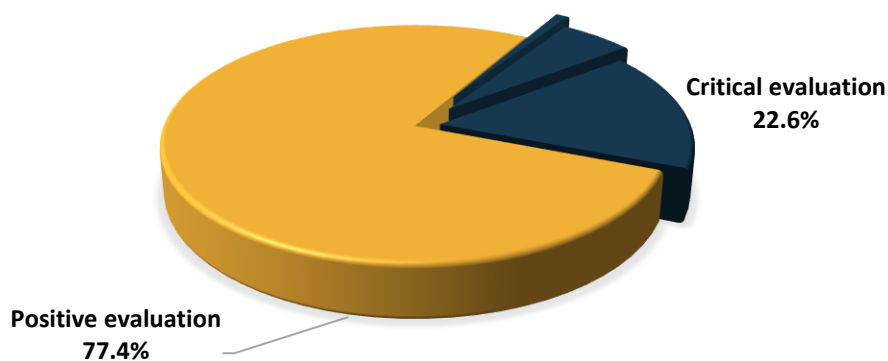
Figure 6.2   *"The population trusts my organization"*
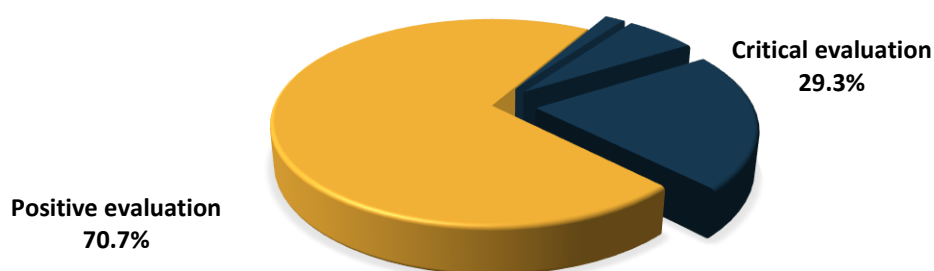
Organizational reputation was also analyzed according to other characteristics of the civil servants participating in the study. The results of the dispersion analysis show that the difference is statistically significant only between the groups differentiated according to the education and job suitability ($F_{(1, 536)} = 8.556$, $p < .05$; see the following graph). In all other cases the data are consistent - no statistically significant difference is observed.

Figure 6.3 Dispersion Analysis: Internal Organizational Reputation and Education and Current Work Suitability

	low	middle	high
Irrelevant education to current	19.7%	63.9%	16.3%
Relevant education to current job	10.2%	60.7%	29%
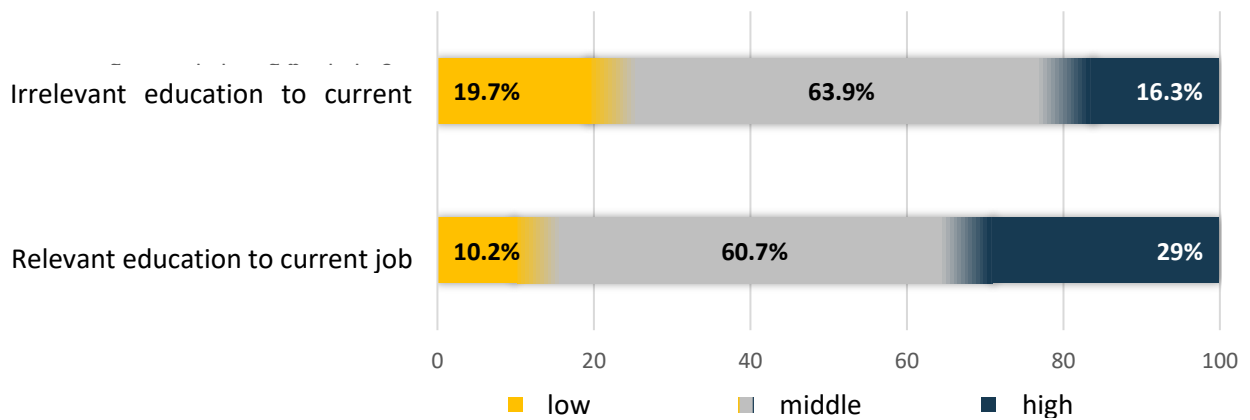
In addition to quantitative data, it is important to present the results of employee focus groups and HR interviews. Respondents (public officials) give ambiguous answers when talking about the reputation of the City Hall as part of a qualitative research, which somewhat hinders the overall picture. However, on the other hand, this may be the real picture - they point out that usually, public opinion is always divided, there are people who have a positive attitude towards the City Hall and trust it, and those who are more or less negative and critical. It is difficult to assess the dynamics of attitudes, usually attitudes change for the better when an important project is on in the municipality. For example, a road is being built or social assistance is being provided. Such an answer is repeated in all municipalities.

As part of the qualitative research, some *public officials* note that the trust among citizens in the City Hall is quite high, as employees try their best to provide timely and quality services to citizens, all applications received from citizens will be followed by an urgent response. The population sees this, hopes that they will receive the necessary services and, consequently, positively evaluates the work of the City Hall *("they are also very satisfied - it seems that you do not have a lot of work from the outside, but when I look at it now, you are very busy").* The trust of the population towards the City Hall is evaluated with an average of 7 points out of 10 points in one of the cities. Interestingly, we obtained a similar assessment as a result of a quantitative research, where 70.7% of civil servants positively assess public trust in the City Hall (see Figure 6.2), although the population estimates are substantially different (see Figure 6.4), Which indicates that public officials have no realistic picture about the attitudes of the population.

Confirming the civil servants' survey (positive expectations revealed by the quantitative research), a number of other opinions were expressed in the qualitative research:

In one of the municipalities it was mentioned that *"a lot of useful things are done in the City Hall for the population, the City Hall is constantly focused on the implementation of a number of projects for the welfare of the population and, consequently, the public attitude is positive."*

The respondent from the Tbilisi district administration ("gamgeoba") states that they have close contact with the population through social media and have information about the existing attitudes. Therefore, it is believed that **the trust of the population has increased. "**The governor ("gamgebeli")

has a very good reputation. *"Since the day of his arrival, he has been on the streets. Sometimes we have complained that he did not spend as much time in the office as he did on the meetings with the whole population. The people see and appreciate him, and I think the results are good."*

Some HRs believe that the current municipal government is paying more attention to the problems of the population and managing the resources accordingly. *"All the boards ("gamgeobebi") have been working actively, because that is their function, the dynamics have improved, because the resources, the budget is more, more is being done and the attentiveness has increased, the staff is more generous."*

Contradictory views were also expressed: the expectations of a *relatively small proportion* of respondents involved in a qualitative research were less optimistic. They talk about the existing problems and name the probable causes of negative attitudes in the population. According to the representatives of some municipalities, the trust of the population in the City Hall is low, despite the fact that all the links of the municipality serve the citizens equally well and diligently. Despite a lot of work and many efforts in the municipalities, *"there is still a lot to be done",* so the population is constantly dissatisfied and most of the work is evaluated negatively. The reasons for the low reputation and negative attitudes were mainly mentioned as several factors: the lack of information of the citizens about the powers of the various services of the City Hall to solve problematic issues; The impact of social poverty and oppositional, politicized media (TV and social media).

City Hall officials say that because of unemployment and social hardship, citizens generally have a negative attitude towards all processes *("they look at us with envy ... what are you worried about ... people are irritated - the unemployed, the hungry, the children are hungry at home." "If 20 people participate in the competition and one is employed, the other 19 are offended").* Employees help uninformed citizens to get various help from the City Hall, many social projects are active, but it also irritates part of the population: *"They do not want to be a 'beggar', years go by and new jobs are not created."*

The opinion was expressed that politicized, opposition media outlets are trying to damage the reputation of the City Hall with baseless accusations. *"Any television is focused on blackening the government ... A Civil servant in a position of self-justification has already been lost; "* They use sensitive topics, tendentiously and out of context, to cover City Hall activities in order to incite the public against the government.

It turns out that the negative attitudes of the population and biased assessments of the media are a serious basis for demotivating City Hall employees. They not only get appropriate pay and appreciation for their diligent work, but they also deserve reprimands and insults - *"You will do something and you will be harassed on TV, you will be insulted, you want nothing more." "You work, you do so much, you try and the curse and the mud come from outside and your job is no longer worth it, you want nothing more."* Respondents noted that the civil sector is obliged to provide the media with any public information that is *"not even read or, if read - by mistake, and then distorted to the public."* As a result of such coverage of the activities of officials in the mass media, a sharply negative attitude towards biased media source was formed among City Hall employees.

The attitude of opposition groups and politicized media is understandable to City Hall staff, but sharing this position by the population is painful and frustrating for them. Respondents (and, as they say, their employees as well) have a strong sense of injustice. Remember the specific people who were unjustly and undeservedly accused of "laziness" and remember such cases with great disappointment. The common misconceptions among the population are explained by "a low level of education, a lack of

critical thinking and the lack of ability to analyze the information provided." Therefore, in their opinion, it is especially important to intensively cover the ongoing processes in the City Hall by objective media.

Respondents emphasized that self-government is a mediator between the population and the central government, and the more the government stimulates self-government, the more satisfied the population will be *"and the more they will vote in elections."* In terms of self-government development, City Hall staff see positive dynamics in most municipalities, however, a small proportion of respondents believe that trust in City Hall is less likely to change. *"As the previous government lived us from election to election, the same continues today."*

"People have a different opinion, those who get what they want have confidence in the City Hall, those who do not - they fight and often do not even understand that the City Hall employee can not do what he asks."

"There is a heterogeneous attitude in the society. Some people think they are doing nothing and are getting paid in vain. But many that come and see what we do know how much work we do. They also express gratitude. "

Population assessments

After a certain period after coming to power of any political force, it has a declining dynamics in terms of reputation, which is also reflected in the mayors. Recently, municipal services, infrastructure, communication with the population have been improved in the municipalities. Nevertheless, the population is critical and has little expectation that the City Hall will solve their problems.

Based on the results of a quantitative research, an analysis of the population's attitudes towards the reputation of the City Hall revealed that the assessments of the population are much more critical compared to the perceptions and assessments of public officials.

"City Hall has a good reputation among the population" - the critical assessment of respondents to this question is 71.1%; Let us remind you that *according to the perception of civil servants*, 77.4% of the population evaluates the reputation of the City Hall positively. **The difference is obvious and indicates that public officials do not have realistic information about the attitudes that exist in the population** (M = 2.83; SD = 1.12; Std. Error of Mean = .04).

Figure 6.4   **Population assessment - "City Hall has a good reputation among the population."**

Critical evaluation
71.1%

Positive
evaluation 28.9%
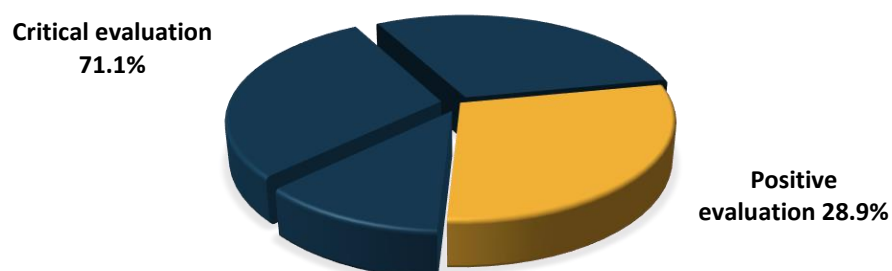
The following factors were named as a precondition for the critical attitudes of the population within the qualitative research:

The vast majority of respondents state that the activity of civil servants, "Public speaking", is mainly felt only before the elections. Identical promises made at this time from year to year deserve less trust because pre-election promises are almost never fulfilled, which generally damages City Hall's reputation. *"The fact that there are so many problems in the city indicates that the City Hall is not working effectively and, consequently, its reputation is low."* People say that after the elections, the City Hall employees forget their obligation to communicate with the population - to "go out", get acquainted with the challenges of the city and take care of solving problems that do not require large sums from the budget.

To illustrate the essential discrepancy between the assessments of the City Hall employees and the population, we will give another example: the environment in the City Hall was assessed by both the officials and the population.

Officials' assessments: **"My organization adheres to the ethical standards of civil service, here is an impartial and conscientious environment."** (M = 4.15; Std. Error of Mean = .05; SD = 1.17). 24.4% of City Hall employees are critical of the City Hall environment.

Population assessments: ***"Ethical standards are observed in the City Hall, there is an impartial and conscientious environment" - the population makes radically different assessments on this question.*** 70% of the population is critical and evaluates the environment in the City Hall negatively (M = 2.91; Std. Error of Mean = .04; SD = 1.11).

Figure 6.5 *Assessment of the environment of the City Hall by the City Hall employees and the population - "Ethical standards are observed in my organization / City Hall, here / there is an impartial and conscientious environment"*
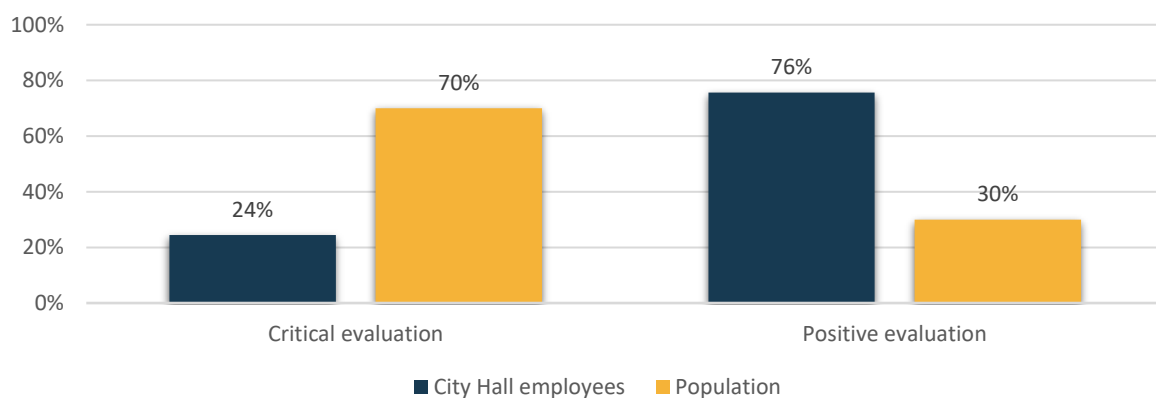
Assessing the conscientiousness of the people employed in the City Hall, most of the qualitative research participants noted that it is the conscientious professionals who are still in the City Hall who transfer the entire burden of their work. However, they are not the decision-makers, nor are they the majority there *("everything they prepare, do, and cannot promote").* It was noted that many unqualified staff work, especially in NPOs, therefore, it is less conceivable for them to do their job in good faith.

Based on the opinions expressed, it can be said that the population's trust in the City Hall is low. The practice established in the City Hall does not involve communication with the population and their involvement, which further complicates the picture. Apparently, due to these circumstances, the work done does not meet the priorities of the population, which is frustrating. As for the performed works, the low quality, with exceptions, is explained by the wrong policy of the City Hall, non-standardized tender procedures or unfulfilled obligations. There is a similar attitude towards City Hall employees - they are considered unqualified staff, who were selected with biased approaches.

Below are the attitudes of the population towards such issues as: protection of citizens' rights, their support; City Hall management and ongoing processes in the organization (including nepotism and political influences).

Figure 6.6 Population assessment - "All citizens' rights are protected in the City Hall."
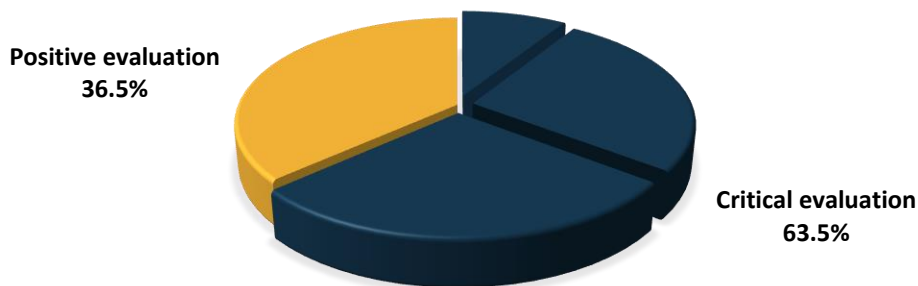
To the question: **"All citizens' rights are protected in the City Hall"** (M = 3.02; SD = 1.13; Std. Error of Mean = .04) statistically significant differences were observed in three variables: level of education, relevance of education received to current job and managerial activity (citizens with low academic education - χ^2 (20, 775) = 44.59, p = .001; respondents employed in ordinary positions (non-managerial) - χ^2 (4, 775) = 18.71, p = .001).

Figure 6.7 Population Assessment - "City Hall assists and offers additional benefits to those citizens who are affiliated with the ruling party."
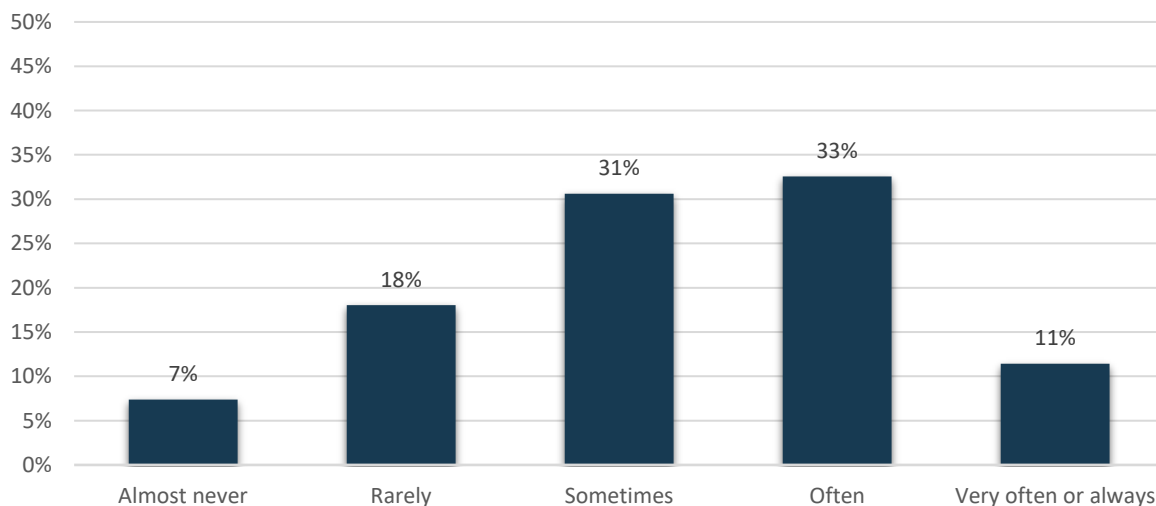
To the question: *"City Hall helps and offers additional benefits to citizens who are affiliated with the ruling party"* (M=3.22; SD=1.10; Std. Error of Mean=.04).

