

HRM MODELS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SOCIAL HOUSING MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLISH MUNICIPALITIES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: social housing management HRM Models, public and private organizations: comparative analysis, Poland	The study aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of human resource management (HRM) models in public and private housing organizations (HOs) managing municipal housing in Poland and to identify differences between these models based on selected HRM characteristics. Empirical research was conducted using a multi-stage survey approach supported by statistical tests. The analysis was based on sub-samples of public and private HOs representing the population of urban municipalities in Poland. The results suggest that in some aspects of people management (e.g., recruiting employees, long-term employment, selection procedures), there was convergence between HRM models in public and private HOs, while in other aspects (e.g., performance assessment, hiring and remuneration rules, employee participation, motivation and evaluation, training and development, interpersonal relations), these models differed significantly, often showing opposite relations. The findings confirmed that public HOs adopted a "soft" HRM model focused on improving employee well-being, while private HOs used a "hard" model aimed at improving organizational performance. This article is the second study dedicated to HRM in the social housing management sector in Poland. The findings may also be of interest in other countries where social housing management is undergoing market transformations.
JEL Classification: M12, O18, R31	
Citation:	
Muczyński, A., & Stachowska, S. (2026). HRM models in public and private social housing management organizations: A comparative study of Polish municipalities. <i>Real Estate Management and Valuation</i> , 34(3), 131-146. https://doi.org/10.2478/remav-2026-0030	

1. Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) is considered a strategic, integrated, and consistent approach to the employment and development of a company's employees. It is a set of interrelated methods and practices aimed at providing the company with talented, committed, and motivated employees, enabling the company to achieve its goals (Armstrong, 2011). In management theory and practice, there is talk of an evolution of the human resources function, in which, despite differences in its development in different countries, industries, and individual organizations, a general direction of change in the approach to its implementation is indicated, consisting

of a transition from random activities, through routine administration, consolidation and strengthening as a fully-fledged field of management, implemented at both the operational and strategic levels (Pocztowski, 2018). The evolution of management in the human sphere, therefore, consists in a transition from the administration of human resources as a service activity to a process-based approach to key management functions (Juchnowicz, 2014). The contemporary approach to HRM is seen as a comprehensive and coherent approach to the employment and development of people working in an organization, whose aim is to improve the effectiveness of the organization through the use of policies and practices

in the areas of development planning, human resource acquisition, learning and development, performance and remuneration, as well as the provision of benefits and services (Armstrong & Taylor, 2016). This concept includes the development of strategies, processes, structures, and tools that support the achievement of high work performance and the improvement of the quality and value of human capital as a source of value creation for stakeholders. The HRM system is recognized as a separate subsystem of an enterprise whose task is to stimulate and improve the effectiveness of human resources to ensure their development and, consequently, the development of the entire organization (Bieniok, 2004). This issue is attracting increasing interest from researchers in the field of HRM (Francis & Keegan, 2006; Paauwe, 2009). Research focuses in particular on the relationship between a range of HRM practices and various performance outcomes (Paauwe 2009). As a result, HRM is recognized as an important factor influencing the performance of the entire organization (Boxall & Purcell, 2008).

This paper focuses on the social housing sector in Poland, particularly highlighting social housing management services related to municipal housing stock (MHS). Due to the restructuring and privatization of municipal property in Poland, MHS was divided into two segments. The first segment (S1) includes municipal dwellings for rent in buildings owned solely by local authorities. In this segment, housing management services are primarily carried out by municipal housing management units (MHMUs), which are public organizations operating as self-government establishments or units or municipal companies. The second segment of MHS (S2) comprises housing in mixed-ownership buildings (Muczyński, 2023a, 2024) belonging to public-private homeowners associations (HOAs). In this segment, housing management services are mainly provided by private property management firms (PPMFs). Since HRM is a part of housing (property) management services (Walker, 2000) in both MHS segments, the dichotomous structure of the MHS management system enables a comparison of HRM in public and private organizations within the specified housing sector in Poland.

The main aim of the study was to conduct a comparative analysis of HRM models in public and private organizations managing municipal housing stock (MHS) in Poland and to identify differences between these models based on selected HRM characteristics. The rationale for such research arises from the growing importance of HRM for the

achievement of organizational management goals and the necessity to implement modifications to enhance HRM within organizations in the municipal (social) housing sector, in light of the transformations occurring within this sector. The need for research and enhancement of HRM in the housing organizations (HOs) surveyed also stems from the growing economic pressure these entities are facing in connection with the gradual implementation of the New Public Management concept (e.g., Walker, 2000; Laffin, 2019; Muczyński, 2023b), as well as from the recognition that these organizations provide housing services to the most vulnerable segments of society (Chischke, 2009). The impetus for conducting this research is further supported by the limited evidence available in both international and national literature. In the first group of studies concerning the implementation of HRM within social housing organizations (Gruis et al., 2009; Blomé, 2010), there is a clear indication of the necessity to equip employees with training that fosters a more customer-centric approach, alongside the requirement for employees to develop organizational strategies and to decentralize decision-making processes, thereby enhancing employee motivation and improving the dynamics between employees and tenants, which in turn facilitates the latter's involvement in management activities. In addition to cultivating the requisite competencies and skills of employees in alignment with the increasing market orientation, diversification, and the proliferation of mixed ownership, persistent HRM tenets encompass internal mobility and promotion, social dialogue, and tenant engagement. In turn, the few national studies on this subject (e.g., Majchrzak, 2005; Tertelis, 2009; Marona, 2018; Muczyński & Stachowska, 2025) emphasize the need for enhancing the quality of customer service within public organizations (MHMUs) engaged in MHS management, highlighting deficiencies in HRM such as ineffective motivation systems, employee assessment and training, inadequate connections between performance and remuneration, ambiguous delineation of competences and responsibilities, a lack of employee involvement in decision-making processes, the politicization of personnel decisions, frequent and poorly considered organizational alterations, and overstaffing. Thus far, no equivalent large-scale studies pertaining to HR functions in private property management firms (PPMFs) have been executed in Poland. In light of the housing literature, the research hypothesis that applied HRM practices are predominantly more advanced in private than in public MHS management organizations in Poland was

formulated.

Following the Introduction, this paper contains five sections. The second outlines the literature review focusing on the determinants and selected empirical findings concerning HRM in public and private organizations; the third section covers the material and methods used for achieving the aim of the study; the fourth section presents and the fifth section discusses the results of the empirical research; the sixth section concludes the research findings and outlines their limitations with recommendations for further research.