City Hall Management and Reputation

Especially noteworthy is the assessment of the City Hall management in the population. Ratings are critical and follow the trends that have been identified in reputation assessments. Which is not surprising, since the organization's management is an important determinant of the organization's reputation.

Figure 6.8   *Population assessment - "City Hall has a professional and conscientious management (governance)."*

Positive evaluation
26.9%

Critical evaluation
73%
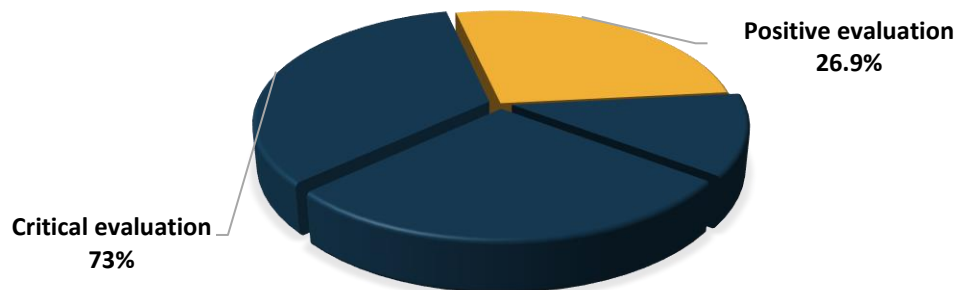
(M=2.82; SD=1.09; Std. Error of Mean=.04)

In a qualitative research, part of the population notes that management can not make important decisions independently (centralized government and the low degree of independence of the City Hall - *"they still do not decide anything here").* Dissatisfaction is caused not so much by the length of decision-making and enforcement, but primarily by the inability of City Hall staff to take responsibility and make any kind of decision; Ignorance of the population and, consequently, wrong expectations - *"[the population] does not know what is within the competencies of the City Hall";* Inability to properly present the case to the population; Incorrect setting of priorities, as well as frequent, incorrect interventions of the central government, low quality of work performed or unresolved problems; Lack of communication with people, formal involvement of the population in the management process.

Nepotism and Reputation

In the context of the reputation of the City Hall, we assessed the perceptions of the population as to whether there are vicious practices of nepotism in the City Hall. Clearly, the existence of such practices only damages the reputation of the City Hall. About 45% of the population believe that there is nepotism in the City Hall.

Figure 6.9   *Population assessment - "There is nepotism in the City Hall, acquaintances and kinship ties solve many things."*
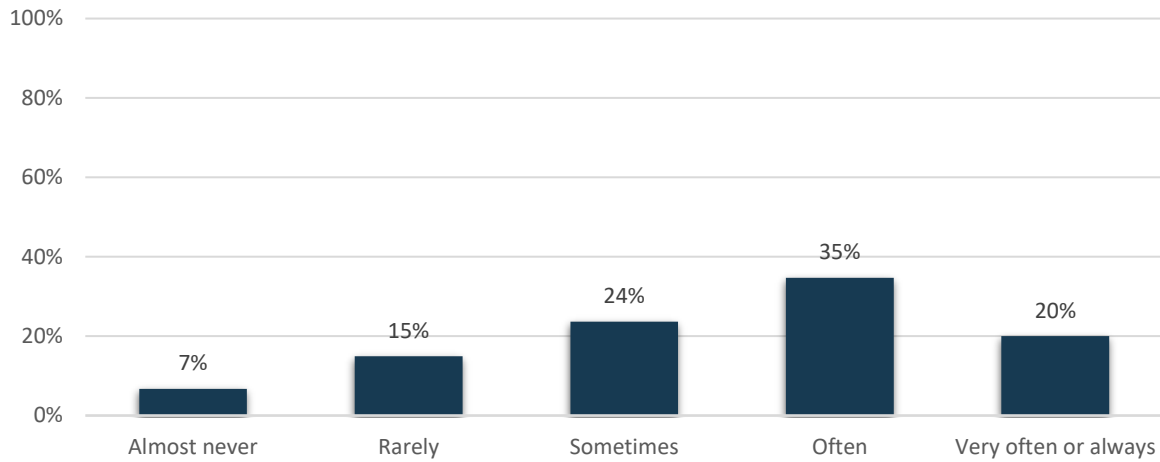
(M=3.46; SD=1.16; Std. Error of Mean=.04)

If we analyze the assessments of different groups, we will see that 77.5% and more of all types of organizations employed, as well as unemployed respondents believe that there is nepotism in the City Hall. **Interestingly, 64.2% of respondents employed in public organizations indicate the existence of nepotism in the City Hall (χ^2(20, 775)=67.54, *p*<.01).**

In the City Hall, nepotism was also assessed from the perspective of public officials with the question: ***"In my organization, personnel decisions (hiring, promotion, etc.) are influenced by kinship and acquaintance."*** (M = 3.87; SD = 1.18; Std. Error of Mean = .05). Only 21% of civil servants agree with this statement. The difference between the assessments of the population and civil servants is obvious.

Figure 6.10   *Evaluation of officials*
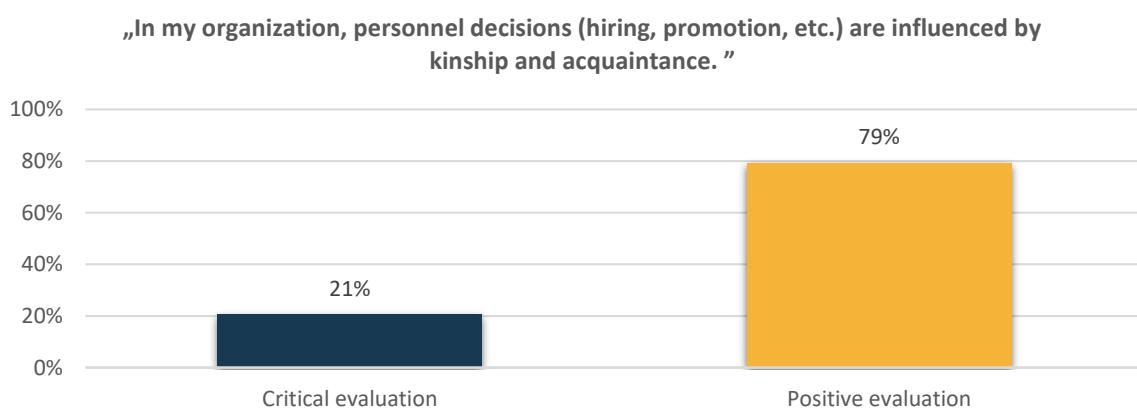
Qualitative research revealed unequal conditions in terms of service delivery to citizens. In this regard, nepotism is considered a crucial factor. Personal encounters accelerate and facilitate the overcoming of many bureaucratic barriers. Positively evaluated the "one-stop-shop" principle, however, still makes it difficult for residents to use the services of the municipality.

It was noted that often the priority of the settlement is subjectively determined and the necessary work is carried out according to the priorities thus defined, which causes even more frustration among the residents of other villages. **In ethnic minority municipalities**, the language barrier has become an additional factor, exacerbating the unintended consequences of poor communication - information failing to reach ethnic minorities, in which case it is particularly difficult to gain trust.

Not all respondents confirm the existence of inequality in the service processes of citizens. However, in almost all municipalities there are ineffective problem-solving attempts, inefficient solutions, indexterity in the problem-solving process. *"For 30 years, our country walks in a circle. We have to choose between bad and very bad, we live in this paradigm, the political establishment has not left us a choice. "*

A different assessment of communication with the population is found in a respondent who has experience working for a social services agency. He said that even with very good services, City Hall officials not only refrained from providing information about them to the public, but also forbade employees from doing so*. "We should not vote for the existence of such services. It was shocking for me. "* This case may be exceptional, though highly noteworthy.

Respondents note that getting a real result, in addition to protection, depends on the activity of the citizen - *"if they were hysterical, they would overdo it."*

It is the duty of the City Hall to proactively respond to the needs of the population and eliminate the existing problems. To do this, he must study, analyze the needs of the population, their opinion and respond adequately to it. About 70% of the population thinks that the opinion of the population is not important for the City Hall.

Figure 6.11   *Population assessment - "The opinion of the population is important for the City Hall (for the people employed in the City Hall)."*

Positive evaluation 30.4%

Critical evaluation 69.5%
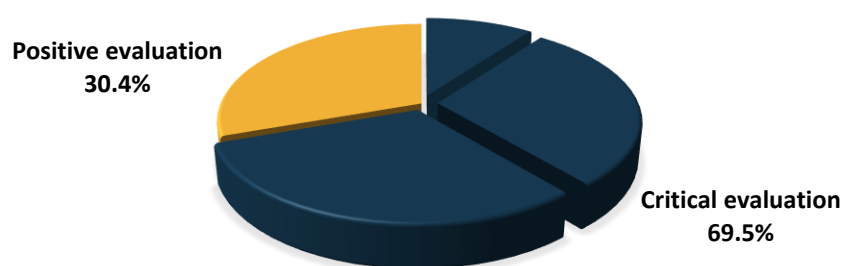
(M=2.90; SD=1.11; Std. Error of Mean=.04)

Reforms and positive dynamics of City Hall reputation

Only a quarter of the population believes that the population's trust in the City Hall is changing in a positive direction.

Figure 6.12   *Population assessment - "I have a feeling that in the recent period the population trusts the City Hall more"*
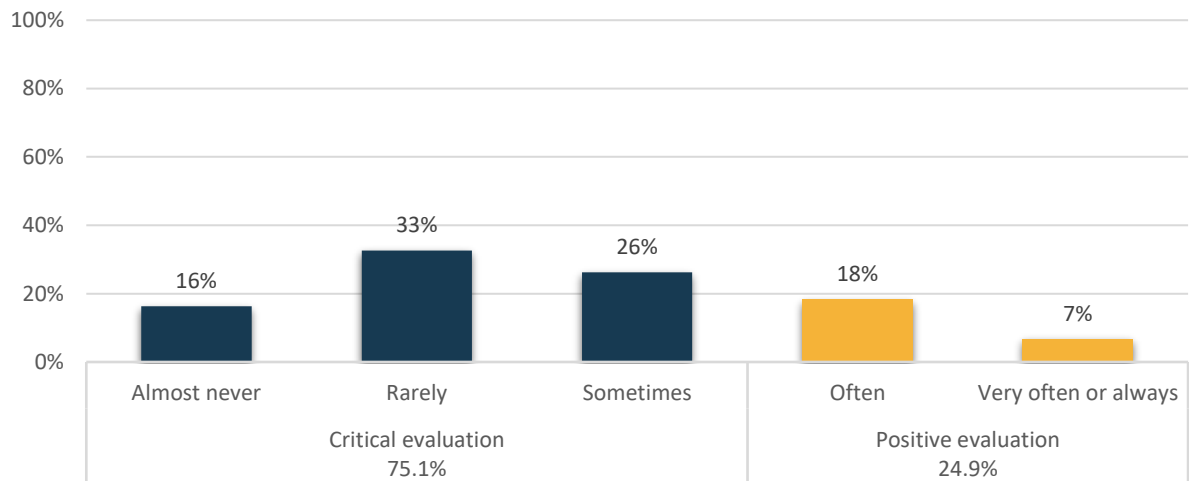
(M=2,66; SD=1.15; Std. Error of Mean=.04)

Approximately the same trends are reflected in the assessments of the positive dynamics of the activities of the City Hall, which is not surprising, since the activities inspire confidence.

Figure 6.13   *Population assessment - "I have a feeling that the activities of the City Hall are changing for the better in the recent period."*
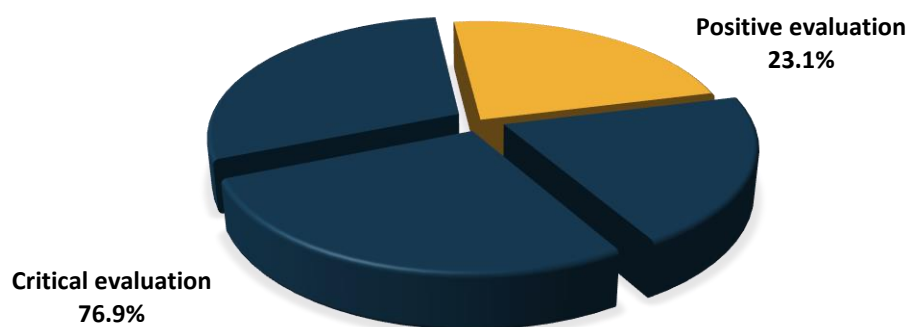
(M=2.61; SD=1.16; Std. Error of Mean=.04)

Such assessments of trust in the City Hall are also confirmed by the views expressed in the qualitative research. It was noted that in recent years, municipal services, infrastructure, primarily roads, have been improved. But since infrastructural problems are still acute in a number of settlements, it is not clear to the population on what principle decisions are made, which indicates a low quality of

129

communication with the population. This view is supported by the fact that the population usually does not separate the responsibilities of central and municipal government, and, consequently, the municipality is often blamed for the shortcomings of the central government, such as the deplorable condition of central roads in mountainous municipalities and others.

"Communication has improved, arranging meetings is not difficult, but we rarely get real results."

Along with such attitudes, there were positive and supportive assessments - *"whoever does something, makes mistakes ... when you find yourself in the place of City Hall employees, it is not easy to do the job."*

The fact that the employees of the City Hall have felt a sense of stability in recent years, as the change in the political situation no longer leads to a mass change of staff, was positively assessed. It was noted that this situation contributes to the formation of professional staff in the City Hall.

Steps towards decentralization were named as positive dynamics of the reform, however, it was noted that this dynamic did not continue (it was reversed). The achievement was the protection of the Civil servant from the law *("the law protects the employee and there are many facts that the court makes a useful decision for the dismissed employees").* As for e-government, although the group generally considered it a good result, it was noted that these services are not available to a large part of the population and they are unable to use them.

Overall, City Hall is not regarded as a prestigious employer (staff turnover is high), however, it certainly has a reputation as a stable employer.

Relationships between factors: Comparative analysis of public and population perceptions

What factors shape opinions about City Hall's reputation in the community?

The results of the research show that views on freedom from political influence in the civil service and **HR processes** (which include questions such as: promoting, promoting, and evaluating professionalism in City Hall; The selection of employees in the City Hall is fair; Women and men have equal opportunities for employment at City Hall; Professionals work there, ethical standards are observed in the City Hall, etc.) account for 71.3% of the variation in City Hall's reputation scores (R^2=.713, $F_{(2, 772)}$= 3428, $p<0.001$); However, only HRM processes are statistically significant - the main factor in the formation of organizational reputation is fair personnel decisions in the City Hall. An increase of 1 standard unit is associated with an average increase of 0.856 standard units of organizational justice ($\beta = 0.856$, $p <0.001$), the degree of political influence having no statistically significant effect.

The same result is revealed in the dispersion analysis. The more positively the population evaluates personnel decisions, the better the reputation of the City Hall among them, the difference is statistically significant between all three groups.
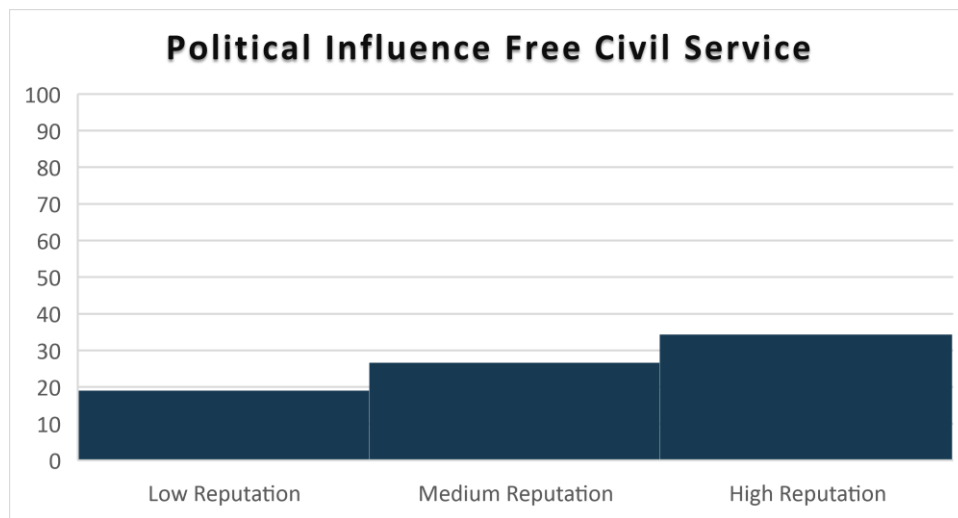
Figure 6.15   *Distinction in HR policy and practice evaluation by reputation*
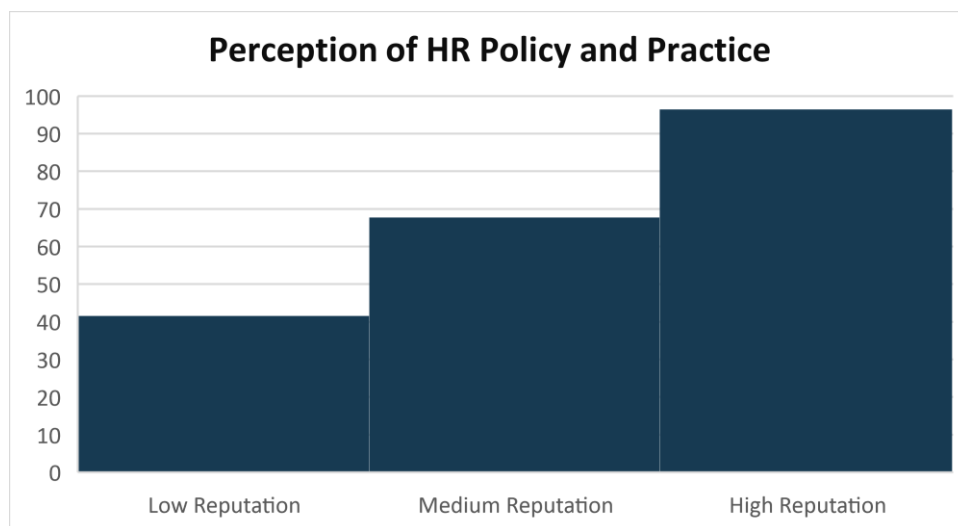
The mood of the population is significantly critical. Respondents with critical attitudes include both supporters of opposition parties as well as respondents with no political preferences and those who have avoided expressing their own political sympathies. In summary, it can also be said that:

- The lower the level of education of the respondents, the more critically they assess the reputation of the City Hall.
- Respondents whose work does not correspond to their education are more critical.
- The most loyal attitude was shown by people employed in public organizations.
- Respondents working in ordinary positions critically assess the reputation of the City Hall.
- The reputation of the City Hall is assessed differently in those groups of respondents who have experience of participating in pre-election agitation and those who do not. However, the evaluations are more positive the less time has passed since such experiences.