2. Literature review

2.1. HRM determinants in public and private organizations

In the literature, we can find the general view that the traditional differences in human resource management (HRM) between private and public sector organizations originated from fundamentally different models of managing work and people. Private organizations typically have adopted a "hard" model of HRM, primarily aimed at improving organizational performance, while public organizations have adopted the "soft" model, primarily aimed at improving employee well-being (Boyne et al., 1999). Regarding the main internal factors influencing the specificity of HRM, the literature emphasizes that the functioning of public and private (business) organizations is subject to distinct value systems and also marked by different missions, goals, and motives of people's activity (Scott & Falcone, 1998; Zieliński, 2011; Hałat-Majka & Makowski, 2015; Dolewka, 2017). The mission of public organizations is to satisfy the collective needs of the public through public goods and services, and the distinctive character of their goals is rooted in the common ownership of these organizations by numerous stakeholders and the resulting multiple and ambiguous goals. The task of public managers is therefore to balance the goals of various stakeholder groups and to resolve related conflicts. In the case of private organizations, the goals are mainly related to profit as an unambiguous measure of success or failure (Kożuch, 2004; Boxall, 2012; Sidor-Rządkowska, 2018). In terms of people's motivation, it is accepted that employees in public organizations are motivated less economically but more intrinsically (altruistically) than their counterparts in private organizations (Baldwin, 1991). Furthermore, the weak relationship between work performance and remuneration in public organizations is not conducive to greater employee involvement in such organizations (Karna, 2011). In

addition, there is a belief that public organizations are more formalized and function in a more bureaucratic way (Boyne, 2002; Bińczycki, 2008), which is due to their hierarchical culture and manifests itself in the existence of a large number of documents and extensive procedures, and thus less autonomy for managers and their low willingness to take risks. Monitoring and control constitute another important difference between the two types of organizations. Public organizations are subject to much more political control than market control, as is the case in private organizations. The actions taken by public managers are closely related to politics, and it is well-known that monitoring and control by individual voters are rather illusory. In addition, public organizations are generally not self-financing and require external funding, which does not relieve them of the rationality of their operations and their concern to carry out their tasks efficiently and effectively (Kożuch, 2004). In analyses of HRM in both types of organizations as employers, particular attention is paid to the remuneration factor (Podgórnjak-Krzykacz & Kalisiak-Mędelska, 2016). It is pointed out that in commercial organizations, remuneration tends to depend on the competence and value of the tasks performed. In contrast, in public organizations, the remuneration system is formalized and standardized, and the remuneration rules still favor employees with the highest formal qualifications and longer seniority, while those who acquire valuable professional competencies quickly are remunerated below the prevailing market rates (Rostkowski, 2012).

Among the external determinants of HRM, a greater emphasis on the legality of operations in public organizations than in the private sector is indicated (Sidor-Rządkowska, 2018). This principle largely determines the functioning of public organizations, including HRM practices implemented in them. As a consequence, for instance, public organizations are obliged to use financial resources available to them according to strict requirements and procedures for the purposeful and rational spending of public funds, rather than according to the financial results achieved, seeking to maximize results with the least possible expenditure, as in private organizations (Bińczycki, 2008). From the dominance of the legality principle, there are also more rigid rules for hiring, promoting, and dismissing employees in public organizations. Furthermore, public organizations, compared to private ones, are marked by the greater complexity of environmental influences and the greater permeability of these influences (Pollit, 1990; Boyne, 2002). They are considered to operate in a less stable environment due

to their close links with politics and being influenced by a large number of more diverse and demanding stakeholders. They are also subject to less competitive pressure, often occupying a dominant or monopolistic market position in the provision of specific services (Kožuch, 2004; Zieliński, 2011), as in the case of MHS housing services provided by MHMUs (Tertelis, 2009). These conditions affect people management in local government organizations, where, often, instead of a developed HRM system, the practice of reacting to emerging needs prevails. Moreover, a lack of knowledge, skills, and teamwork is perceived in these organizations. There is also little dissemination of HR development policies. It should be emphasized that, on the one hand, HRM in Polish municipal offices is quite precisely regulated by law, and, on the other hand, many of its important aspects are omitted from the law and their application depends on the will of local authorities (Karna, 2011). In addition, HRM in the local government sector is not a copy of solutions from the private sector but adapts some of them to the specifics of municipal organizations. This mainly concerns tools for the recruitment of qualified employees, shaping career paths, and motivating or appraising employees. Against the background of the general tendency to use the traditional HRM model in municipal organizations, the wide differentiation of HRM, depending on the size of the workforce and the type of units, is highlighted.

2.2. Public and private sector HRM – selected empirical findings in a comparative approach

Empirical studies on HRM found in international literature mostly concentrate on private (business) organizations, while HRM in the public sector has received relatively little scholarly attention (Brown, 2004; Truss, 2008). Earlier HRM research largely explored the identification of best HR practices, including employment security, selective recruitment, decentralization of decision-making, extensive training, performance-based compensation, and the HRM–performance relationship (Huselid, 1995; Paauwe, 2009; Boxall, 2012). Comparative analyses of HRM practices across public and private organizations are still relatively uncommon (Boyne, 2002). The most extensive empirical comparisons of how the public and private sectors adopted and applied HRM practices in the 1990s were conducted by Boyne et al. (1999) in the UK and Kalleberg et al. (2006) in the USA. Boyne et al. (1999) carried out a cross-sectional survey that included more than 900 managers from both sectors, controlling for variables such as organizational size and industry type. Their findings indicated that private

organizations emphasized flexibility and used a wider range of reward mechanisms, including performance-related pay, additional benefits, and individualized bonus systems. Public organizations, on the other hand, scored higher on equal pay for equal work and provided greater job security. They also offered more support for employee welfare initiatives, such as health care. Overall, Boyne et al.'s (1999) results supported the idea put forth by Farnham and Horton (1996) that HRM in the public sector possesses unique features. Kalleberg et al. (2006) performed a similar comparison of what they referred to as “high-performance work practices” in nonprofit, public, and for-profit organizations. Using the AMO framework (ability, motivation, opportunity: Appelbaum et al. 2000), they compared practices enhancing these three components, drawing on data from over a thousand organizations. Their analysis also controlled for industry, organizational size, and organizational age. Their results paralleled those of Boyne et al. (1999): public and nonprofit organizations offered more opportunities for participation in decision-making, while private organizations more frequently applied performance-linked incentive systems. Contrary to Boyne et al. (1999), Kalleberg et al. (2006) did not detect substantial differences regarding practices aimed at improving employee skills. They attributed this to the fact that the skill-enhancing practices examined by Kalleberg et al. (2006) were “modern” (focused on building human capital), whereas those examined by Boyne et al. (1999) were more “traditional.” Collectively, these two sets of studies shed light on the distinct nature of HRM in the public sector during the late 1990s.

Budhwar and Boyne (2004) carried out a comparative assessment of HRM practices in public and private organizations in India. Their analysis targeted key HR areas, including the structure of the HR unit, the role of HR in organizational change, recruitment and selection processes, compensation and benefits, training and development, employee relations, and the emphasis placed on essential HRM strategies. Their findings indicated that differences between public- and private-sector HRM practices were not very pronounced. Furthermore, in several HR domains (e.g., compensation, training, and development), Indian private firms adopted more rational approaches than public organizations. Among additional relevant studies is a comparative investigation of HRM practices and the HRM–performance relationship in private and public organizations across three societal clusters – Anglo, Germanic, and Nordic (Vanhala & Stavrou,

2013). This research contributed to ongoing discussions about the role of context in HRM (Paauwe, 2009) across sectors. The results demonstrated that HRM practices tend to be more advanced in private organizations, regardless of societal cluster. At the same time, analyses of the HRM-performance link revealed noteworthy similarities and differences between sectors and clusters. A study on HRM in Nigeria (Ikyanyon et al., 2020) showed that HRM practices (such as staffing, training, rewards, and employee involvement) may be shaped by both formal and informal institutions as well as the country's socio-economic environment. These practices can also be affected by organizational characteristics and HRM-specific contextual challenges. In particular, formal institutional elements like labor legislation and trade unions tend to exert a stronger influence on HRM practices in the public than in the private sector, and more so in large organizations than in small ones. A noteworthy meta-analysis (Blom et al., 2020) comparing the effects of ability-, motivation-, and opportunity-enhancing HRM practices on individual performance across public, semi-public, and private sectors has recently appeared within contextual HRM research. The study showed that meaningful, though complex, sectoral differences in HRM effects exist; however, the assumption that these effects would be strongest in the private sector and weakest in the public sector was not confirmed. According to the authors, the smaller-than-expected differences may stem from an increasing "blurring of sectors," as well as from the possibility that other contextual factors - such as industry, size, age, or culture (Subramony, 2009) - are more influential than sector alone.

One of the latest international investigations (Knies et al., 2022) indicates that differences between the public and private sectors have diminished over time across most HRM practice categories. The study found that equal-opportunity-oriented HRM practices remain more common in the public sector; however, development and career management practices are now implemented to a similar degree in both sectors, or even more extensively in the private sector. Conversely, HRM practices related to compensation and benefits, as well as appraisal and performance management, continue to be more prevalent in the private sector, although public organizations have increasingly adopted appraisal systems. The study affirmed that notable distinctions between HRM in the two sectors still exist, but some differences from the late 1990s have faded, while others persist, suggesting that traditional public-sector values are less prone to

change. These findings reinforce the importance of avoiding uncritical transfer of HRM insights from the private to the public sector and instead encourage thoughtful adaptation that recognizes the institutional context (Boselie et al., 2021).

To conclude, it is important to highlight that drawing a clear line between the public and private sectors has become increasingly difficult. This is due to the growing overlap and convergence between the two sectors, largely driven by outsourcing and public-private partnerships initiated by many public authorities as part of public management reforms in recent decades (Goldfinch & Wallis, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

3. Material and methods

The method used for the comparative analysis of HRM models in public and private housing organizations (HOs) managing MHS in Poland was a multi-stage survey (questionnaire) approach. The implemented research procedure consisted of the following stages:

1. Identifying antecedent research pertinent to the attainment of the main aim of the study, thereby facilitating the validation of the research hypothesis.
2. Executing a pilot study on a selected sample of HOs using an initial survey questionnaire as a research tool.
3. Performing a basic study on a representative sample of HOs through the application of a verified form of the survey questionnaire, supplemented by direct unstructured interviews.
4. Analytical processing of the empirical data acquired, accompanied by subsequent discussion regarding the research results about the verification of the research hypothesis and the fulfillment of the study's main aim.
5. Formulating conclusions pertinent to the comparative analysis of HRM models in public and private organizations managing MHS in Poland and the desired changes in them, with an indication of the limitations of the research, and proposals for their development.

A pilot study was conducted in the last quarter of 2022 on a sample of 10 MHS management organizations (HOs) located in municipalities from the Warmia and Mazury Province in Poland. The survey questionnaire (in its initial form) was sent to persons responsible for HRM in the selected HOs. Based on the responses received, a proper survey questionnaire was developed, taking into account the general principles of its structure proposed by Dyduch (2015). The established structure of the questionnaire consisted of

two groups of questions, the first concerning the general characteristics of the organization under study, and the second concerning the solutions used in the HRM practice of that organization. The questions in the first group concerned such features of HOs as: ownership form, organizational and legal structure (single-person enterprise, civil company, limited liability company, self-government budgetary unit or establishment), type of the MHS, location (according to the size of the municipality and province), and employment in the Human Resource Unit (HRU). The second group included questions on HRM characteristics such as: the general approach to the importance of people (1), and the dominant approach to HRM in the organization (2), the most important goals (3), and the dominant features (4) of personnel policy, the strategy and procedures for HRM in the organization (5), the importance of personnel processes for organizational functioning (6), the role (7) and core tasks of the HRU in organizational management (8), and the HRM tools applied in the organization (9).

To verify whether the observed differences between the surveyed characteristics of HRM in both groups of HOs (MHMUs and PPMFs) are statistically significant, Pearson's chi-squared (χ^2) tests were performed. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$, meaning that differences with p -values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant. This analysis allows for a methodologically substantiated determination of whether the organization's ownership form actually differentiates surveyed HRM characteristics, or whether the observed variations are due to random distribution within the sample, and indicates a convergence of both HRM models in the housing sector under study.