131

Summary of Chapter 6

The basis for raising the public's trust and reputation towards the City Hall is the development of a well-functioning and transparent civil service at the municipal level. The aim of the reform is to establish a meritocratic, efficient and effective civil service and to improve the legal and institutional environment. The extent to which this goal was achieved was also determined by the assessment of the reputation of the City Hall.

The real picture is this: the attitudes of the population towards the City Hall are mostly very critical. The low level of public trust damages the "legitimacy" and reputation of the decisions made by the City Hall. According to public officials, the reason for the critical attitude of the population is the lack of information about the work done by the City Hall employees, as well as the authority of various services of the City Hall to solve problematic issues; The role of other important contextual factors is also highlighted, including social poverty and the influence of opposition-minded, politicized media.

As the research showed, public officials do not have a clear idea of the attitudes of the population - it is obvious that there is a discrepancy between the perceptions of civil servants about the reputation of the City Hall and the real assessments of the population. Consequently, removing communication barriers and improving communication processes are essential in this process.

Research shows that reputation can be built and maintained through meritocratic personnel policies, as well as political neutrality, adherence to fundamental principles of justice, and improved communication processes.

According to the research evidence, the reputation of the City Hall is determined by a **meritocratic human resource management system**, which excludes the influence of political preferences and connections / nepotism in this process. Consequently, the critical attitude towards the city halls of the municipalities, in these processes, and more generally in the civil service reform, indicates the challenges that need to be addressed by additional and systematic efforts.

Chapter 7. Recommendations

We would like to note once again the full compatibility of the goal of the civil service reform with international standards and best practices including the principles for effective functioning of the civil sector as described in the concept framework paper for the civil service reform developed by OECD. Civil Service Bureau has performed significant work in municipal city halls to support human resource management practices based on these (meritocratic) principles that can be well observed in the resources developed by them as well as in training sessions, mentoring, etc. We should also note a huge role and support of donor organizations in the process. However, there are significant challenges related to the implementation gap between the law and practice conditioned by the local context and some methodological and operational flaws. A part of changes recommended by us are in conformity with the law and are oriented on transformation of its key requirements into a practical and functional instrument, while another part, in case it is shared, requires changes at different levels. **In addition, introduction of and support to methodologically functional human resource management system based on meritocratic principles is considered to be the main and effective instrument for reducing influence and political patronage in municipal city halls that can be achieved in case of clear demonstration of political will.**

The recommendations were developed based on the needs identified as a result of the research and modern approaches of human resource management. In the process of developing the recommendations, we used systemic approach and the principle of prioritization and synchronization of changes. Along with the suggested changes and recommendations, we provide their theoretical justification (why) and mechanisms (how); the latter is provided as detailed as the research allows.

We will start our recommendations with the ones oriented on the perfection/modification of the Performance Evaluation System as it has a significant role in effective administration of other processes of human resource management (career management, remuneration, training and development, etc.). Developing and putting the Performance Evaluation System into operation is a dynamic process. Respectively, optimizing and making changes to it is a very natural process for the purposes of its enhancement.

Performance Appraisal

What should be done to transform the Performance Evaluation System from being a nonpracticing instrument into a functional one?

We will focus on several key recommendations and base our discussions on the following issues provided in the recommendations:

- Identification and operationalization of valid performance criteria;

- Synchronization of performance criteria with organizational vision and objectives;

- Introduction of minimum standards for Participatory Evaluation System;

- Increase of the competences of representatives/evaluators at the management and other levels and support of perception of the Performance Evaluation System importance;

- Diversification of performance evaluation methods;

- Perfection of the feedback system;

- Modernization of the Performance Evaluation System using modern technologies.

Management of performance evaluation is a systemic process including three interrelated phases: (1) system development; (2) evaluation process; (3) feedback process. As it can be observed from the research, main challenges of the Performance Evaluation System in municipal city halls are related to the flaws emerging at all the three levels of the system formation and its administration.

Appraisal Criteria

Identifying performance standards, objectives and criteria is a complex and critical part of the performance management system. The research demonstrates that the criteria applied in municipal city halls in the **evaluation** process are not well operationalized; the reason of the confusion is the evaluation score system specified in the law and what is meant under excellent performance. Operationalization of the criteria for competence and performance means transformation of abstract concepts into specific, measurable and observable constructs that ensures their being subject to empirical examination and reduces the level of subjectivity in the process of evaluation. In the process of performance evaluation, the competences subject to evaluation should be presented in observable and measurable behavioral terminology. General criteria/competences (e.g. being organized, excellent performance) may be interpreted differently by evaluators if they are not operationalized in behavioral terminology (e.g. working to "deadlines", etc.). **General evaluation criteria are a good "sanctuary" for formal evaluation.** Respectively, evaluation criteria should be modified to make them **measurable, achievable, realistic and time efficient**. Subjective and vague evaluation are problematic for the whole evaluation system and threatens the trust of the employee to it.

Evaluation system has to facilitate specification of objectives and goals; it should also simplify the process of decision-making. The system has to develop measurable responsibilities. Only under such conditions Performance Evaluation System will have the capacity to improve the productivity of the

organization. For this purpose, it is imperative that we have well-operationalized performance evaluation criteria demonstrating organic correlation with organizational goals and objectives.

Synchronization of Evaluation Criteria with Organizational Vision and Objectives

Individual performance is defined as follows: "Behavior linked with the objectives of the organization that can be measured based on the share contributed by the individual to achieve the set objectives (Barrick & Ryan, 2003) p.88). Respectively, in order to evaluate individual performance of a staff member **it is essential to clearly formulate organizational goals as well as indicators defining the success of the organization**; for this purpose, the work of the employee and his evaluation should be directly linked to the organizational goals. **Employees working requirements, standards and, respectively, evaluation criteria should be synchronized with organizational vision and objectives.** In order to introduce an effective Performance Evaluation System, we have to clearly formulate missions and objectives of municipal city halls, identify the key factors leading to the city hall efficiency and success, and the so called *results and performance indicators[7]* – "the areas where the achieved success ensures the efficiency of the organization (Bullen & Rockart, 1981). For the purposes of directing the employees work in the right direction and comply it with the key organizational goals and objectives, the management has to provide all staff members with clear information about the mission and goals of the city hall and key factors contributing to the employees' success. In the process of analyzing the evaluation results, it is important for the employees to see the correlation between the work performed by them and the success of the organization. Each employee has to perceive his/her own share and contribution to the formula defined for the success of the organization. By using the performance evaluation results, the city hall management should obtain highly valuable information about the compatibility of the work performed by its employees with the strategic goals of the organization. Correspondingly, **during the process of evaluation, the focus must be made on the behavior patterns that serve and meet the organizational goals.**

Diversifying Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation system should be based on measurement of such behavior and/or competencies of employees that are related to excellent performance (or associated with it). With a focus on this, we have to apply 4-5 key competencies associated with excellent performance. Their identification and clear operationalization can ensure similar interpretation by employers and evaluators of the competencies to be evaluated. **City halls can define the competencies to be evaluated with pertinent methodological support and development of guiding principles (the so-called guidelines). It is admissible to delegate this function to civil service. However, in this case wide engagement of the city hall employees should be ensured** – receiving feedback from employees and taking them into

---

[7] Results indicators should be used to evaluate wide-scale objectives and long-term goals of the city hall (e.g. timely implemented infrastructure projects.); the results measured using such indicators provide little chance for their improvement, however, are very important for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the organization. Performance indicators refer to short-term goals and objectives and are directly related to revealing flaws in the working process, identifying causes and addressing them.

consideration is very important in this process since employees' involvement in the system development ensures a high level of its appreciation by them.

At the same time, we should bear in mind that evaluation of the work performed by an individual employee should be based on the analysis of his work and respective work instructions. It is essential for city halls to have clearly defined instructions based on job analysis (see below relevant recommendations); first of all, it is important that we have defined work requirements and clear standards for employees.   To inform employees on work requirements and standards is a necessary condition for the effectiveness of the evaluation system.

Participatory Evaluation

Evaluation process is integrally linked with the management philosophy, type of leadership and organizational culture. In some organizational cultures, evaluation is a two-side process and implies co-participation of a subordinate and a manager; central evaluation system (evaluation "from top to bottom") is customary for some cultures. Municipal city halls decided on this approach. We believe the choice should be made in favor of a participatory evaluation; introduction of a participatory evaluation system and applying at least a two-way evaluation system (managers evaluate subordinates and the latter evaluate managers) will be a significant step to system modification at this stage. Involvement of employees in the modification process of performance evaluation is very important. This is the process in which a person to be evaluated also participates in the development of the evaluation system and has the role of an evaluator – he acquires the sense of ownership, more responsibility and motivation to carry out the evaluation process successfully.

Introduction of the participatory evaluation system and application of at least a two-way appraisal will trigger the development of a participatory management style in city halls being an effective mechanism for the prevention of formality of the performance evaluation system. At this stage, it would be desirable **to introduce at least this minimum standard of the participatory evaluation system – subordinates should be given an opportunity to evaluate their managers** (namely, evaluate their managerial skills – clear goal setting, support, etc.). Such desire was recurrently expressed by employees within the frames of the research.

Evaluators' Competency

Validity of any evaluation procedure is defined by how precisely it reflects actual discrepancies between different levels of performance as well as the contribution made by a specific individual to achieve the common goal. Similar evaluation of employees by evaluators and lack of differentiation poses a threat on the performance validity process. The problem of performance-based differentiation of employees by evaluators is conditioned by the following several factors: desire to maintain good relations with employees and avoid conflicts, confirmation of expediency of low evaluation, risk of increasing the number of complaints, etc. However, the challenges existing in the performance evaluation system in municipal city halls are caused **by the lack of perception of the importance of the system and relevant competences of evaluators (representatives of different managerial levels).** Relevant knowledge and training are important for fair, impartial and qualified evaluation.   By providing comprehensive training and additional educational resources to evaluators,

we can facilitate better understanding of the importance of the performed work and of how the whole process of evaluation affects the improvement of results and city hall effectiveness. Respectively, training sessions should be planned in a way that would ensure competence increase in performance evaluation and **should be focused on the perception of the importance of performance evaluation. Training sessions should be used as a strategy for the appreciation of changes and getting used to them.** We have to perceive that objective and transparent to the maximum extent evaluation of the employees is one of the most effective ways of dealing with personnel issues. Success or failure of a new evaluation system depends on how much an employee is confident that his manager will be able to apply the new instrument of performance evaluation in a competent and professional manner. Communication, cooperation, trust and ethical behavior are important factors in the management evaluation that affect motivation and performance of people to be evaluated and, respectively, demonstrate the effectiveness of the evaluation system; consequently, significant work is to be carried out in this sphere.

Performance Appraisal and Feedback System

The main benchmark of the modern performance evaluation system management is professional growth and development. Performance evaluation should facilitate identification of employees' professional development needs, rational management of career planning and development process and, at the same time, it must organically conform with labor remuneration system that would ensure the growth of motivation of employees and their retention. There is no regulatory problem in this respect – the entry in resolution #220[8] states that performance evaluation shall be the precondition for career development, enhancement of professional skills, encouragement, professional development needs and other outcomes as stated in the legislation. However, the entries made in the law are less functional in practice: the increment defined by law is so insignificant that it cannot serve as a stimulus or motivator for employees; contribution of performance evaluation results to a person's promotion is also negligible.

Respectively, **first of all, performance evaluation system needs to be modified to address the challenges, and then it should be actually linked with positive results (feedback, salary, promotion, training). This is a necessary condition for making the performance evaluation system a functional instrument for achieving organizational goals.** In this process, it is important that we identify organizational objectives of municipal services and link them to policy documents (middle-term strategies, program budgets of municipalities, etc.); in addition, evaluation system should be connected with the reward system - this connection, rewarding good performance and preventing bad one, can greatly contribute to the formation of organizational values and its effectiveness.

---

[8] Resolution #220 of the GOG on The Approval of the Rules and Conditions for Evaluation of Professional Civil Servants.

Evaluation Methods

Selection of the method to be used depends on the goal of the evaluation, what type of work the employees perform and how is interpreted good performance.

A two-side evaluation is better and implies participation of subordinates and managers. Management style, culture and organizational traits must be taken into consideration. Otherwise, introduction of performance evaluation system might be not desirable but can have negative impact instead.

Evaluation should be conducted at least twice a year. The latest evaluation models are not characterized by long cycles since performance evaluation should ensure quick feedback in order to improve performance. Hence, it is important that we formalize the evaluation process and simplify administration. At this stage, it is expedient to modify and diversify the existing methods instead of offering new ones. We believe, the focus should be made on scale evaluation so that its advantages are used effectively and risks are controlled. Its administration twice a year will enable us to observe in dynamic the contributions made by employees. First of all, a list of competencies to be evaluated should be developed: (1) for managers (focused on managerial skills and critical factors defining the effectiveness of managerial activity), and (2) for employees (critical factors defining effective functioning). Main indicators of performance evaluation should be developed and formulated in a manner understandable for all employees.

Application of the so called scale method is the most adequate in this case. Interview on evaluation-related issues may have a summarizing nature and be used once, at the end of the year.

Modernization of methodology of the system would be expedient in future. We have to consider the application of management by objectives (MbO)[9] method which is an effective procedure for measuring the share of an individual contributed to the organization's success. The method supposes agreement between an employer and an employee on periodic control of the objectives of the employee and their implementation. However, its application requires more competency and pertinent organizational environment and culture. That's why, at this stage we believe that the main goal is perception of the importance of performance evaluation system, improvement and diversification of the existing system in municipal city halls. At the beginning the process should be managed by Civil Service Bureau with the support of relevant professional organization.

New Technologies and Performance Management

Development of information technologies significantly simplified administration of human resource management process. The role of information technologies in the development and introduction of performance evaluation system has been growing lately. Technological progress has substantially eased performance evaluation process management, too. In addition, surveys demonstrate that the use of computers has positive effect on the evaluation process and feedback (HANDBOOK OF INDUSTRIAL, WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, Volume 1, 2005). In case of introduction of participatory evaluation system in municipalities, an effective way of its administration might be the use of information technologies that may remove great uneasiness. For example, a manager receives a cumulative evaluation made by employees but is not able to point out who wrote what. At the same

---

[9] Civil Service Bureau has the resource on this subject developed in 2019 with the support of Giz.

time, evaluations provided by the manager to the employees in an electronic form does not have social characteristics being a significant challenge for the evaluation process in municipal city halls. Development-oriented evaluation and feedback may still stay a function for face-to-face meetings.

In the era of artificial intellect and Big Data, process management does not have to face the problems related to documentation and administration. First of all, it is important that we react to the challenges existing in the performance evaluation system and look for optimal information-technological solutions in the administration process. All the more so as the introduction and integration of e-governance are one of the most important components of civil service reform and have a high priority along with decentralization, anticorruption activity and other directions of the reform. E-governance implies not only the introduction of electronic resources but also transformation of functions and interactions. It should also be considered that based on the available data, e-governance has been introduced and successfully implemented in the countries and administrative units that are at low level of technological development (UNDP, 2015).

Career Advancement Opportunities

Career achievement is not only the result of investments made by a person into the development of his/her skills; the share made by the organization for the career development of its employees is also important (e.g. availability of professional development that usually should be transformed into individual achievements). However, high level of competencies and good performance are not always "translated" into career advancement because of the barriers in career mobility. These barriers are often created by irrationally planned career regulations or non-meritocratic human resource management. Respectively, an organization has a special role in the dynamic process of managing individual and organizational investments while fair regulations for career advancement are decisive.

Among the functions of human resource management, career advancement opportunities are especially important for civil servants. The key goal of organizational career management is the support to employees' professional achievements that is demonstrated in the promotion based on the organization's goal and salary increase. However, career advancement acquired a form of a wider concept than just remuneration and status (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005) and became related to life design (planning). Respectively, the worries of those employed in city halls about limited opportunities for career advancement are not unexpected.

Career success may be subjective, meaning the satisfaction of an individual with all his career aspects, as well as an objective implying tangible professional achievement, including career advancement, that were evaluated by others. Employees invest their time, efforts, competencies, knowledge, capacity and skills in the organization expecting some benefits/return on investment in the form of compensation or positive changes (competencies and status) in their career portfolio. Due to limited career advancement opportunities, expectations of the people working in city halls are not realized resulting in their dissatisfaction and sense of organizational injustice. The new rule for career advancement, promotion and internal competitions substituted the practice of making decisions singlehandedly; though, in parallel with increasing the level of justice and objectivity, **it limited civil servants' promotion opportunities to some extent.**

We will point out several mechanisms that might help remove barriers on the way to career advancement.