The basic study was conducted in three rounds in 2023. The questionnaire was sent to HOs in all 302 urban municipalities in Poland. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter outlining the aim of the research and the use of the results. The respondents included representatives from top management, HR department managers, or individuals designated to perform HR functions within the organization. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents were also interviewed to clarify or refine the issues raised in the survey. After three rounds, a total of 138 questionnaires were returned, resulting in an initial response rate of 45.7%. Then, after eliminating incomplete questionnaires, the main survey sample comprised 130 MHS management organizations (HOs) from across Poland. The main survey sample represented 43.0% of all urban municipalities in Poland. It consisted of organizations managing housing properties owned solely by municipalities (47.7%) and by public-private HOAs (41.5%). Only 10.8% of sampled HOs managed both MHS segments simultaneously. Among all HOs in the sample, 21.5% were located in municipalities with up to 20,000 residents, 35.4% in those with 20,000 to 50,000 residents, 27.7% in municipalities with 50,000 to 100,000 residents, and 15.4% in municipalities with more than 100,000 residents. Later in the research process, the main survey sample was divided into two sub-samples, including 66 (50.8%) public organizations (sub-sample MHMUs) and 64 (49.2%) private ones (sub-sample PPMFs). Structural characteristics of the main survey sample and the distinguished sub-samples of HOs under study, broken down by organizational and legal form, average number of employees, and number of employees in the HRU, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Structural characteristics of the main survey sample and the distinguished sub-samples of HOs under study

Type of structure (features)	Main survey sample	Sub-sample of MHMUs	Sub-sample of PPMFs
<i>Percentage structure of the surveyed HOs by the organizational and legal form</i>			
Single person enterprises	19.3	0.0	39.1
Civil law companies	11.5	0.0	23.4
Limited liability companies	23.1	9.1	37.5
Self-government budgetary establishments	21.5	42.4	0.0
Self-government budgetary units	24.6	48.5	0.0
Housing cooperatives	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other forms	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Percentage structure of the surveyed HOs by the average number of employees</i>			
Entities with up to 9 employees	16.9	6.1	28.1
Entities with 10 to 24 employees	40.0	21.2	59.4
Entities with 25 to 49 employees	25.4	37.9	12.5
Entities with 50-99 employees	12.3	24.2	0.0
Entities with over 100 employees	5.4	10.6	0.0

Percentage structure of the surveyed HOs by the number of employees in the Human **Resource Unit (HRU)**

Entities with 1 person employed in the HRU	53.8	45.4	62.5
Entities with 2-3 persons employed in the HRU	30.0	25.8	34.4
Entities with 4-5 persons employed in the HRU	11.5	19.7	3.1
Entities with over 5 persons employed in the HRU	4.6	9.1	0.0

Source: own study.

The organizational and legal forms of HOs in the survey sub-sample of MHMUs were primarily made up of self-government budgetary units (48.5%) and self-government budgetary establishments (42.4%), while limited liability companies held a much smaller percentage (9.1%). In contrast, the PPMFs sub-sample was dominated by forms such as single-person enterprises (39.1%), limited liability companies (37.5%), and civil law companies (23.4%). In the breakdown of the sub-sample of MHMUs by average employment, entities with 25-49 employees prevailed (37.9%), followed by entities with 50 to 99 employees (24.2%) and entities with 10-24 employees (21.2%). Largest MHMUs, employing over 100 people, and smallest ones, employing up to 9 people, were much less common. In contrast, in the subsample of PPMFs dominated entities employing between 10 and 24 workers. A significant proportion was also accounted for by the smallest PPMFs, employing up to 9 people (28.1%), and medium-sized PPMFs, employing 25 – 49 people (12.5%). In the structure of MHMUs according to the number of employees in the HRU, most sampled entities employed one person (45.4%). It was much less common for MHMUs to have 2–3 employees in their HR department (25.8%) or 4–5 employees (19.7%). This staffing pattern of employment in the HRU was quite similar in the subsample of PPMFs. Despite differences in the presented structures, including in the employment structures, both sub-samples of HOs are homogeneous in terms of the functional domain, as MHMUs and PPMFs provide management services for the same category of assets - the municipal housing stock (MHS). Considering the 43.0% response rate, which is high for surveys in the housing sector, and the internal structure and geographical distribution of sampled HOs across all 16 voivodships, the main survey sample and the distinguished sub-samples were considered sufficiently large and representative of the MHS management organizations in Polish urban municipalities. This means that the samples obtained provide a solid statistical basis for generalizing the results and drawing conclusions regarding HRM in the social housing management sector in Poland.

4. Results

Comparative research on HRM models in public (MHMUs) and private (PPMFs) organizations managing MHS began with an examination of the general approach to the importance of people (1) and the dominant approach to HRM in these organizations (2). Taking as a measure the percentage share of responses obtained in the relevant sub-samples of public and private organizations, it was found that in both sets, most HOs declared treating employees as a valuable resource that is an organizational asset to be developed, with the measure reaching 53.1% in the sub-sample of public organizations and 59.3% in the sub-sample of private ones. Slightly fewer MHMUs (19.7%) than PPMFs (23.4%) favored a modern (capital) approach, according to which employees are treated as the most valuable resource, capital, an element that builds the value of the organization, in which it is necessary to invest. Simultaneously, more MHMUs (22.7%) than PPMFs (15.6%) declared a traditional approach to HRM, in which employees are viewed as a source of costs, a resource that should be utilized efficiently within the organization. Detailed statistical analysis of each approach to the importance of people revealed no significant differences between the surveyed sectors. For the “valuable resource” approach, the difference was not significant ($\chi^2 = 0.50$, $p = 0.479$), and similar results were found for the “capital” approach ($\chi^2 = 0.16$, $p = 0.693$) and the “source of costs” approach ($\chi^2 = 1.02$, $p = 0.313$). These findings confirm a high level of convergence in the fundamental perception of employees across both public and private housing organizations. When analyzing the dominant approach to HRM, it was found that a lower percentage of MHMUs (39.4%) compared to PPMFs (60.9%) declared the use of the “hard” (managerial) approach based on rules and procedures, while the percentage of declarations using a “soft” (leadership) approach based on communication and cooperation reached 57.6% and 35.9%, respectively. A significantly higher percentage of public organizations than private ones reported little employee participation in decision-making processes and limited information sharing with employees on important matters concerning the organization's operations. Simultaneously, MHMUs more frequently

than PPMFs declared striving to balance the goals and needs of the organization and its employees, and to create a climate conducive to interpersonal relations. In contrast, a higher percentage of PPMFs than MHMUs declared an emphasis on the effective use of human resources (work efficiency), a focus mainly on achieving the organization's goals and meeting its needs, as well as creating a climate conducive to work efficiency. Statistical verification confirmed significant sectoral differences in the dominant HRM approach. PPMFs significantly more often apply the "hard" approach ($\chi^2 = 6.05$, $p = 0.014$) and focus on work efficiency ($\chi^2 = 16.11$, $p = 0.0001$). In contrast, MHMUs are significantly more likely to adopt a "soft" approach ($\chi^2 = 6.29$, $p = 0.012$), prioritize interpersonal relations ($\chi^2 = 14.35$, $p = 0.0001$), and balance organizational and employee needs ($\chi^2 = 4.29$, $p = 0.038$). However, public organizations also show significantly higher levels of restricted employee participation ($\chi^2 = 5.47$, $p = 0.019$) and limited information sharing ($\chi^2 = 5.14$, $p = 0.023$) compared to their private counterparts. Thus, statistical analysis confirmed significant differences between the two sectors in terms of the prevailing approach to HRM, indicating that form of ownership is a significant factor differentiating HRM styles.