1. In case the performance evaluation system becomes a functional instrument, a *competition* as **the only and mandatory** precondition might be removed and substituted by some rational prerequisites. The following two ways for promotion might turn out to be more flexible: **(1) competitions** as defined by the regulations in force (the results of performance evaluation, minimum qualification requirements and interview results are taken into consideration); and **(2) promotion without competition** based on the recommendation of a manager supported by well-grounded arguments about an extraordinary contribution made by the employee to meet the organizational goals. In such cases prerequisites must be broken down in details (e.g. what an extraordinary contribution means); **availability of clearly elaborated rules/regulations is important, e.g. defining quotas and their ceiling in order to limit the risks and manipulations caused by political patronage.** We believe, such approach will add to the flexibility of the decision-making process related to career advancement.

2. **Making changes to and redesigning the process of assigning classes to civil servants** is also desirable. It should not take a distinguished employee, having made significant contribution to the implementation of organizational goals, 20-25 years to achieve the highest category.

    Performance evaluation and a well-grounded recommendation of a direct supervisor should be an alternative way of assigning categories to the employees whose share in achieving the organizational goal is high.

3. In addition, it should also be mentioned that assigning categories is not perceived by employees as a meaningful career award since the accompanying salary increase is below the threshold of perception (it is so small and insignificant that does not evoke the sense of satisfaction in employees) and, respectively, assigning classes is considered by employees as just a formal procedure – a part of employees participating in the research didn't even know which category they had been assigned.

    To make this instrument functional for career advancement, we have not only to modify the rule of assigning categories but we should also increase the increment related to the category type. However, resources and political will are important for the initiation of the above process.

We have to take into consideration that present-day employees are no longer content with the roles and positions reflecting the interests of the organization and managers. They wish for higher job satisfaction and more opportunities for career choice. Human resource management structural unit should enhance the support of employees' professional development and suggest city hall employees more career management-related initiatives; it is desirable for human resource management structural units to have career development programs in their organizations; self-survey instruments (of skills, interests, job attitudes, etc.) should ensure the provision of information about education and career opportunities to employees to the maximum extent; enable employees to get involved in development programs and assist them in elaboration of personal development ones. To do so, they should be trained in the sphere of career management. All these changes will diminish the feeling of

career development opportunities being limited in municipal city halls that will have a negative impact on their trust to the organization and the quality of working life.

It should be noted once again that these changes should be implemented with great caution to avoid the emergence of a faulty system where a high level of nepotism and political influence will have more impact than the decision made based on the qualifications and the performance by an employee.

Career development is a strategic process in the organization that aims at increasing the efficiency of the organization through maximization of an individual's career potential. Career management in city halls should be focused on the objectives and goals set by the organization; strong knowledge of the career path, performance evaluation of employees and objective assessment of their potential, educational and training programs, tailoring employees career plans to the organization's requirements, and searching for "additional ways" of career advancement might be one of the ways of addressing turnover problems of competent and qualified personnel from the system.

Training and Development

Training **is a planned and systemic process** of behavior changes that in case of effective planning and administration facilitates the increase of productivity and efficiency of the organization. Despite training and development activities being evaluated as the most effective in municipal city halls, there still are some challenges in the sphere that require timely reaction**. Adaptation with organizational changes is one of the goals of training.** This instrument was not effectively applied in the process of performance evaluation since, as it was demonstrated from the research results, the growth of evaluators' competencies and perception of performance evaluation still remains an important challenge.

Usually, civil sector budget, among them the resources allotted for training purposes are significantly low compared to those allocated for education and development in the private sector **Invalid source specified.** As the research demonstrates, employee's professional development is encouraged in city halls. Within the frames of civil service reform, encouragement of professional development and resources allocated for this purpose from the salary fund create general positive dynamics in this sphere; however, at the same time, municipal city halls do not often dispose the financial resources due to subjective as well as objective reasons including procedural problems related to the obligation of a tender announcement.

There are other problems as well, especially the ones related to mandatory training sessions (the so called adaptation training) that equip the employees with specific knowledge. The research demonstrates **that it is needed to offer training sessions tailored to the actual needs of employees. However, in order to do so we need to methodologically improve training needs analysis and training effectiveness evaluation systems**. The main goal of organizational training enhances such competencies of personnel that would enable them to master in dealing with job-related tasks (Weinert, 2001); just involving employees in training sessions and setting quantitative indicators of training sessions are not important.

Introduction and Application of Instruments for Analyzing Training Needs

The first necessary step for effective training and generally for any planned changes is clear elaboration of the goals that could be achieved through those changes. Assessment of training needs is a data collection process through which problematic segments can be identified. It demonstrates the types of training needed and, respectively, defines priority directions for employees' professional development that would assist the city halls or an individual to achieve the set goals. **Organizational, operational and individual guidelines for analysis should be developed** for comprehensive evaluation of training needs. Organizational analysis is important in order to link organizational needs (current and potential problems) with training goals and results. In case of incompatibility between work requirements and capacity (operational analysis), we have to analyze *whether the training is an effective instrument to eliminate incompatibility*. In order to obtain an answer to this question, it is also important that we evaluate the baseline skills of an individual, his motivation, readiness to accept changes, etc.

It should be noted that in countries with centralized training system, needs identification is the prerogative of a training center. However, even in such case Human Resource Management Department is obliged to review career development plans of its employees (OECD & SIGMA, 1997). Human resource management specialists in municipal city halls should be equipped with knowledge and instruments needed for the analysis of training needs, or this function should be delegated and reconciled with those of Civil Service Bureau. It is obvious that the first approach is more relevant – along with the importance of enhanced competencies there and then, it is much easier to identify the needs of city halls at the spot.

Identifying the need for training and development is the fundamental phase of training planning. If we want to facilitate professional development of the city hall employees taking into consideration the priority directions for individuals and organizations, we have to introduce a methodologically operative system for training needs analysis. In order to do so, we have to develop training analysis guidelines, and people responsible for the matter should be trained.

Training Methods

Training and development should be perceived as a sustainable process for the development of opportunities. However, training sessions and development programs, being relatively short-term, in municipal city halls are still oriented on the provision of information, program budget funds spent while **quantitative indicators are often used** for measuring the success. It is noteworthy that such practice is mainly encountered in the civil sector of developing and less developed countries (Healy 2001). This approach should be changes since an effective design of training sessions and interactive methods, time needed to develop practical skills and exercises significantly define training effectiveness.

It is very important that municipal city halls have clearly articulated requirements for provider; e.g. while developing a training module, they should take into consideration that the training should be planned so that it would ensure not only knowledge improvement but also effective application of the knowledge gained at the training in practice. Training format, content and teaching methods should be appropriately selected to ensure effective transfer of the knowledge acquired at the training into

the working process. In addition, effective mechanisms for quality regulation should be introduced in which evaluation of training effectiveness has a decisive role.

Introduction and Application of Instruments for Evaluation of Training Results Effectiveness

Training evaluation and permanent monitoring (process and results) relative to its goals and objectives is important; it is essential to observe how the training changed personnel practice and behavior at work and how these changes affect the performance efficiency of the training participants. Generally, evaluation of training results effectiveness is an important instrument for **training quality control**. For the purpose of quality regulation and enhancement of training programs, training sessions should be evaluated at the following four levels: **(1) reaction assessment** (what the participants think about the training); **(2) learning assessment** (whether the knowledge and capacity have improved); **(3) behavior assessment** (whether the acquired knowledge is introduced and applied in practice); **(4) results assessment** (training impact on performance quality and achievements) (Kirkpatrick, 2007). However, evaluation of the fact how the acquired knowledge has been transferred into a real working situation and how it improved the performance results are decisive in the assessment of training effectiveness. Recommendations developed for the civil service in this regard are as follows: it is desirable to have the data gained as a result of in-depth learning obtained at the working place of the employee through application of different methods (OECD & SIGMA, 1997) attached to the information collected by a training center from questionnaires. Instruments and guidelines for the assessment of training effectiveness should be developed as in case of training needs analysis. In parallel, support of the people responsible for this matter is necessary.

Coping with Organizational Difficulties

The obligation of announcing tenders creates a barrier for city halls and organizations offering training sessions to customers. These organizational problems have to be solved.

Offering specialized training sessions tailored to the employees' actual needs (along with putting into operation right mechanisms for training quality control) and introduction of additional and different format of activities for qualification improvement (mentoring) might be the way for the solution of current problems.

After having reacted to current challenges, some steps towards modernization of training and development activities should be planned. Training has long been more than just seminars held indoors, and it includes strategies for hand-on training sessions, learning with the help of internet technologies, education and simulation strategies (Berman, Bowman, West, & Van Wart, 2016).

Personnel Selection

At the outset, we would like to note that the selection practice based on the meritocratic principle is important not only for its distinguished role in the formation of human capital; **selection practice**

based on the meritocratic principle is a significant leverage for the prevention of political influence since the professionals selected through fair selection procedures are more self-confident, less vulnarable and susceptible to such influence.

Please, see below some possible ways of the reaction to the challenges encountered in the selection process held in city halls:

- Decrease employment-related barriers for youth in the civil sector;

- Diversify the ways of attracting people by municipalities and develop recruitment strategy;

- Diversify selection methods;

- Balance open and closed competitions.

Decreasing Existing Barriers for Youth Employment in Civil sector

Selection criteria that artificially limit applicants chances to be hired impedes the efforts directed to diversification of labor force and often excludes the possibility of recruiting such candidates that might turn out to be the best performers (Sullivan 2002). Young and qualified people often face such restraints at municipal city halls. Requiring **a multi-year mandatory experience** (along with low salaries and limited career advancement opportunities) is a significant barrier for attracting young people to civil servants' positions. Based on our and survey participants' general assessment, this approach should be reconsidered.

What could be done to enable young cadre having high potential to be employed in city halls? We believe that in order to solve the problem, municipal city halls should apply internship and/or temporary workforce practice. **Internship and internship results could be used to offset mandatory working experience requirement for young people.** One of the productive ways for attracting youth might be acknowledgement of internship period as actual working experience that requires relevant changes to legislation.

We can effectively apply the State Internship Program for this purpose. Many graduates residing in a municipality may want to be employed in the city hall and their academic achievements (GPA) could be used as a selection criterion (university ratings should also be discussed/considered in this process). Internship will allow **municipal city halls carefully observe the capacity and potential of young people during performance process,** select the best ones and offer relevant positions; **in case of the best evaluation and a cogent recommendation, young people should have an opportunity to be hired for the third range position where their potential could be used more effectively.** Reasonable application of internship will also allow city halls to develop a pool of potential applicants that will ease the process of future selection. This approach has a significant advantage. As demonstrated by surveys, before being hired for a permanent position in the organization, interns acquire working experience that increases the odds for their retention in the civil sector (Doverspike, Taylor, Shultz and McKay 2000). It is not an insignificant argument taking into consideration high turnover risks in the civil sector. Substitution of mandatory working experience for internship results will remove artificially created barriers for young people and increase the validity of a selection process as we will

be able to prognosticate the effectiveness of a future employees with higher precision through observing the process of their performance.

There is one more way that can serve as a substitution for **mandatory working experience requirement** for young people and **this is evaluation of applicants using standardized tests along with the obligation of maintaining the probation period**.

We would like to draw your attention to the benefits of re-introduction of skills assessment practice when selecting new employees (not limited to young people only). The research demonstrates that objectivity and fairness of interviews are problematic and very sensitive. Based on this conclusion, we can infer that there is a necessity for diversification of standardized methods and application of objective ones instead. In addition, assessing cognitive skills using reliable and valid instruments in case of objective administration, **is an important mechanism for the prevention of nepotism and politically motivated personnel-related decisions in municipal city halls.**

First, we will explain why assessment of cognitive skills in the selection process is important and then we will focus on the problem of availability of valid tests for municipal city halls.

Assessment of General Cognitive Skills and Diversification of Selection Methods

Skills are the foundation for responding appropriately to life's demands and adapting to the environment. Without them no problem could be resolved, and in the case of sufficient motivation, this competence enables the employee to perform to a high standard. The term **general cognitive skills** refers to the ability to adequately perceive and process information, reason logically, perceive essential connections between events. It shows up in the form of universal intellectual operations (analysis, synthesis, generalization, abstraction, etc.). **Cognitive skills** can be described as components of the ability to **learn and adapt** (Jensen, 1980; Schmidt, 2002; Sternberg & Detterman, 1986). The main purpose of using an ability test in the selection process is to forecast how well a candidate will do in a particular job using this or that skill. Assessment of general cognitive ability is an *assessment of a learning potential* - people with high cognitive skills acquire more knowledge about work faster. The application mechanism for abilities assessment in the selection process looks as follows: those acquiring job-related information quickly and well, perform better (Schmidt & Hunter, 2004). However, the more complex the job is, the more important it is to assess general cognitive skills during the selection process (Hunter, 1986).

Municipal city halls mainly use the interviewing method in the selection process, which also allows the assessment of the applicant's intellectual abilities to a certain degree. Then there might come up the question, *why an ability test is recommended then?* **The combined application of the two methods is more beneficial than the application of each predictor/method separately. The use of both methods gives higher validity to the selection process.**[10] It is obvious that none of the methods, including general cognitive ability test or interview, is a unique method for selecting employees and only by combining them can the desired outcome be achieved. The civil servants' involved in the research had varied views on the assessment of general cognitive skills, although they agreed that having objective

---

[10] When using jointly a structured interview and a general mental ability test, the validity coefficient equals to 0.63, while using an interview alone or a general intelligence test, the coefficient drops to 0.51.

instruments in the selection process is necessary as the interview leaves a lot of space for subjectivity. Concurrently, **testing-based selection builds more trust in the community and helps form views on the meritocracy of the selection process**.

Availability of reliable, valid standardized tests is a challenge for municipalities. This is not a local problem. Employee selection tests are not available for developing countries and transitional economies, and at the same time, valid instruments represent a financial burden due to their high cost (WPSR 2005). In collaboration with several professional organizations currently operating in Georgia, it has become feasible to create relevant instruments and update them on a regular basis.

An easier solution is to "certify" applicants automatically if they have passed the Unified Masters Exam Skills Tests (with a three-month probationary period for beginners, along with other procedures prescribed by the law for all other applicants), in which case the main prerequisite is a Master's Degree from an accredited higher educational institution. Job-related cognitive skills tests for the selection process are built differently than the exam tests used for educational purposes, which is one of the model's shortcomings. For office jobs, **clerical skills test**s are commonly employed. The share of such jobs in municipal city hall is high. We believe that applications of clerical ability tests to diversify the selection process for relevant positions would be an appropriate option. Clerical skills tests measure a person's ability to read and comprehend instructions, analyze reports, conduct basic math, sort records, and so on. Consequently, the clerical skills test comprehensively assesses a person's ability to perceive different details (numbers, letters, symbols, images, shapes, etc.) quickly and correctly and in a possible shortest period of time; to interpret/analyze them (for example, find differences, detect errors, etc.) and to draw conclusions. Having clerical skills is important for a wide range of jobs, but it is especially vital in the professions that, as a rule, require a high level of attention to details. For a specific set of occupations, this instrument can even replace a cognitive skills test.

Diversification of Employee Recruitment Channels by Municipalities and Development of Recruitment Strategy

The employer's recruitment strategy outlines the methods and means used to find qualified candidates for open positions. The organization's reputation, solvency, social responsibilities and other benefits, all play a role in attracting applicants. Municipal city halls are less appealing to qualified workers due to poor salary and limited career advancement opportunities. The civil sector in many countries face similar challenges due to slow, bureaucratic regulations and bureaucratic procedures of promotion. To boost the organization's attractiveness to applicants, they strive to make recruitment procedures more "friendly" and transparent by adopting new procedures and technology advancements (Lavigna and Hays 2004). **We believe that diversification of personnel recruitment channels and development of recruitment strategies by municipal city halls will be one possible response to the current challenges**. This can be accomplished through the use of electronic media, social media, local television, staff references, feedback from successful students in the municipality, among other things. Determining exactly what combination of sources and methods of locating applicants will be used for a certain vacancy is an important component of a program for attracting employees. The municipality's human resources department should devise a plan for attracting applicants taking into account their own needs as well as current context. **They should not limit themselves to a passive role** (for example, just posting ads on hr.gov.ge).

Identifying talents should receive the most attention and resources during the recruitment process. Due to a scarcity of qualified personnel, this appears a difficult task. One way to maximize the recruitment and selection process is to **further decentralize the selection process** within the city hall**,** thus, increasing the responsibilities of middle-level managers; the discretion of individual structures and their leaders in the selection process should be increased, despite the risk of abuse of these rights (Berman, West, & Van Wart, 2016)

Balancing Open and Closed Competitions

Giving advantage to closed competitions is a functional instrument for encouraging employees at a city hall and fostering their "organizational growth." At the same time, decision-making and forecasting are also simplified, but we must remember that the organization sometimes requires injection of new blood, new ideas, and innovative, non-standard approaches to work ... The greatest way to achieve the latter is through open competitions. Open competition is capable to meet effectively the organization's needs in this direction and satisfy its requirements.

Future Perspectives on Modernization of Selection Practices

It is also necessary to modernize selection practices in future. Organizations in the civil sector have moved from narrow and unique job specifications to the use of broader behavioral attributes (Page, Hood and Lodge 2005). In this regard, the complex methodology of the *Assessment Center*, which comprises several methods (different types of tests, interviews, group exercises, simulations) is important. It is still considered the gold standard in the civil sector and is widely used in the United Kingdom and several other countries (WPSR 2005, 83). The Assessment Center's methodology is used not only for selection purposes but also for professional development and advancement. Its main advantage is transparency and high degree of recognition of results by applicants. This method, due to its high cost, is mainly used for the selection of senior managers. We believe that introduction of the Assessment Center methodology for closed competitions will be important in future.

Determining the Design of the Selection Process Based on Job Analysis

Because the degree of relevance of employees' skills and abilities, motivation, and attitudes to the work of the staff, among other factors, determines the effectiveness of the organization, it is obvious that the main goal of the staff selection-distribution process is to achieve similar maximum compliance. The process of determining the suitability of an employee and a job, on its part, depends on **comprehensive study of labor activities**, **its description and analysis**. **Hence, selection methods and the design of the selection process should be determined in accordance with the qualification requirements identified as a result of job analysis.** However**, job analysis is considered the basis of all human resource management processes.** Therefore, in the next section we will focus on this critically important issue.

Job Analysis

Job analysis is a systematic process that defines in the terms of performed work activities (tasks) and outlines the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (knowlage, skills, abilities and other characteristics - KSAOs) that an employee must possess in order to perform the job successfully. In

the recommendations section, we highlighted the importance of job analysis in developing a performance appraisal system, and we indicated that a specific, job-related appraisal system can be formed based on the results of job analysis. The appraisal system becomes more personalized at the expense of job-specific examples. The role of job analysis in identifying training needs and developing relevant training programs is particularly important, which is one of the challenges in municipal city halls. It should be noted that the formation of compensation systems, career management in the organization is also based on job analysis. Consequently, clearly defined job requirements (descriptive part of job analysis) and qualification requirements (analytical part of job analysis) are crucial. Through the efforts of the Civil Service Bureau, municipal city halls have had significant support in the process of job analysis and job descriptions. However**, the descriptions (in the form in which they exist today in municipal city halls) are not a functional instrument for achieving those important goals that the job analysis has in the administration of various HRM activities.** *One of the self-government experts noted "Job descriptions are pretty generic. The addition of the 'and other' component while listing the functions adds to the ambiguity... they all appear to be alike, so what can be done based on them? As a result, the performance appraisal method is flawed. Job descriptions are in direct connection with selection and training - I need to know what he does in order to figure out which competencies he needs to develop.*" Job descriptions are more tailored to people than to jobs, as evidenced by interviews with human resource management experts. A methodologically sound approach and standardized processes are required for the job analysis process. We believe that additional work in the city halls is required in this direction. The resolution of this problem must be assigned either to a professional organization, or city hall HRs must be thoroughly prepared in order to conduct methodologically sound, detailed job analyses for all positions in the city hall. On a content and methodological level, it is vital to enhance HRM service representatives' awareness of the essence and value of job analysis.

Preparation of the Framework of the Civil servants' Competencies

It should be emphasized that in many organizations today the competency model is replacing the traditional approach of job analysis. **The competency model focuses more on the connection between the work and the organization's strategic goals.** In addition, **competency-based selection models are also more complicated**. If the goal of the job analysis is to better realize and measure job assignments, **the competency model tries to influence how those assignments are carried out within a given role in order to meet the organization's strategic goals.** Providing high-quality civil services requires competency-based models.

We believe that it is necessary *to prepare a framework for well-operationalized competencies of civil servants* with a consistent approach to human resource management activities. It provides competency-based human resource management that will help achieve the goals set by a city hall and the state (vertical integration). This is important because overall, human resource management is more than the sum of individual activities taken together (horizontal integration) (WPSR, 2005). The Civil Service Bureau has already accomplished some work, but to make it a valuable instrument for human resource management more effort is needed in this direction. The list of competencies required for effective public governance can be limitless. However, application of the competencies framework has a number of advantages, including assisting organizations to communicate their goals and needs, enhances collaboration between employees to the point that all employees are aware of

their role in achieving those goals, and improves the system of the selection, assessment, training and development processes. The essential competencies must be integrated into all human resource management activities, including selection, performance appraisal, promotion, training and development, compensation, success planning, and career management, so that the competency model be functional.

Diversity Management

In the municipal city hall where ethnic minorities prevail, significant efforts are needed, first and foremost, to support civil servants to learn the state language. In some of such municipal city halls, the employees of ethnic minorities having language barriers predominate. In addition to supporting learning of the state language, until the problem is resolved, it is necessary to translate training materials into appropriate language to ensure that minorities have access to vocational training. It is also critical to adapt and translate the regulations that govern the selection process and other HRM activities.

Minority employment is crucial in the city halls of ethnically diverse municipalities because members of the relevant demographic group are better prepared to respond to the specific needs of the minority population. (It should be noted that in some municipalities, the Georgian population is the minority, and hence, this recommendation applies to them too.) This approach is important for a city hall to provide effective services to minority representatives in the municipality.

Increasing environmental adaptability and employment opportunities for people with disabilities should be given first priority. This is critical to establishing meritocratic principles. So, quotas may be established. In this regard, international experience may be considered (for example, in the Czech Republic a selection quota of 4 and in Slovenia a 2-percent quota is provided for persons with disabilities); given that women face certain barriers in terms of promotion, it is also possible to use the same approach in promotion to support gender balance as it happened in the Czech Republic[11].

Decentralization

Human resource management in municipal city halls is a more of a reactive than proactive process. It mainly focuses it attention on operational activities; the strategic planning function is performed by the Civil Service Bureau. The function of the latter is to establish goal-oriented, unified, standardized and, at the same time, methodologically sound practices in civil sector. Such redistribution of functions has played its positive role in the field of human resource management in municipal city halls due to the shortage of competencies. However, the focus on process unification has facilitated its centralization. At this stage, it is important to concentrate on the optimal redistribution of job roles, as well as of rights and responsibilities between the central institution and the relevant services of city

---

[11] https://www.oecd.org/gov/pem/hrpractices.htm

halls, on the greater delegation of functions and on achieving the optimal balance between centralization and decentralization, so that municipal city halls are able to **timely respond to their own specific needs**. However, decentralization does not stop the Civil Service Bureau from having an important strategic role, such as developing regulatory frameworks, supporting professional development focused on civil sector challenges, creating training resources, and so on. The Civil Service Bureau, as the central coordinator of these and other important processes, should ensure an integrated and holistic approach of human resource management. Simultaneously, it should place a greater emphasis on the delegation of rights and support for exercising real self-governance. The latter is a crucial issue since *according to experts*, self-government is not considered a policymaker in the matters of local importance (within its competence). Only in the context of systemic change, when the mayor truly depends on the local community, can there be a genuine increase in accountability to the population (and not to the central government).

The process of decentralization of human resource management is a *part of the larger picture;* without genuine self-governance and system transformation, *relatively* local changes are unlikely to have an effective impact on challenges existing in self-governance; however, it can provide a significant impulse to genuine self-governance, as "HR's role in civil service reform is critical for acquiring and developing new skills, changing old behavior, as well as acquiring the knowledge necessary to adapt to a changing environment and developing adaptive skills" (LAHOUEL, 2015). Raising awareness on self-government issues and fostering professional development simultaneously with the **decentralization of human resource management processes will give a significant impulse to and prepare municipalities for greater systemic changes and genuine self-governance**. Transformation of regulations developed by the Civil Service Bureau into shorter, less bureaucratic and competitive normative bylaws will allow municipal city halls, and the civil service in general, to adapt to current social, demographic and other changes and, most importantly, to enable municipal city halls to respond more effectively and efficiently to the needs of their population.

International experience should also be taken into consideration in this process. A country-by-country analysis conducted by EUPACK (European Public Administration Country Knowledge) confirms that the most important goals in the civil sector are, on the one hand, to increase flexibility and reduce costs, and, on the other, to promote increase in staff qualifications and meritocracy. The main challenge - to reduce and eliminate political influences – still pertains. With significantly tighter human resources and a smaller budget, European civil service reform has aimed at achieving better results. As the experts in this field note: "*No one in Georgia has undertaken optimization or has estimated how many employees were needed to perform job well in Georgia. This resulted in a significant increase in administrative costs. In terms of political influence, civil servants have adapted to current legislation and learnt how to act to avoid detection of violation.* "One way to overcome existing problems is by careful, reasonable personnel optimization, among other adjustments.

Decentralization and introduction of effective accountability mechanisms at all levels, as well as more autonomy and redistribution of responsibilities, will force municipal city halls to focus on finding and retaining qualified staff and respecting professionalism in the personnel. As part of the process, they have to learn to delegate rights and allow civil servants more autonomy.

To sum up, it should be said that **genuine self-governance can be achieved through a systemic approach to political will and changes. Civil service reform, with its timely response to the needs uncovered by the research, will become a more functional instrument to support meritocratic human resource management. By creating relevant conditions for the development of competencies and delegating rights, with minimal bureaucracy, it should** *give a significant impulse to exercising genuine self-governance*.

Supporting Professional Development of Human Resource Management Specialists

The key prerequisite of almost all initiatives and changes described in this chapter is the systematic support to human resource specialists to increase their competencies in the municipal city halls.

First of all, it is important to mention that the function of human resource management is much more complex than many employees of this field in the municipal city halls think. And this is understandable given that the majority have not received relevant academic education in this sphere. Consequently, they are not clearly aware of their vital role in achieving organizational goals; in addition, they do not have adequate level of technical knowledge and abilities necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to them. On the other hand, while performing their duties, they face certain challenges in the municipal city halls, including lack of awareness of the contribution of human resource management on the part of the city hall management, which is the result of their limited perception of the role of human resource management.

Mentioned circumstances make us think that efforts should be made to address both problems. However, a complex training of the human resource management specialists shall still remain crucial. As their competencies and the performance quality improve, the vital role of this field and the need to cooperate with human resource management specialists as *strategic partners* should also become apparent to the management.

It is important to audit/study the performance of the human resource management specialists employed in the municipal city halls, as this action will detect their needs and the direction for their professional development. This may be conducted by an external evaluator invited by the self-government. A framework of relevant work, as well as provision of feedback is important for them. It is necessary to develop effective mechanisms for human resource management accountability, identify goals and monitor performance. These goals should be integrated with the goals and the mission of the organization. It is necessary to revise and modify job instructions of human resource management specialists, their job descriptions - turning important personnel management functions into actual work activities. Along with professional development, it is necessary to strengthen their authorities, increase the degree of their involvement in the processes. Coaching and training will enable them to achieve the desired result, on the other hand, management will perceive them as "strategically valuable assets".

Involvement of professional organizations in the training process at the early stage of strengthening the abilities of human resource management representatives may be the most instrumental and effective. The skills building process should have systematic and continuous character. Several critical steps may be involved in this process: 1. **general training in HRM**, in which HRM representatives from all municipalities will gain in-depth knowledge of key theoretical issues. This will help them in self-reflection and assist them to identify the direction they require support. 2. **Special courses in HRM**

(staff selection, training and development, performance appraisal, HR analytics, etc.) which should be in-depth, maximally hands-on courses integrating formative assessment. It is also feasible to introduce a mentoring program that will provide municipalities with a mentor in the HRM field who will provide methodological support to HRs in the management of various processes. Such support process is facilitated by the availability of remote communications in city halls, which is less of a barrier after the pandemic. The experience-sharing sessions, which may take on a permanent character, are a significant source of development. Sharing successful and unsuccessful practices will help HRM specialists properly anticipate and effectively manage expected challenges. Clearly, in line with this process, it is necessary to prepare new training resources and increase access to the most-up-to-date knowledge in the field of human resources management.

To sum up, **increasing investment in human resource management personnel is an essential prerequisite for the effectiveness of civil service reform**. Simultaneously, the trust of the city hall management and Civil Service Bureau to human resource management personnel should be enhanced, which will be reflected in the delegation of rights by the Civil Service Bureau following the increase of competencies; city hall management should realize that they will best serve their own organizations and the people of the municipalities when they have highly qualified, competent staff in the field of human resource management and, at the same time, constantly encourage their professional development.

Reputation of the City Hall and Communication with the Public

The Civil Service Reform Concept states that "creation of a well-functioning and transparent civil service system is the **basis for increasing public confidence in the state**". The concept also claims that delays in the reform over time have caused public frustration since ongoing reforms in recent years have had fragmentary nature and focused on short-term outcomes.

The reputation of municipalities was assessed using crucial characteristics/dimensions that are important for civil sector reputation (bureaucratic reputation). In academic surveys or proved approaches of organizational reputation assessment, civil sector reputation is assessed based on four key components, in addition to total, general reputation (positive or negative perception of the organization's reputation by stakeholders): 1. Competence and performance quality; 2. Empathy; Fair attitude towards the society, beneficiaries; 3. Adherence to rules, procedures and effectiveness of decisions; 4. Ability/resource to deal with a difficult circumstances. This is the approach we used in our research. Although proceeding from the functions and goals of the city hall, we identified the population living in the municipality as a preferred research segment, the perceptions of civil servants about what the population of the municipalities think about the reputation of the city hall were also assessed.[12]

In the framework of the research, practically in all municipalities, the total assessment of the reputation of the municipalities by the population and the assessment relevant to the above factors turned out to be very critical and, in most cases, even negative. In addition to objective factors (shortcomings in the activities of municipalities, nepotism, political influence, etc.), ineffective

---

[12] The opinions of civil servants were used as additional, complementary information to better understand the factors that contribute to current reputation and to identify practical approaches for its improvement.

approaches and strategies of public relations and communication were also identified as contributors to negative reputation[13]. As one of the self-government experts noted, "*The civil service is basically a closed system. From the outside, it is usually not clear what is being done in there... there is a feeling that nobody does anything. The population has a little information about what is being done inside*".

Since the recommendations already discussed aim at increasing the efficiency of the city hall as a whole, **this time we will concentrate on the issue of communication with the public**. We first will present the factors determining the negative reputation of the city hall based on the results of the research, and then the recommendations, which are conventionally grouped into two - strategic and tactical - categories. However, we would like to note that the **recommendations and communication strategy below will be efficient only if there are conditions to introduce meritocratic human resource management principles in the municipal city hall and implement effective result-oriented projects and improve services.**

The following factors influence the population's critical opinion on city hall's activity:

- Unawareness of the population and specific groups of community regarding municipalities' powers and functions, as well as inaccurate expectations generated as a result of this lack of information;
- Absence of adequate communication/information systems, concerning planned, ongoing and accomplished works by municipalities tailored for specific groups of population;
- Ignoring or using unsuccessfully engagement schemes in relations with public, non-governmental sector and the media (even in so-called politically neutral cases).

The *strategic* part of the recommendations involves the development of a multi-channel communication strategy and relevant communication system, optimally adapted to stakeholders or specific groups of the population, and includes the following activities:

- Identification of the main audience groups in terms of the specifics of the municipality and determining the appropriate communication channels for these specific groups - taking into account- age, ethnic or territorial factors; also learning how often they use local media, social networks/websites, direct communication and controlled media (brochures, booklets) in compliance with their concrete goal/task;
- Preparation of key messages and transformed, group-oriented versions in multimedia format (resources targeted at both active and passive audiences; visual communication patterns; video products (multimedia materials should be explanatory, informative, oriented on attitude modification);
- Revision of population, non-governmental sector and media engagement schemes based on existing experience. Developing together with beneficiary representatives the strategies aimed at overcoming barriers;
- Taking into consideration the specifics of the civil sector and the political reality in Georgia, providing at least basic approaches to proactive and response strategies for risk and crisis management for relevant municipal services.

The following are the *tactics* for implementing this communication strategy:

---

[13] It is noteworthy that this factor has been actively mentioned by both civil servants and the population. The views of these two segments were almost the same in assessing and admitting the need for improvement of communication gaps.

First of all, it is necessary to explain the functions of the municipality and create the right expectations for the population, for which webpages of the municipality, local media can be used effectively, special information meetings can be organized and so on. It is essential to **inform the population about the activities (planned, ongoing, suspended, completed) of the municipalities** - for this purpose it is possible to introduce a periodic video platform prepared for controlled channels of the municipality (FB page, youtube channel, website) by the press service, where the municipality representatives will inform the public about how things are going, will explain the motives for the selected priorities, the reasons for the project delays, the dynamics of current cases, etc. Initiation of a special section on local television within the framework of news programs in the formats and about the topics described above or placement of video materials prepared by the municipality; increasing the number of direct meetings with the public.

It is also necessary to **refine the population engagement schemes**. It is expedient to involve experts in the role of a mediator in the development of these schemes and to develop a permanent platform as a result of analyzing the existing experience, which, at the same time, will be an additional resource for information dissemination. It is also necessary **to initiate a youth-oriented project**.

It is obvious that for the effectiveness of a communication strategy it is important to select and train trusted speakers in parallel; the research also visibly revealed the necessity for support from public authorities who directly deliver services to the population arriving in municipalities, meeting with them. The public authorities working in these positions have expressed a clear readiness and willingness to take effective communication or conflict management training. It's expedient to prepare support resources for them so that they could deal with standard situations, avoid conflict, and respond to frequently expressed complaints or queries.

The main precondition for public trust is increased access to high-quality civil services, effective, efficient responses to their needs, and establishment of meritocratic principles. Along with a good communication strategy, it has a positive impact on the reputation of city halls among the population. As the reform concept rightly points out, a belief in an impartial civil service leads to the involvement of broad sections of society in the exercise of power, which ultimately ensures the formation of a fair and impartial policy.

Attitudes and Perceptions of Civil servants

Human resource management is an interdisciplinary science with eclectic methods. For in-depth survey and interpretation of issues, it relies on theoretical models of industrial and organizational psychology and the rich scientific knowledge accumulated in it. We also rely on this knowledge in the process of developing survey design, reviewing survey findings, and developing recommendations.

In this section, in the context of industrial and organizational psychological theories and models of behavior, some important recommendations for effective introduction of changes are presented.

Subjective Perception of the Meaningful Work and Commitment to the Organization

The research found that subjective perceptions of the meaningful work have a strong beneficial impact on city hall employees' organizational behavior. In the context of the research, subjective view of the meaningful work means that the city hall employee believes he has a chance to have a positive influence on the well-being of the municipality's population.

There is plenty evidence that an unfair, unmeritocratic organizational environment is a prerequisite for employee demotivation, low levels of commitment, and counterproductive/hostile behaviors (Wu, Sun, Zhang, & Wang, 2016). However, the research has shown that a civil servant's perception that he is doing *significant, valuable, and useful work even in an unfair, non-meritocratic environment leads and /or maintains commitment to the work and the organization.* The possible mechanism looks as follows: perception of the meaningful work promotes employee's resilience (strength and sturdiness) and provides the formation of a sense of self-efficacy (Albrecht, 2013) (Martela & Pessi, 2018) which enables him to overcome difficult situations in the workplace and meet challenges. That is why, **in the light of the challenges facing municipal city hall, organizational support for shaping the perception of the importance of employee's work is crucial**.