In the next steps, the most important goals (3) and the dominant features (4) of personnel policy in both sets of sampled HOs were examined. The study showed that the priority goals of personnel policy included preventing the outflow of competent, valuable employees, as declared by 57.6% of MHMUs and 73.4% of PPMFs, and recruiting suitable personnel to work in the organization, which was supported by a similar percentage of respondents (avg. 68.3%) in both sets of organizations. A significantly lower share of MHMUs than PPMFs also supported such personnel policy goals as continuous development of employee skills, motivating and increasing employee commitment, and people management that fosters initiative, creativity, and autonomy, while shaping desirable working relationships was a goal more often emphasized in public organizations than in private ones. The analysis of personnel policy goals revealed significant sectoral disparities. PMFs place a significantly higher priority on the continuous development of employee skills ($\chi^2 = 7.61$, $p = 0.006$), motivating and increasing commitment ($\chi^2 = 5.64$, $p = 0.017$), and fostering initiative and autonomy ($\chi^2 = 6.29$, $p = 0.012$). Conversely, MHMUs are significantly more focused on shaping desirable working relationships ($\chi^2 = 8.24$, $p = 0.004$). No significant differences were found in the goals related to recruiting personnel ($p = 0.718$) or

preventing employee outflow ($p = 0.058$), suggesting these challenges are perceived similarly across both sectors. When identifying the dominant features of personnel policy, a similar percentage of MHMUs and PPMFs were in favor of both a focus on long-term employment and the prevalence of contracts for an indefinite period (avg. 90.7%), as well as the use of simple selection procedures based on the assessment of only the core requirements (avg. 67.7%). It was also found that when hiring employees, MHMUs more often attached great importance to formal qualifications (education), while PPMFs more often declared an emphasis on the assessment of actual competencies (knowledge, skills, motivation to work). Similarly, MHMUs more often emphasized the link between remuneration and work input and seniority, while PPMFs more often pointed to the link between remuneration and performance appraisal and employee competencies. In the study, 60.6% of MHMUs and 54.7% of PPMFs declared that their organizational culture was based on loyalty, commitment, and cooperation, while only 37.9% and 42.2% of them, respectively, stated that their culture was based on competition and rivalry between employees. Also, in both sets of HOs, the individualized and specialized work model prevailed (69.7% of MHMUs and 37.5% of PPMFs) over the teamwork and comprehensive work model (30.3% of MHMUs and 57.8% of PPMFs). Statistical testing confirmed profound differences in the operational features of personnel policies. MHMUs rely significantly more on formal qualifications during hiring ($\chi^2 = 7.65$, $p = 0.006$) and seniority-based remuneration ($\chi^2 = 8.56$, $p = 0.003$), while favoring an individualized work model ($\chi^2 = 12.68$, $p = 0.0004$). In contrast, PPMFs emphasize actual competencies ($\chi^2 = 8.91$, $p = 0.003$), link pay to performance appraisal ($\chi^2 = 10.75$, $p = 0.001$), and significantly more often adopt a teamwork model ($\chi^2 = 11.10$, $p = 0.0009$). No significant differences were observed regarding long-term employment ($p = 0.736$), selection simplicity ($p = 0.830$), or declared organizational culture ($p > 0.05$), highlighting areas where both sectors remain convergent.

Subsequently, the strategies and procedures of HRM in sampled organizations (5) and the importance of personnel processes for organizational functioning (6) were studied. The results concerning the first topic are shown in Fig. 1. The research revealed that a higher percentage of MHMUs than PPMFs were in favor of having personnel strategy and procedures for recruiting and selecting, employee adaptation, evaluation, remuneration, and dismissal.

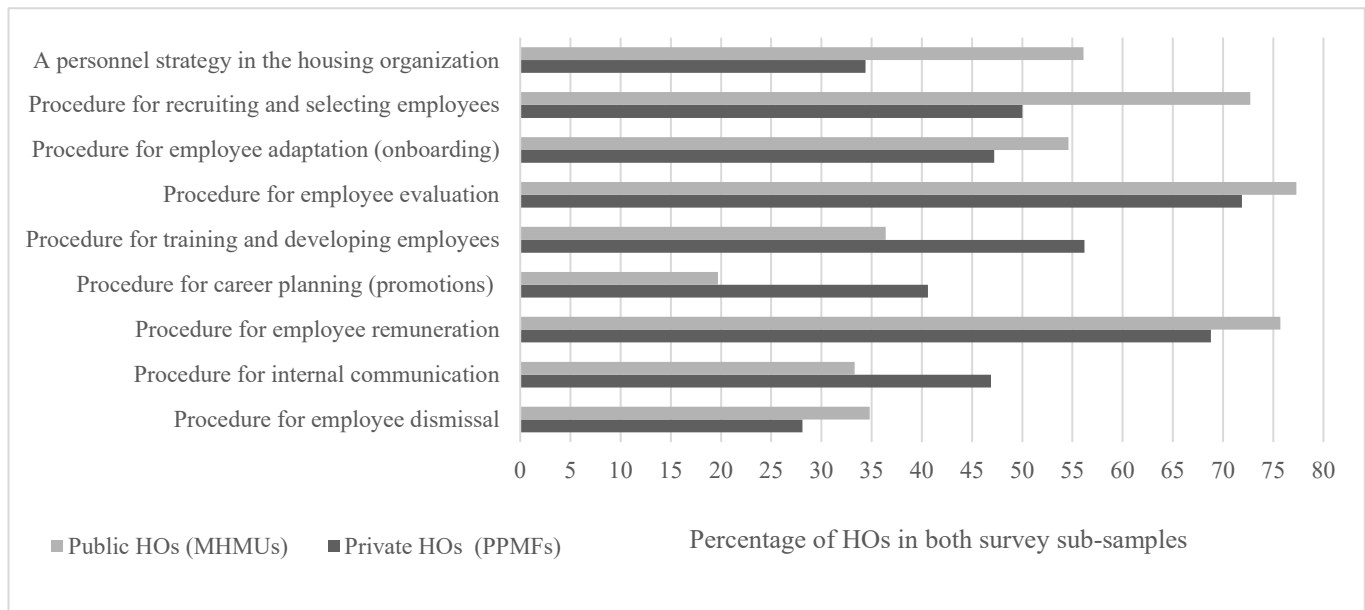


Fig. 1. Comparison of applied HRM strategies and procedures of HRM in sampled housing organizations. *Source:* own study.