How can we use this finding of the research?

Because organizations play an important role in how employees value their work, we will focus on two interrelated organizational factors.

First, in order for civil servants to clearly realize that they are doing meaningful work, it is essential to have a clear formulation of the organization's mission, purpose, and the values that the organization serves. The "feeling" of purpose is related to the perception that a person can manage obstacles. In the recommendations section, more than once we have mentioned the importance of a clear, unambiguous formulation of the mission and objectives of the city hall, which are critically important for the effective administration of various human resource management processes. We would like to add here that it is necessary to communicate this point openly with the city hall employees and to convey the importance of the organizational mission and goals to each employee.

The **role of management** is significant in shaping the subjective perception of meaningful work. By having a clear, unambiguous formulation of an organization's mission, goals, and clear positive feedback on behavior relevant to those goals, they can help employees realize that they are doing meaningful work. Management plays an important role in creating a factor of trust towards work value and the organization. The perception of work as meaningful positively affects the engagement and productiveness of the employees, as well as their labor wellbeing. As a result, they get involved in their work not only physically, but also psychologically, emotionally and mentally. In addition, the employees who attach great importance to their jobs, are more organized and motivated and enjoy a higher degree of commitment towards the organization (Savvides & Stavrou, Handbook of Workplace Well-Being: Purpose, Meaning, and Wellbeing at Work, 2020).

There are plenty of empirical evidence in connection with the positive effect of organization commitment. The organization commitment is described by three key characteristics. They are: (1) strong desire to remain the member of the organization; (2) recognizing and sharing the organizational values and goals and (3) readiness to make extra effort in favor of the organization (Mowday, 1982). We assume that for municipal city halls to improve organizational efficiency, it is important to replace excess control characteristic for bureaucratic organizations by **commitment and commitment strategy** that will enable employees to perform their duties in a more autonomous way. Introduction of delegation of rights and accountability mechanisms will increase civil servants' responsibility and commitments and will enable them to contribute significantly to common affair, which in its turn will assist employees to achieve job satisfaction and will be positively reflected on their labor wellbeing.

Organizational Justice

In order to have a positive attitude to an organization and successfully begin performing one's duties, it is significant that the employee assess the ongoing processes of the organization as fair. If he

assumes that an employer acts in a transparent way and fairly and creates such atmosphere in which each member is be able to enjoy equal conditions, it will positively affect the relationship between the employee and organization and on the product produced as a result of such relationship. Hence, to create healthy environment in the municipal city hall, to increase employees' productivity and job satisfaction its crucial to **put organizational justice on the agenda**. As it was mentioned in the section of the theoretical framework of the research, *subjective perceptions of an employee about ongoing processes in the organization and about the fairness of decision-making* have an impact on employee **behavior, attitudes** (satisfaction, commitment, commitment) and **performance**. The theory of organizational justice is a theoretical framework of our research and its importance have been more than once highlighted in the report. To further emphasize its significance, we would like to note once more that the perception of organizational justice by employees serves prevention of potential problems and, in addition, is a **precondition for job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior** (effort intensification for an organization, volunteerism, for the success of the organization doing more than assigned by job description) and **high level of performance** (Bouazzaoui, Wu, & Roehrich, 2020).

In terms of theory of social sharing, when an employee sees that he is supported at his workplace, it triggers in him tendency to display behavior relevant to his work, which first of all implies mobilization of more effort to improve quality of his performance. In case of absence of organizational support, he will reevaluate obtained benefit and the effort put in the job by him (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). If the employee decides that his contribution (resource spent by him for his performance) is more, he will try to reduce it, which will be manifested in reduction of effectiveness, demotivation, increased absenteeism, and tardiness.

Let us explain what should be done in a city hall to achieve organizational justice. The following is **critically important:**

- Equitable distribution of organizational resources, ensuring equal opportunities for material rewards or employee development-oriented opportunities;
- Development and establishment of logical and impartial rules, procedures and equitable regulating mechanisms for decision-making,
- Informing and adequately explaining an organizational process, decisions and outcomes to employees;
- Treating employees politely; showing respect and appreciation to them.

In principle everything mentioned above facilitates establishment of meritocratic principles of human resources management, and, respectively, presents an essential part of research-based recommendations package.

We would also like to mention that all the recommendations directed towards efficient implementation of changes, are simultaneously **oriented on increase in labor wellbeing of employees**. These changes are important to prevent stress, psychological or physical tension of employees and for employees' healthcare, also for their wellbeing, motivation increase and productivity. Employees' quality of work life, perception of well-being in workplace guarantees a cascade of positive results for the organization - increases the level of employee engagement,

responsibility and resilience indicators; as a result, they become more productive at work and demonstrate higher quality performance, which is an important precondition for long-term efficiency of the organization.

The Path from Public Value to Personal Choice

Values have always occupied central place in public organizations as an important instrument to provide high quality services and legitimacy for the public. Values are a kind of cultural, institutional force that affects an employee and directs his behavior. There is some consensus on values that are important to civil services. They are: accountability to the general public, equitable opportunities and transparency and impartiality.

The research demonstrates that declared public values – *impartiality, political neutrality* – have not transformed into a key value of the organizational culture of the municipal city hall and the people employed there. Despite positive dynamic, the environment in the municipal city hall remains vulnerable to political influences, while civil servants are less sensitive towards this or that manifestation of political patronage. The research shows that unlike career advancement, reward and benefit distribution, and other HRM processes that are important prerequisites for perceiving organizational injustice, dissatisfaction with local political influence does not convert into a perception of injustice on the part of the government officials. The new regulations, despite focusing on mechanisms for prevention of political patronage, have failed to make political neutrality a standard of conduct for the municipal city hall, and still remains a significant challenge.

It should be admitted that this is more a value problem than a shortcoming of regulations. In this context we will concentrate our attention on the attitudes of civil servants. The perception of political patronage as a common phenomenon, indifference and/or acceptance may be conditioned by an institutional memory. intimidating or nihilistic attitude towards the guarantees provided by the law. As Weber points out, traditional bureaucracy is a hierarchical process of enforcing rules and laws, carried out *by members devoid of personal decisions* and who have specialized technical knowledge of rules and procedures (Max Weber's Two Conceptions of Bureaucracy, 1948). The situation in municipal halls is very similar to this picture. Lack of personal decision-making and self-responsibility, low autonomy, can be one important prerequisite, due to which the core values declared by the civil service reform are not interiorized (have not become their integral part) by the employees of the municipal halls. This is indicated by the fact that civil servants refrain themselves from expressing their views on the issue of political patronage and the high degree of silence during the qualitative research or referring to the law while leaving the question in connection with their engagement in pre-election processes without an answer.

What Should be Changed?

Modern approaches to public governance run counter to the traditional organizational culture of the civil sector, which is characterized by an over-focus on rules and procedures. Post-bureaucratic organizations are oriented on the following values: collaboration, trust, negotiations, teamwork, decentralization of powers and less hierarchy in management (Cooke, 1990). Special attention is

focused on autonomy that facilitates engagement of employees in decision-making process and teamwork. The above-mentioned modern tendencies, already introduced in the public structures, should gradually become a practice in the municipal city hall as well. This primarily requires changes at the *macro level*: **the leaders of civil sector should contribute more to the process of values development; should support accountability in the civil sector, introduction of equitable opportunities, transparency, impartiality and political neutrality as being priority values. It is important to demonstrate and adhere to these values at a macro level. It is necessary to create new patterns of governance and civil service, which will promote the development of citizenship, public sphere, autonomy, responsibility. This requires improvement of the context and <u>organizational culture</u> in which civil servants "live" and work**.

Organizational culture is a unity of certain common, shared views, opinions, around which employee behaviors are formed and organized; it is unity of norms and values that a person "learns" in the organization (Terrence & Kennedy, 2000). Leaders and management play a crucial role in shaping organizational culture, recognizing and adhering to these values, and setting a personal example. Creation of new templates, demonstration and observance of the values by public leaders will also determine the behavior of local leaders and help build a *relevant organizational culture* in the municipal city hall, adherence to declared priority values and unacceptance of double standards already at the level of civil servants. To sum up, it can be said that the process of establishing impartiality and *political neutrality in the civil sector has to go through a difficult path from public value to individual one*. In order for the changes not to acquire a superficial character, in the process of introducing the reform, it is necessary to integrate value-oriented processes in it, which, in its turn, is a very challenging and far-reaching goal.

Bibliography

Bibliography

Albrecht, S. L. (2013). Work Engagement and the Positive Power of Meaningful Work. *Advances in Positive Organizational Psychology*.

APA Dictionary of psychology. (n.d.).

Arild Wæraas, Moshe Maor. (2014). Understanding organizational reputation in a civil sector context. In *Opganizational Reputation on the Civil sector.* Routledge.

Athanassiades, J. (1973). The distortion of upward communication in hierarchicalorganizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 16, 207–226.

Barber, A. E. (1998). *Recruiting employees: Individual and organizational perspectives. Sage Publications, Inc.* SAGE.

Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., & Li, N. (2012). The Theory of Purposeful Work Behavior: The Role of Personality, Higher-Order Goals, and Job Characteristics. *Academy of Management Review*, 1-52.

Barrick, M. R., & Ryan, A. M. (2003). *Personality and Work: Reconsidering the Role of Personality in Organizations.* Pfeiffer.

Berman, E., Bowman, J., West, J., & Van Wart, M. (2016). *Human Resource Management in Civil service: Paradoxes, Processes, and Problems.* SAGE.

Bies, R. a. (1986). Interactional Justice: Communication Criteria of Fairness. In: Lewicki, R.J., Sheppard, B.H. and Bazerman, M.H., Eds., . *Research on Negotiations in Organizations, ,* Vol. 1, JAI Press, Greenwich, 43-55.

Bouazzaoui, Wu, & Roehrich, J. (2020). Justice in inter-organizational relationships: A literature review and future research agenda. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 128-137.

Bullen, C. V., & Rockart, J. F. (1981, June). A Primer On Critical Success Factors. *Center for Information Systems Research Sloan School of Management Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, p. 3.

Campion, M. A., Pursell, E. D., & Brown, B. K. (1988). Structured interviewing: Raising the psychometric properties of the employment interview. *Personnel Psychology,,* 41(1), 25–42.

Colquitt, J. A. (2007). Justice and personality: Using integrative theories to derive moderators of justice effects. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes,. 100, 110–127.

Cooke, P. (1990). Locality, Structure, and Agency: A Theoretical Analysis.

Cropanzano, & Mitchell. (2005). Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management*, 31(6):874-900.

Dollard M. F. , Bakker A. B. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83*(3), 579-599. doi:https://doi.org/10.1348/096317909X470690

Dollard, M. F., Idris, M. A. (2011). Psychosocial safety climate, work conditions, and emotions in the workplace: A Malaysian population-based work stress study. *International Journal of Stress Management, 18*(4), 324-347. doi:10.1037/a0024849

Freudenberger, H. J. (1974). Staff Burn-Out . *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES*, 159-165.

Hameed, A. a. (2011). "Employee development and its effect on employee performance: A conceptual framework", . *International Journal of Business and Social Science,,* Vol. 2 No. 13, pp. 224-229.

HANDBOOK OF INDUSTRIAL, WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, Volume 1. (2005). London: SAGE.

Inegbedion, H., & et al. (2020). *Managing Diversity for Organizational Efficiency.* SAGE.

International Labour Organization. (n.d.).

J., G. (1990). Organizational Justice: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. *Journal of Management*, 399-432.

LAHOUEL, A. A. (2015). HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS. *Global Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol.3. No. 2, pp. 1-12.

Levashina, J., & Hartwell, C. J. (2014). The structured employment interview: Narrative and quantitative review of the research literature. . *Personnel Psychology*, 67(1), 241–293.

M. J. Cullen, P. R. (2003). Personality and counterproductive work behavior . *Journal Of Industrial Psychology*.

Malach-Pines, A. (2005). The Burnout Measure, Short Version . *International Journal of Stress Management*, 78–88.

Martela, F., & Pessi, A. B. (2018). Significant Work Is About Self-Realization and Broader Purpose: Defining the Key Dimensions of Meaningful Work. *Frontiers in Psychology*. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00363

Max Weber's Two Conceptions of Bureaucracy. (1948).

McNall, L., & Paul W. Thurston Jr, . (2010). *Justice perceptions of performance appraisal practices, .* State University of New York, Brockport, New York, USA, : Siena College,.

Mikula, G. P. (1990). What people regard as unjust: Types and structures of everyday experiences of injustice. . *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 20(2), 133–149. .

Milliken, F. M. (2003). An exploratory study of employeesilence: Issues that employees don't communicate upward and why. . *Journal ofManagement Studies*, 40, 1453–1476.

Mlcoch., L. (2000). Restrukturalizace vlastnicky´ch vztahú—institucionálni pohled. In Mlcoch, L., Machonin, P. and M. Sojka: Ekonomické a spolocenské zmeny v ceské spolecnosti po roce (alternativní pohled), .

Mowday, R. P. (1982). *Employee—Organization Linkages: The Psychology of Commitment, Absenteeism, and Turnover.* New York: Academic Press.

Nicholas Kinnie, S. H. (2006). Satisfaction with HR practices and commitment to the organisation: why one size does not fit all. *Human Resources Management Journal*, Volume15, Issue 4.

Obel, B. @. (2018). The science of organizational design: fit between structure and coordination. *Journal of Organization Design* , 7 (1).

OECD, & SIGMA. (1997). *CIVIL SERVICE TRAINING SYSTEMS IN OECD COUNTRIES.* SIGMA-OECD.

Osborne, S. P. (2017). "Public Management Research over the Decades: What are We Writing About?". *Public Management Review*, 19 (2): 109–113.

Paschoal, T., Torres, C. V., & Porto, J. B. (2010). Felicidade no trabalho: relações com suporte organizacional e suporte social. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea, 14*(6), 1054-1072. doi:10.1590/S1415-655520100007 00005

Paschoal, T., Torres, C. V., Barreiros, J., & Porto. (2010). Happiness at work: relations with organizational support and social support. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea* .

Randma-Liiv, T., & Järvalt, J. (2010). Civil sector HRM: The case of no central human resource strategy. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 5(2):242-256.

Roberts, K. &. (1974). Failures in upward communication inorganizations: Three possible culprits. 7,205–215. *Academy of Management Journal*.

Savvides, E., & Stavrou, E. (2020). *Handbook of Workplace Well-Being: Purpose, Meaning, and Wellbeing at Work.* The Palgrave .

Savvides, E., & Stavrou, E. (2020). Purpose, Meaning, Joy, and Fulfilment. In S. Dhiman, *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Well-Being* (pp. 1-27). Burbank: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Shoss. (2017). Job Insecurity: An Integrative Review and Agenda for Future Research. *Journal of Management*.

Steger, S. (2017). Sustainable Growth and Resource Productivity. (pp.172-193).

Steiner, D. a. (2001). Procedural justice inpersonnel selection: International and cross-cultural perspec-tives.International Journal of Selection and Assessment,. 9,124–137.

Taylor, M. C. (2000). Organizational Recruitment: Enhancing the Intersection of Research and Practice Linking Theory with Practice . *Industrial and Organizational Psychology:*.

Terrence , D., & Kennedy, A. (2000). *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life.* Addison-Wesley.

Tyler, T. R. (1990). Beyond Formal Procedures: The Interpersonal Context of Procedural Justice. In J. Carroll (Ed.), Applied Social Psychology and Organizational SettingsHillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates. (pp. 77-98). .

UNDP. (2015). *Public Administration Reform Practice Note, 4.3.2.* Retrieved from file:///Users/user/Downloads/PARPN_English%20(3).pdf

Walton, R. E. (1985). From Control to Commitment in the Workplace. *PERFORMANCE INDICATORS* .

Weinert, F. E. (2001). *Concept of competence: A conceptual clarification. In D. S. Rychen & L. H. Salganik (Eds.), Defining and selecting key competencies* . Hogrefe & Huber Publishers.

Wu, M., Sun, X., Zhang, D., & Wang, C. (2016). Moderated mediation model of relationship between perceived organizational justice and counterproductive work behavior. *Journal of Chinese Human Resource Management, 7*(2).

Appendix 1

Description of research constructs and tools

The appendix discusses the research tools used in the quantitative research to ensure the collection of valid information for project purposes. These tools are: (1) a survey of employees' perceptions and attitudes in municipal halls (servant's questionnaire) and (2) a public opinion and attitude survey questionnaire (population questionnaire).

The appendix describes the factors / research constructs obtained as a result of the psychometric and factor analysis of the research instruments, which we manipulated in the process of the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

The scale used for evaluation in research instruments focuses on frequency estimation *(almost never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often or always)* and provides information on how often different results are achieved in practice. In presenting descriptive data, this scale is converted into two types of evaluation: **critical evaluation** (almost never, rarely, sometimes) and **positive evaluation** (very often or always). As for the negatively formulated questions, they are reversed (inverted); Accordingly, the principle of scale conversion works in all cases. By default, both instruments are preceded by a demographic block, which allowed us to present data in a variety of descriptive contexts.

1. Survey of perceptions and attitudes of employees in municipal City Halls

The instrument that assesses the City Hall Employees' attitudes is divided into several content parts: 1. Demographic characteristics; 2. Job information; 3. Human resource management practices and 4. Perceptions of justice in the organization.

Section 1. Demographic Block Along with standard information, includes areas of interest for research: involvement in electoral processes, party affiliation, and more.

Section 2. About the job - This section integrates several standardized, adapted versions of the instrument / scale. It is evaluated through the following scales:

- **Organizational commitment**
- **Subjective perception of the meaningful work**
- **Professional burnout**
- **Perception of work related well-being.**

Occupational burnout and perception of work related well-being are used to **assess the quality of working life of employees.**

These scales are represented in the form of composite variables, which are obtained by accumulating similar items in content. For example, **commitment** is measured by such items as: *I believe that the success of the organization is my success, I have a feeling that this organization is the same "home" for me, and so on.* To assess the subjective perception of meaningful work, employees answered the question*, how much they like what they do at work, how much they feel they are doing a worthwhile job, that their work brings positive changes to the population, and so on.* The **quality of working life** was assessed on the basis of emotions mastered by employees in the workplace. Negative emotions were combined in the scales of burnout, while positive emotions were combined in the scales of perception of work related well-being.