The reverse relationship was true for procedures for training and developing employees, career planning, and internal communication. Statistical analysis of the data in Fig. 1 confirmed significant sectoral differences in four out of nine categories. Public HOs are significantly more likely to possess a formal personnel strategy ($\chi^2 = 6.36$, $p = 0.011$) and documented recruiting and selecting procedures ($\chi^2 = 7.12$, $p = 0.007$). Conversely, private HOs show a significantly higher prevalence of formalized procedures for training and development ($\chi^2 = 4.91$, $p = 0.026$) and career planning ($\chi^2 = 6.97$, $p = 0.008$). In areas such as remuneration, onboarding, and employee evaluation, as well as internal communication and employee dismissal, no statistically significant differences were found ($p > 0.05$), indicating a convergence of HRM practices in these operational domains. The highest importance for organizational functioning was attributed in sampled HOs to processes such as personnel administration (72.7% of MHMUs and 67.2% of PPMFs), hiring employees (60.6% of MHMUs and 70.3% of PPMFs), work analysis and employment planning (45.5% of MHMUs and 65.6% of PPMFs), evaluation of work results (39.4% of MHMUs and 62.5% of PPMFs), and shaping the remuneration system (42.4% of MHMUs and 60.9% of PPMFs). In this study, personnel administration is understood as the performance of routine tasks related to human resources, such as maintaining personal files, payroll processing, and ensuring compliance with labor law. Further down the ranking were training and

development (40.9% of MHMUs and 56.2% of PPMFs), employee motivation (33.1% of MHMUs and 51.6% of PPMFs), employee relations management (48.5% of MHMUs and 39.1% of PPMFs), and employee career planning (13.6% of MHMUs and 31.2% of PPMFs). The study confirmed significant differences in how public and private housing organizations prioritize specific HR processes. PPMFs attribute significantly higher importance to work analysis and employment planning ($\chi^2 = 5.59$, $p = 0.018$), evaluation of work results ($\chi^2 = 7.66$, $p = 0.006$), and shaping the remuneration system ($\chi^2 = 5.39$, $p = 0.020$). Furthermore, processes such as employee motivation ($\chi^2 = 4.96$, $p = 0.026$) and career planning ($\chi^2 = 5.83$, $p = 0.016$) are also perceived as significantly more critical for organizational functioning in the private sector. In contrast, no significant differences were found in the perceived importance of personnel administration ($p = 0.458$), hiring ($p = 0.224$), or employee relations management ($p = 0.277$), which remain core priorities for both types of HOs.

The transformation of HRM models often involves redefining the role (7) and core tasks of the Human Resource Unit (8) in organizational management, which was the research topic in the next steps. Generally, the HRU role was most often defined in both sets of HOs as similar to other organizational units (51.5% of MHMUs and 34.4% of PPMFs) or as auxiliary, with less importance than other units (22.7% of MHMUs and 31.2% of PPMFs). Many fewer HOs saw the HRU role as supportive, more important than other organizational units, or, on the contrary, as subordinate, with little

importance. Statistical analysis of the HRU's role in organizational management revealed a significant difference in one of the key perceptions. In public organizations, the HR unit is significantly more likely to be perceived as having a role of similar importance to other organizational units ($\chi^2 = 4.20$, $p = 0.040$). On the other hand, although a higher number of private

organizations declared that the HRU has less importance than other units, this difference did not reach statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 1.07$, $p = 0.301$). Comparison of the most frequently indicated core HRU tasks in both sets of the surveyed HO's is presented in Fig. 2.



Fig. 2. Comparison of core tasks of the Human Resource Unit (HRU) in sampled housing organizations. *Source:* own study.

The highest percentage of HO's, with a similar frequency of indications in MHMUs and PPMFs, opted for traditional HRU tasks such as administering personnel matters, keeping records and analyzing employment status, preparing reports and statements related to hiring employees, as well as preparing and updating workplace descriptions. The HRU tasks that were more often indicated by MHMUs included developing procedures and documents related to employment, ensuring compliance with labor laws, and supervising work. In contrast, the tasks that were more often declared by PPMFs included cooperation with external institutions on employee matters, conducting recruitment and selection processes, administering an employee evaluation system, and implementing training activities. Statistical analysis of the updated data for HR unit tasks revealed significant sectoral differences in four out of twelve categories. MHMUs are

significantly more involved in developing formal procedures and documents ($\chi^2 = 12.38$, $p = 0.004$) and ensuring compliance with labor laws and supervising work ($\chi^2 = 15.31$, $p = 0.0001$). These findings align with the high level of formalization typical for the public finance sector. Conversely, PPMFs focus significantly more on the implementation of training activities ($\chi^2 = 6.56$, $p = 0.01$) and cooperation with external institutions on employee matters ($\chi^2 = 5.98$, $p = 0.014$). In the remaining eight categories, such as personnel administration, recruitment, or advising executives, no statistically significant differences were found ($p > 0.05$), indicating a shared operational core.

Finally, an analysis of the HRM tools applied in selected sub-samples of public and private housing organizations was conducted (9). The most commonly used tools of this type, according to respondents, are presented in Fig. 3.

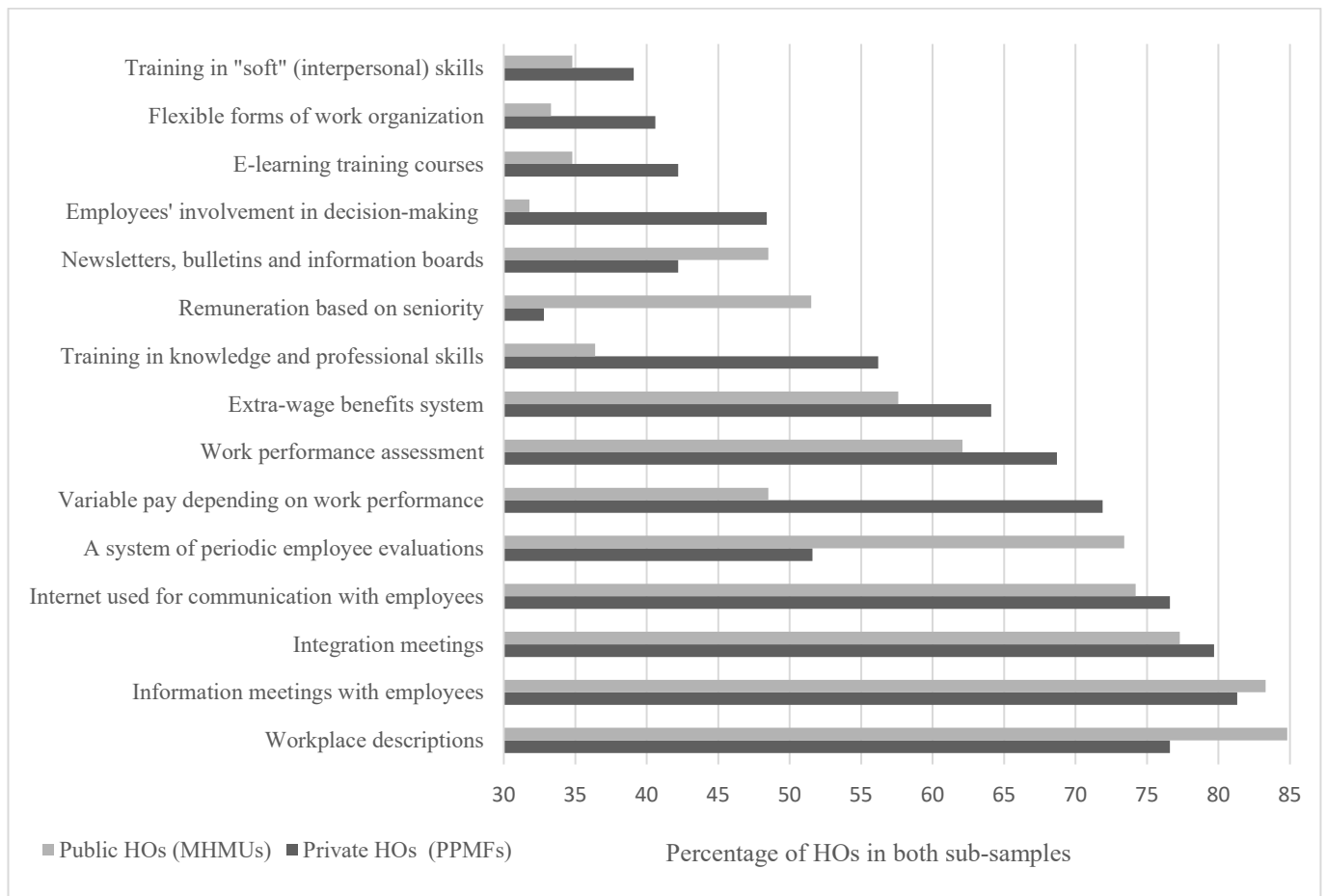


Fig. 3. Comparison of the most commonly used HRM tools in sampled housing organizations. *Source:* own study.

The most popular HRM tools with a comparable indication percentage by MHMUs and PPMFs included information and integration meetings, as well as using the Internet for communication with employees. A significantly higher percentage of MHMUs than PPMFs were in favor of workplace descriptions, systems of periodic employee evaluations, remuneration based on seniority, newsletters, internal bulletins, and information boards. In contrast, the most popular HRM tools, which were less often used by MHMUs than PPMFs, encompassed variable pay depending on work performance, work performance assessments, extra-wage benefits systems, training in knowledge and professional skills, employees' involvement in decision making, e-learning training courses, etc. Statistical testing of the tools utilized in HRM processes (Fig. 3) confirmed significant sectoral differences in five key areas. Private organizations are significantly more likely to implement performance-based variable pay ($\chi^2 = 5.90$, $p = 0.015$), professional knowledge training ($\chi^2 = 4.91$, $p = 0.027$), and involve employees in decision-making processes ($\chi^2 = 4.14$, $p = 0.042$). Conversely, public organizations show a significantly higher reliance on periodic

evaluation systems ($\chi^2 = 5.45$, $p = 0.020$) and on seniority-based remuneration ($\chi^2 = 4.50$, $p = 0.034$). In the remaining ten categories, including internal communication methods and work organization forms, no statistically significant differences were found ($p > 0.05$), indicating a standardized instrumental base across the entire social housing sector.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning thirty additional HRM tools that were included in the survey questionnaire but are not shown in Fig. 3, as there was little to no interest in them from both groups of respondents. Little interest was attributed to elements such as work evaluation, formal career paths (promotion), work in project teams, management by goals, employee opinion implementation programs, or solutions that facilitate work-life balance for employees. However, HRM tools, which, according to the respondents, were not yet utilized in either of the two groups of HOs surveyed, included elements such as mentoring and talent management programs, personnel controlling, or assessment/development centers. etc.

5. Discussion

An analysis and interpretation of the research results require consideration of the more detailed structural characteristics of both sub-samples, including those presented in Table 1. On the one hand, it should be emphasized that the sub-sample of MHMUs was dominated by self-government budgetary units (SGBUs) and self-government budgetary establishments (SGBEs), i.e., organizational units of municipalities (local governments) belonging to the public finance sector, where HRM was subject to the provisions of the Self-Government Employees Act (Act, 2008). Therefore, sampled SGBUs and SGBEs were marked by all the features of public organizations, including the dominance of the legality principle, focusing on performing municipal own (public) tasks in the field of housing, requirements for the purposeful and rational spending of public funds, bureaucratic organizational culture, highly formalized procedures, politicization, etc. The aforementioned legal regulations have a significant impact on HRM practices in these organizations, as they introduce constraints on hiring, promotion, dismissal, and employee remuneration. However, these regulations do not form a comprehensive and coherent HRM system, as some HRM practices are regulated in more detail (e.g., recruitment), and others are treated superficially or even omitted (e.g., HR planning, motivation, or personnel development). This allows local authorities to implement, within the existing legal constraints, detailed HRM solutions better tailored to the needs of employees and employers within the situational conditions of MHS management in a given municipality. Such implementation usually involves adapting appropriate HRM methods, techniques, and tools from the private sector to the public one, as confirmed by the study findings. On the other hand, the structure of the sub-sample of PPMFs was dominated by firms employing no more than 49 people. In other words, the PPMFs sub-sample consisted almost exclusively of small organizations, which were characterized by distinct specificities in terms of HRM practices. Qualitative research has shown that small firms interact dynamically with contextual conditions (e.g., labor markets) and specific conditions within the organization itself (e.g., ownership and resources), which causes HRM practices in small organizations to differ significantly from those in large organizations (Harney & Alkhalaf, 2021). Furthermore, it is emphasized that the diversity of professional relationships and business goals of small firms leads to the belief that there are different but equally effective