Secton 3. The questions combined in this section of the Servant Questionnaire were intended to assess the degree of political impact on the human resource management process. As a result of factor analysis, 4 factors were identified:

- □ **Human Resource Management (HRM) Practice**
- □ **Politically neutral environment**
- □ **Local political and pre-election interventions**
- □ **Organizational reputation**

Table A. 1.1   Reliability of factors and scales

	Scale Reliability (Cronbach's α)
Factors	
Human Resources Management Practice	α=.86
Local political and pre-election interventions	α=.87
Politically Neutral Environment	α=.76
Interactional Justice	α=.83
Distributive Justice	α=.81
Procedural Justice	α=.78
General Organizational Justice	α=.83
Organizational Reputation	α=.90
Scales	
Perception of Meaningful work	α=.81
Organizational Commitment	α=.82
Perception of work-related well-being	α=.72
Burnout	α=.76

Human Resources Management – Factor Description

Human resource management practice is one of the factors obtained based on factor analysis of the job related questionnaire. It describes the vision of City Hall employees on various aspects of human resource management, such as staff selection, performance appraisal, training and development. The scale is characterized by high internal consistency (Cronbach's α=.86).

Table A 1.2 Human Resources Management – Factor Description

Human Resources Management				
Items		**M**	**SD**	**Rir**
1	My organization has a competitive and fair selection process that attracts and employs competent people.	3.99	1.01	0.69
2	Professionalism in my organization is encouraged, promoted and valued.	3.63	1.17	0.66
3	My organization helps all employees to develop the skills (eg, trainings, conferences…) that they need to successfully perform their assigned duties.	3.99	0.99	0.60
4	Promotion in my organization is fair - according to the results of the employee performance appraisal.	3.73	1.17	0.72
5	I have a feeling that the performance appraisal in my organization is conducted formally, only because of the requirements of the law.	3.86	1.30	0.50
6	The dismissal of an officer in my organization based on a personal statement is the result of the decision and coercion of the leaders.	4.46	0.91	0.50
7	The process of obtaining, analyzing and evaluating information about the job performance is objective and fair.	4.13	0.88	0.63
8	My organization adheres to the ethical standards of civil service, there is an impartial and conscientious environment here.	4.15	0.98	0.61
Scale M=32; SD=6; Minimum: 11; Maximum: 40; Cronbach's α=.86				

Employees' views on human resource practice are statistically significantly related to the other target constructs involved in the study. The relationship is positive. This means that a positive evaluation of HRM practice is accompanied by a fair perception of the organization, the formation of commitment, a positive evaluation of the organization's reputation, and so on. see the following table for details.

Table A. 1.3   Relation of perceptions about HRM practice to other target factors - correlation analysis

	HRM Practice
Interactional justice	.542**
Distributive justice	.614**
Procedural justice	.264**
Subjective perception of the meaningful work	.567**
Organizational commitment	.582**
Organizational reputation	.763**
Local political and pre-election interventions	.724**
Politically neutral environment	.746**
** The correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Description of 2 factors to assess political influence

- **Politically neutral environment**
- **Local political and pre-election interventions**

Based on the factor analysis of the construct of free civil service, two factors were identified that account for 47% of the latent variable score variation. The first factor combined questions about **local political and pre-election interventions** (factor 1), hence the factor is named similarly. The second factor included items on a **politically neutral environment** (factor 2). The psychometric and descriptive statistics of the questions are given in the following table.

Table A. 1.4   Politically Neutral Environment - Description of Factor Constituent Items

	Politically Neutral Environment - Factor 1			
	Items	**M**	**SD**	**Rir**
1	My organization encourages employees for diligent work and professionalism, their party affiliation has no influence on this process;	3.57	1.38	0.54
2	Different political views in my organization do not affect the atmosphere of trust and cooperation between colleagues;	3.33	1.52	0.39
3	The opinion of each employee is important to my organization, regardless of their party affiliation.	4.04	1.08	0.60
4	Personnel decisions free from political influence are made in my organization;	3.68	1.32	0.50
5	All employees in my organization are treated with respect and care, regardless of their party affiliation and political sympathies;	4.30	0.93	0.54
6	Personnel in my organization are selected on the basis of professionalism and not on the basis of party affiliation.	3.88	1.18	0.50
	Scale M=22.8 ; SD=5; Minimum: 6; Maxsimum: 30; Cronbach's α=.76			
	(M – Mean Score; SD – Standard Deviation; Rir- Discrimination index)			

Table A. 1.5   Local Political and Pre-election Interventions – Description of Factor Constituent Items

	Local Political and Pre-election Interventions – Factor 2			
	Items	**M**	**SD**	**Rir**
1	The population of the municipality thinks that employment in the City Hall is done only on political grounds;	3.48	1.22	0.55
2	In my organization, public officials who support opposition parties are not afraid to express their political views;	4.06	1.16	0.71
3	Civil servants employed in my organization during the pre-election period are not directly or indirectly involved in agitation	4.10	1.04	0.65
4	The influence of the parliamentary majority in the selection and promotion of staff in my organization is not high	4.34	0.99	0.71
5	In my organization, an administrative contract is used to employ political activists.	4.26	1.02	0.67
6	The promotion of an officer in my organization is more conditioned by the competencies and job achievements of the officer than by party affiliation	4.16	1.17	0.65
7	Pre-election processes do not negatively affect the climate and efficiency of my organization.	3.90	1.14	0.50
8	I do not expect that in case of a change of government, the persons employed in the municipality will change.	3.58	1.19	0.53
	Scale M=31.9 ; SD=6.4; Minimum: 12; Maximum: 40; Cronbach's α=.87			

Relationships between these two factors and other target variables can be found in the following tables. The tables show that **all relationships are positive and statistically significant. For** example, if public officials feel that personnel decisions and the organizational environment are politically neutral, they value organizational justice, perceive work as meaningful, increase their organizational commitment, and value HR processes and organizational reputation.

Table A. 1.6 **The relation of a politically neutral environment to other target factors– Correlational Analysis**

	Politicaly Neutral Environment
Organizational justice	.593**
Meaningful work	.471**
Organizational commitment	.489**
Human Resource Management (HRM) Practice	.746**
Organizational reputation	.582**
Local political and pre-election interventions	.532**
** The correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	

Table A. 1.7 **Relation of local political and pre-election interventions to other target factors - correlation analysis**

	Local political and pre-election interventions
Organizational justice	.492**
Meaningful work	.393**
Organizational commitment	.426**
Human Resource Management (HRM) Practice	.724**
Organizational reputation	.624**
Politically neutral environment	.532**
** The correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	

Finally, the descriptive information on target constructs is summerized in the following table.

Table A. 1.8 **Descriptive Statistics of Target Constructs**

Constructs	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**Min.**	**Max.**
Meaningful work	536	4.30	.695	1	5
Organizational commitment	536	4.38	.685	1	5
HRM practice	536	31.93	6.046	11	40
Organizational reputation	536	24.66	4.282	6	30
Local political and pre-election interventions	536	31.88	6.428	12	40
Politically neutral environment	536	22.80	5.040	6	30
Organizational justice	536	39.97	7.783	12	55

Organizational Reputation – Factor Description

Organizational reputation describes the perception of employees about how well the City Hall performs its duties, how high they think the population has trust in the City Hall, and so on. Sh. The combined items under the organizational reputation construct are given in the following table. The scale has a high reliability rate (Cronbach's α=.90).

Table A. 1.9   *Descriptive statistics of target constructs*

	Organizational Reputation			
	Items	**M**	**SD**	**Rir**
1	My organization performs its duties well;	4.33	0.77	0.79
2	The population has high trust in my organization;	3.88	0.93	0.77
3	My organization has a good reputation among the population;	4.02	0.88	0.75
4	I have a feeling that lately the population trusts the City Hall more;	4.01	0.93	0.75
5	My organization does what is important for the municipality and the citizens living here;	4.42	0.72	0.72
6	I have a feeling that after the civil service reform, a lot has changed in my organization for the better.	4.01	0.97	0.65
Scale M=24.7; SD=4.3; Minimum: 6; Maximum: 30; Cronbach's α=.90				

Employees for whom the City Hall has a good reputation also value the practice of human resource management, the degree of freedom from political influence, they perceive their job as meaningful the organization as fair. The correlations of intra-organizational reputation are given in the following table.

Table A. 1.10   *Relation of organizational reputation to other target factors – Correlation analysis*

	Organizational Reputation
Interactional justice	.486**
Distributive justice	.530**
Procedural justice	.198**
Meaningful work	.576**
Organizational commitment	.580**
HRM practice	.763**
Local political and pre-election interventions	.624**
Politically neutral environment	.582**
** The correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	

Organizational Justice – Factor Description

Based on the Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Organizational Justice Scale, similar to the original, three dimensions were identified, which account for 68% of the total latent variable score variation. The first factor combined the questions evaluating interactional justice. Interactional justice describes employees' perceptions of the fairness of communication practices within an organization. The second factor combined distributive justice assessment questions. Distributive justice describes the subjective perception of employees about the fairness of the distribution of labor outcomes. The third factor is procedural justice, which implies the perceived fairness of the processes on the basis of which decisions are made on the distribution of labor outcomes in the organization. In the study, we also manipulate the total, general organizational jusctice variable obtained by combining the given three dimensions. The psychometric and descriptive statistics of the questions are given in the following table. All three dimensions are characterized by high reliability, internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is given in the tables.

Table A. 1.11 Interactional Justice – Description of factor constituent questions

Interactional Justice				
Items		M	SD	Rir
1	About the decision that affects me, the supervisor informs me in advance and discusses that decision with me;	4.02	1.11	0.69
2	My supervisor reviews the decisions made and provide me with additional information upon request;	4.20	0.93	0.70
3	The supervisor treats me with respect;	4.60	0.67	0.66
4	Before making a decision about me, the supervisor tries to understand and consider my opinion, concerns;	4.00	1.03	0.68
5	My supervisor refrains from making inappropriate remarks and comments;	3.95	1.16	0.51
Scale M=20.8; SD=3.8; Minimum: 5; Maximum: 25; Cronbach's α=.83				

Table A. 1.12   Distributive Justice – Description of factor constituent questions

Distributive Justice				
Items		M	SD	Rir
1	I think I get paid according to the work I do.	2.81	1.38	0.56
2	My contribution to the activities of the organization is in line with the results I receive from the organization.	3.50	1.16	0.68
3	The procedures by which the results of my labor are evaluated are consistent and fair.	3.53	1.10	0.70
4	I justly receive reward (s) for my work (e.g., praise, financial incentives, bonuses, etc.).	2.94	1.36	0.58
Scale M=12.8; SD=4; Minimum: 4; Maximum: 20; Cronbach's α=.81				

Table A. 1.13   *Procedural Justice – Description of factor constituent questions*

Procedural Justice				
Items		M	SD	Rir
1	I can express critical opinions about the decision made by the management.	3.32	1.16	0.65
2	I can appeal the job evaluation result that I am concerned about.	3.10	1.46	0.65
Scale M=6.4; SD=2.4; Minimum: 2; Maximum: 10; Cronbach's α=.78				

Relationships between justice dimensions and other research variables can be found in the following table. ***The tables show that all relationships are positive and statistically significant***. Accordingly, all results are interpreted in the same way. Let's explain one example: the more fairly employees perceive communication processes in the organization (interactional justice), the more they value their work (meaningful work), are characterized by a high level of commitment, positively assess HRM practice in the organization and reputation of City Hall.

Table A. 1.14   *Relation of the dimensions of organizational justice to other target factors – Correlational Analysis*

	Interactional Justice	Distributive Justice	Procedural Justice
Interactional justice	1	.405**	.310**
Distributive justice	.405**	1	.324**
Procedural justice	.310**	.324**	1
Meaningful work	.333**	.409**	.112**
Organizational commitment	.414**	.370**	.134**
HRM practice	.542**	.614**	.264**
Organizational reputation	.486**	.530**	.198**
Local political and pre-election interventions	.372**	.460**	.238**
Politically neutral environment	.508**	.470**	.331**
** The correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table A. 1.15   *Descriptive statistics of key target constructs according to employee assessment*

	M	SD
Interactional justice	20.8	3.8
Distributive justice	12.8	4.0
Procedural justice	6.4	2.4
General organizational justice	40.0	7.8
Burnout	7.2	3.1
Perception of work-related well-being	11.5	2.4
Human Resource Management (HRM) Practice	31.9	6.0
Local political and pre-election interventions	31.9	6.4
Politically neutral environment	22.8	5.0
Degree of freedom from political influence	54.7	10.1
Organizational reputation	24.7	4.3

2. Public Opinion and Attitudes Questionnaire (Population Questionnaire)

A total of 40 questions were assessed using public attitudes. Based on factor analysis, several factors were identified in the population questionnaire. these are:

- **Degree of freedom from political influence**
- **HRM practice**
- **Organizational reputation**

Orgnizational Reputation: Short Description of the Factor

The perception of the reputation of the City Hall by the population was assessed using such questions as: *I negatively assess the activities of the City Hall, the City Hall has a good reputation among the population, the City Hall does its job well, I have a feeling that the population trusts the City Hall more and so on.*

HRM Practoce: Short Description of the Factor

The following questions are used to assess the attitude of the population towards **HRM practices:** *Professionalism in the City Hall is encouraged, promoted and evaluated, the City Hall staff is selected fairly, women and men have an equal chance of employment in the City Hall, professionals work there, the City Hall adheres to ethical standards, the environment there is impartial and honest, etc.*

Degree of freedom from political influence: Short Description of the Factor

Factor assessing the degree of freedom from political influence include questions such as: *civil servants employed by the City Hall during the pre-election period are directly or indirectly involved in agitation; In the event of a change of government, the Civil servants employed in the municipality will change, the activities of the City Hall is determined by the political agenda and not the needs of the municipality, The City Hall is usually staffed by people who are or are affiliated with the ruling political force, City Hall is free from political influence and so on.*

Table A. 1. 16 Descriptive statistics of major target constructs by population estimates

	M	SD	Scale Reliability (Cronbach's α)
Reputation	11.0	3.8	.86
Degree of freedom from political influence	26.7	7.8	.90
HRM Practice	68.2	20.2	.96

Appendix 2

## Demographic characteristics of target groups

In this appendix you will find the composition of the target groups involved in the study according to demographic characteristics. The first part provides the demographics of the population, followed by the demographics of public officials. In the case of both target groups, the descriptive data were divided into three content sections: place of residence, individual characteristics and affiliation / sympathy for a political party, and the practice of involvement in pre-election activities / agitation. In the case of the population you will find their composition according to the following characteristics: district, place of residence, sex, age category, level of education, employment status, sympathy for a political party, participation in political agitation; In the case of civil servants, the descriptive characteristics are: district, gender, age category, level of education, length of service in the civil service, membership in a political party and the practice of involvement in pre-election activities. According to these characteristics, the differences between groups in the perception of political influence on the human resource management process and other factors in the municipal halls are assessed and given in the fourth chapter of the same report. This section presents only the number of participants in the given categories, which will give you an idea of the sampling demographic configuration.

Population

Table A. 2.1   Population by municipalities

	Number	Percent
Khulo	66	8.5
Ozurgeti	88	11.4
Telavi	100	12.9
Marneuli	170	21.9
Gori	154	19.9
Kutaisi	197	25.4
Total	775	100.0

Table A. 2. 1 Population participating in the study by place of residence
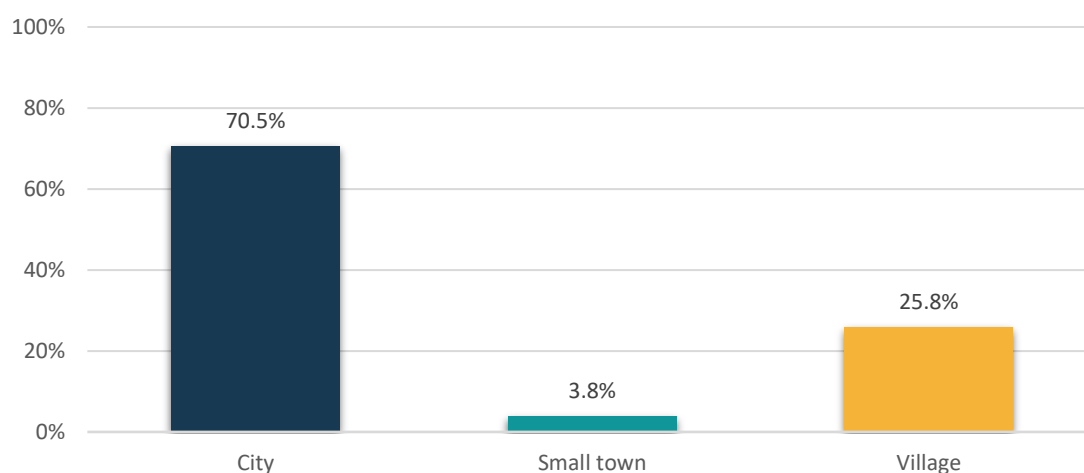
Individual Characteristics

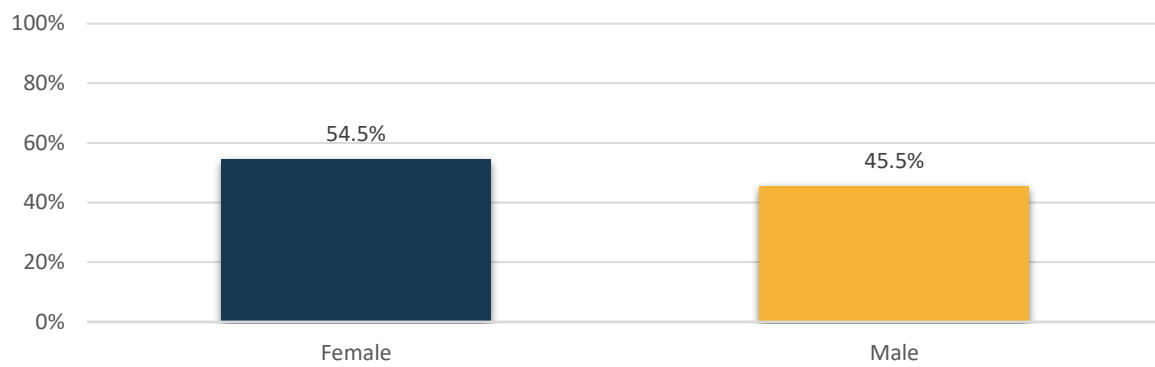*Table A. 2. 2 Population participating in the study by gender*

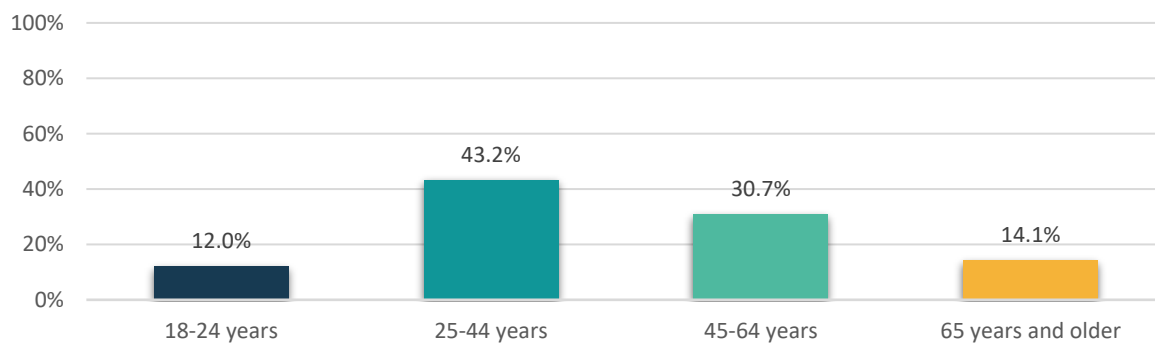*Table A. 2. 3 Population participating in the study by age categories*

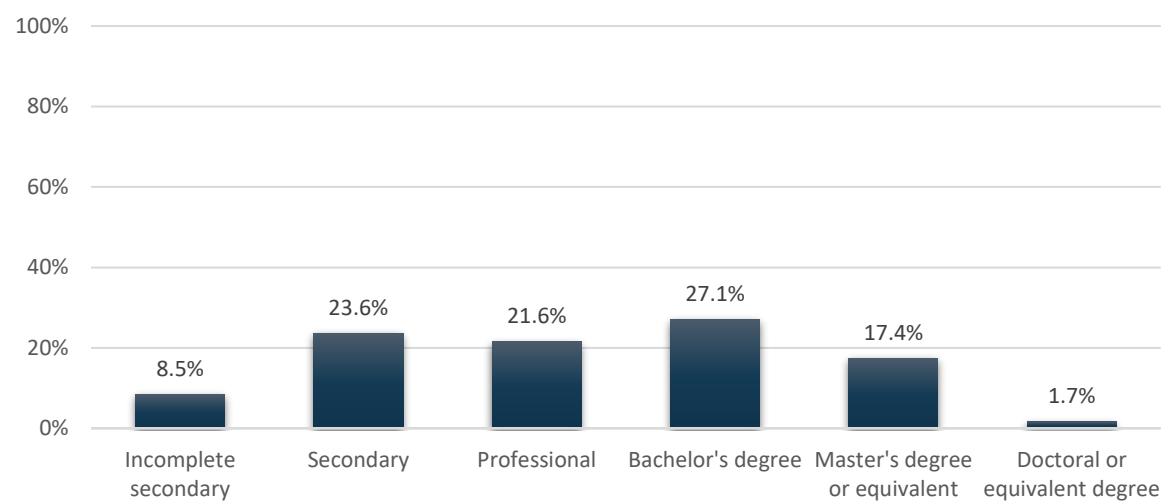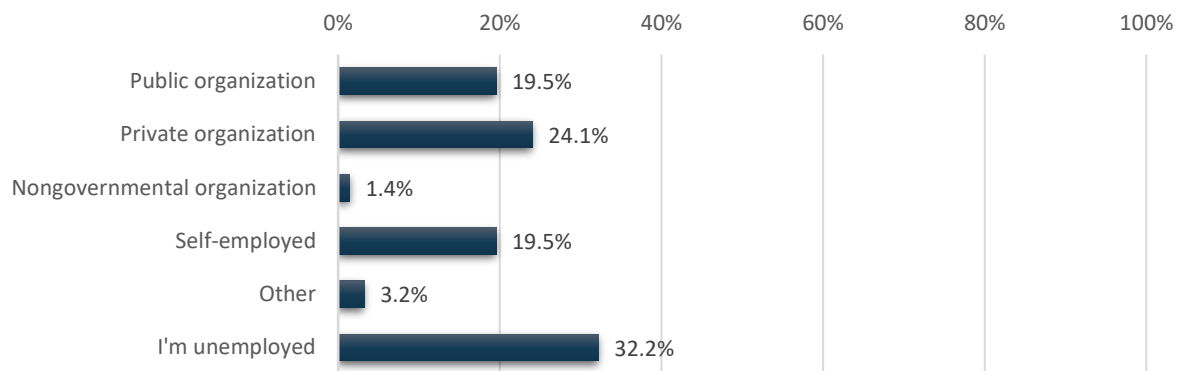*Table A. 2. 4 Population participating in the study by level of education*

Table A. 2. 5 Population participating in the study by type of employment

Political preferences and experience of engaging in agitation

Table A. 2. 6 The number of people participating in the study according to their sympathy for political parties
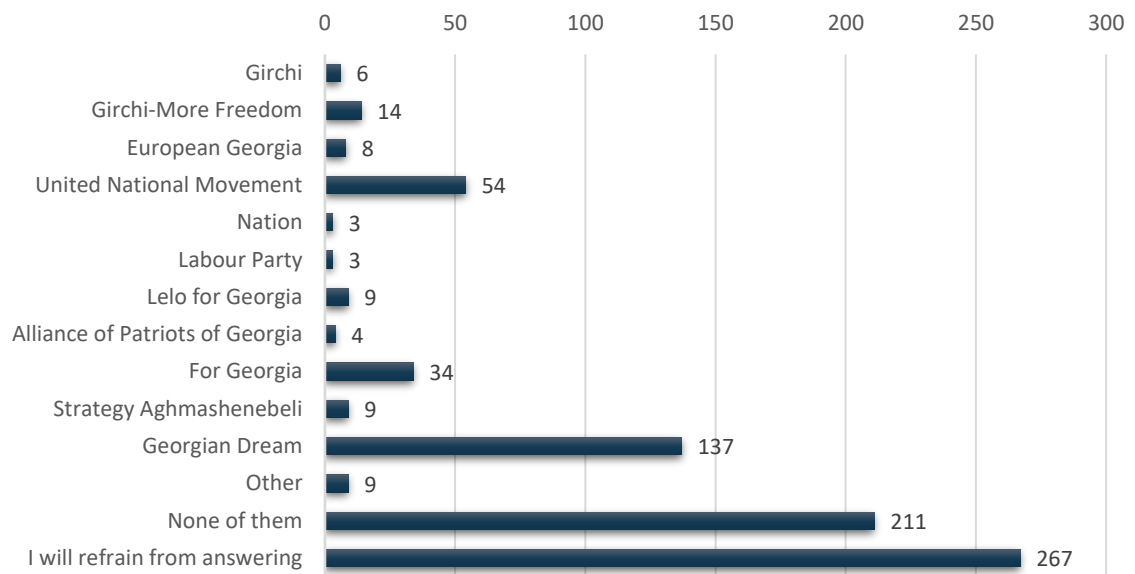
Table A. 2. 7 Population participating in the study by involvement in political agitation
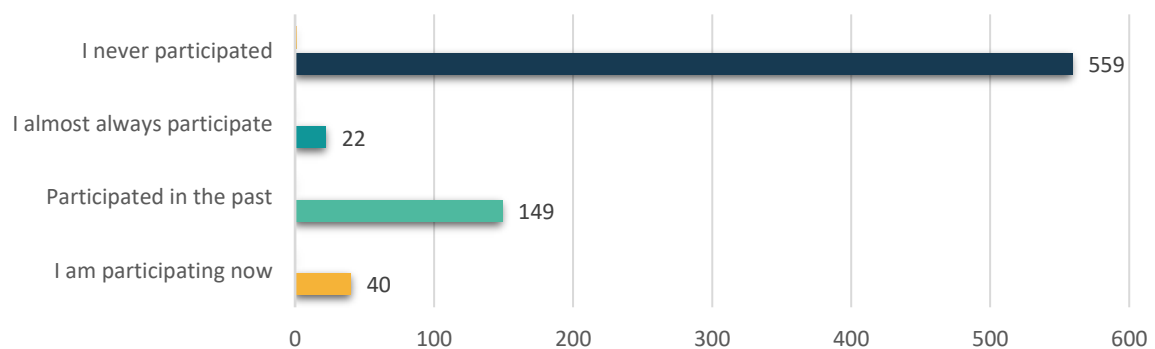
Civil servants

Dwelling place

Table A. 2. 2 Number of civil servants participating in the study by districts

	Number of people	Percent
Batumi	45	8.4
Lagodekhi	14	2.6
Dusheti	22	4.1
Oni	21	3.9
Borjomi	21	3.9
Akhalkalaki	18	3.4
Tetritskaro	16	3.0
Tkibuli	27	5.0
Vake	16	3.0
Isani	16	3.0
Khulo	20	3.7
Ozurgeti	27	5.0
Telavi	30	5.6
Marneuli	35	6.5
Gori	59	11.0
Kutaisi	69	12.9
Zugdidi	56	10.4
Martvili	24	4.5
Total	536	100.0

Individual Characteristics

Table A 2. 8 Number of civil servants participating in the study by gender
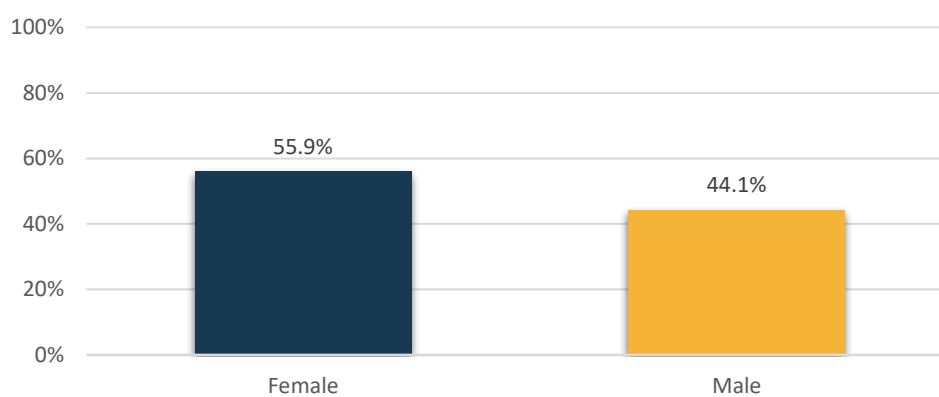
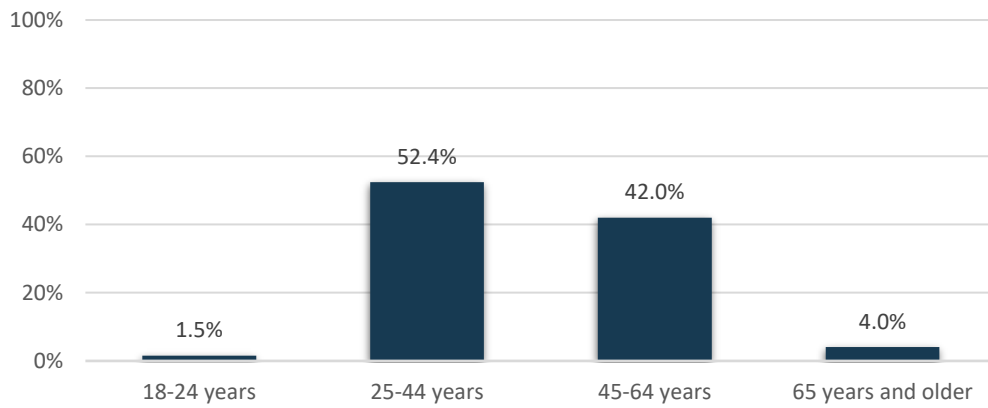*Table A. 2. 9 Number of civil servants participating in the study by age categories*

Table A. 2. 10 Number of civil servants participating in the study by level of education
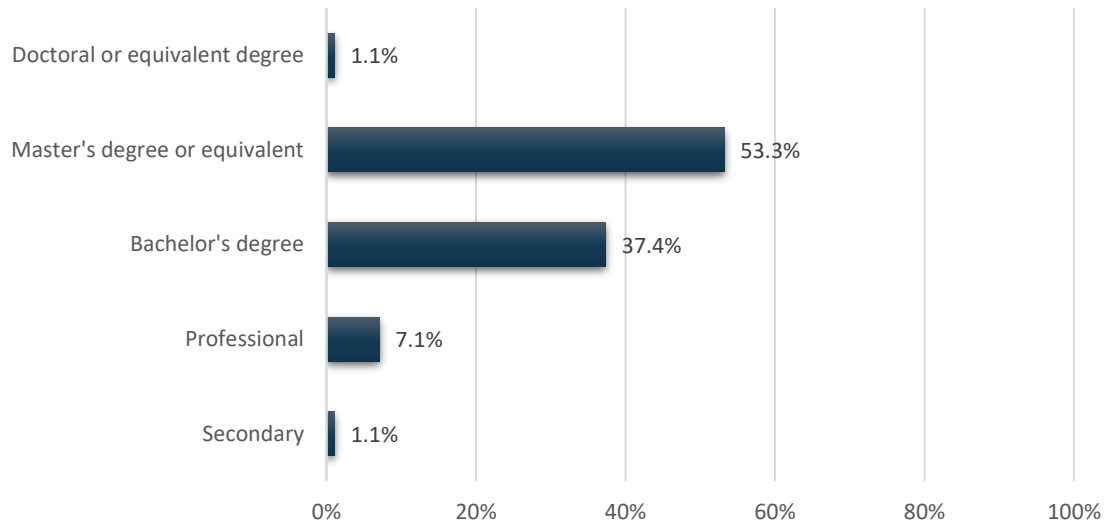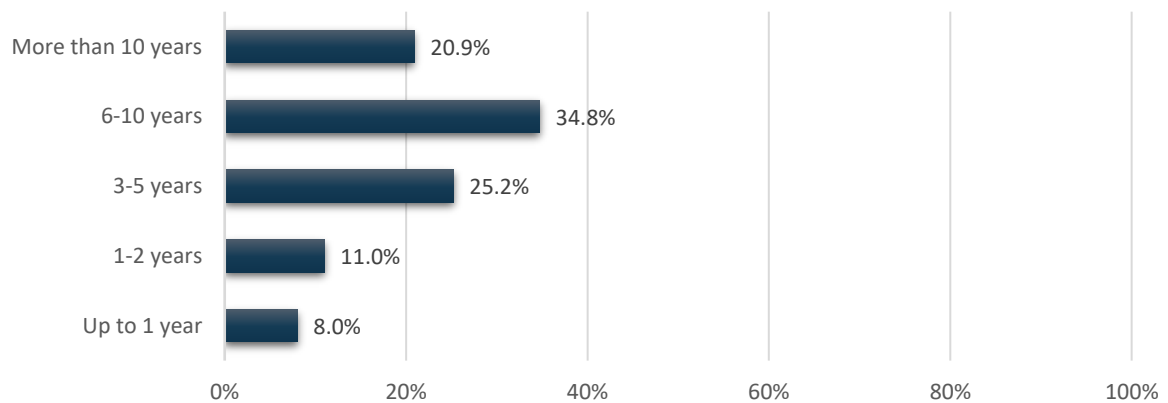

Table A. 2. 11 Number of civil servants participating in the study by experience in the civil service

Political party membership and experience in pre-election activities

Table A. 2. 12 Number of public officials participating in the research by political party membership
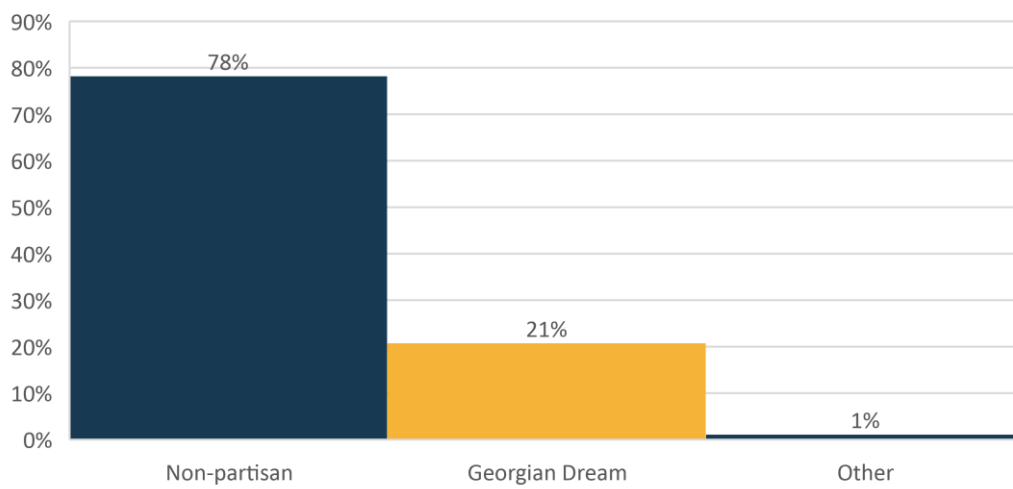

Table A. 2. 133 Number of civil servants participating in the research by involvement in pre-election activities