(equifinal) approaches to HRM in small organizations (Kroon & Paauwe, 2022). Some authors articulate that most small firms have not treated HRM as an essential element of the organization's functioning. It has often been considered less important than marketing, finance, or operational functions (Barczyk, 2018). This stems from the specific nature of the functioning, organization, and limited resources of small organizations, as well as from the informal and direct interpersonal relationships. Therefore, HR practices in the smallest firms are uncomplicated, intuitive, and limited to the day-to-day handling of employee matters, including maintaining employee records and organizing health and safety training (Krawczyk, 2016). However, as the number of employees in an organization increases, these HRM activities become more sophisticated, as demonstrated by the results of the study.

It is noteworthy that although PPMFs in the sample are predominantly smaller than MHMUs, they demonstrate a higher adoption of performance-oriented HRM tools. This suggests that the ownership structure and the resulting market pressure exert a stronger influence on HRM practices than the "size effect" of the organization. This finding addresses the complex interplay between organizational characteristics. While size often dictates the formalization of HR functions, the ownership form acts as a proxy for the underlying institutional logic. Our analysis suggests that the "publicness" of an organization - characterized by legal rigidities and public accountability - remains a significant predictor of HRM patterns even when controlling for employment scale. Consequently, the observed differences are not merely a function of organizational size but are rooted in the divergent strategic imperatives of the public and private sectors. In the case of public units, the formalized HRM model is largely imposed by the legal framework, which standardizes practices regardless of the employment scale. While MHMUs are primarily constrained by the legal framework (institutional logic), PPMFs operate under market logic where organizational size becomes a key determinant of HR formalization. Thus, the comparison reveals how different structural drivers (law vs. market) shape HRM regardless of the organizations' functional similarities.

Research revealed that MHMUs less frequently than PPMFs emphasized a modern approach to the importance of people in organizations, viewing them as valuable assets to be developed and as capital that increases

organizational value. However, the differences in the percentage of responses between the two groups were relatively small, and the order of priorities was identical. More MHMUs than PPMFs reported limited employee participation in decision-making and restricted information sharing. The view of Boyne et al. (1999) regarding housing organizations was also confirmed: private organizations adopted a “hard” HRM model more often, focused on improving organizational performance, while public organizations adopted a “soft” model more frequently, aimed at enhancing employee well-being. Concerning HR policies, PPMFs more often declared a proactive approach, such as competence development, motivation, initiative, and creativity, whereas MHMUs placed greater emphasis on establishing desirable work relationships, formal qualifications, and linking remuneration to work input and seniority. The teamwork model was much less common in MHMUs, aligning with previous studies (e.g., Karna, 2011). Nonetheless, recruiting suitable employees, using simple selection procedures, and focusing on long-term employment were valued similarly in both groups of HOs, likely due to the specific nature of MHS management services. It was also found that public HOs more often than private ones declared that they had a personnel strategy, and that the procedures examined were evenly distributed in both groups of organizations. This may result from different understandings of these terms by respondents and indicate the transfer of good HRM practices between HOs in different sectors. Much lower importance of HR processes such as employment planning, evaluation of work results, training and development, employee motivation, and career planning for MHMUs corresponds to findings reported by other researchers (e.g., Blom et al., 2020). Both groups of HOs perceived the role and tasks of HRU similarly, as the differences in the percentage of declarations for such tasks as administering personnel matters, keeping records, analyzing employment status, preparing reports, statements related to hiring employees, and workplace descriptions were relatively small, and the order of priorities in the big picture was consistent. This may raise some concerns about the full adequacy of the declarations made in this regard to practice in the context of the structure of the PPMFs sub-sample. The other HRU tasks studied were found to be more popular among MHMUs (e.g., developing procedures and documents related to employment) or PPMFs (e.g., administering an employee evaluation system). The results were logically linked to the HRM tools used by the organizations surveyed. However, it

is difficult to state unequivocally which group of HOs applied more advanced HRM tools, as the response rates for the most popular categories of these tools were either similar in both groups or differed significantly, often showing opposite relations. Furthermore, such ambiguities were encountered in many other HRM issues (practices) covered by the study. This means that some HRM practices studied differed significantly between public and private sector organizations surveyed, while others were convergent in both groups, which is consistent with the findings of Knies et al. (2022).

In summary, while individual variables such as legal form or HR unit staffing contribute to the diversity of HRM practices, the ownership structure emerges as the primary lens through which HRM models in the social housing sector should be interpreted. The convergence observed in communication tools, contrasted with the significant divergence in core motivational and evaluative instruments, underscores that the impact of ownership is most pronounced where organizational performance and employee incentives intersect. This multi-layered perspective provides a methodologically substantiated understanding of the HRM landscape, moving beyond simple descriptive comparisons towards a more nuanced analysis of organizational determinants.

6. Conclusions

Professional HRM is crucial in both public and private organizations involved in MHS management because it enables the acquisition and development of skilled and ethical employees, which enhances service quality, organizational efficiency, and satisfaction of residents and other stakeholders. Inspired by existing literature, research was undertaken with the main aim of conducting a comparative analysis of HRM models in public and private organizations managing MHS in Poland, and identifying differences between these models based on selected HRM characteristics. The scope of the comparative analysis included both strategic (policies, strategies, and personnel procedures) and operational dimensions of HRM management, including its process, institutional, and instrumental (tool) dimensions. A multi-stage survey (questionnaire) research procedure was applied. The analysis was based on the selected survey sample of HOs divided into two sub-samples (MHMUs and PPMFs), representing the population of all urban municipalities in Poland. Formulated conclusions are grounded in a methodological framework, where the identified sectoral disparities have been formally

validated using Pearson's chi-squared (χ^2) tests at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. This ensures that the observed differences between public and private organizations are statistically significant and not due to random distribution.

The research hypothesis was formulated that applied HRM practices are predominantly more advanced in private than in public MHS management organizations in Poland. In summary, it should be concluded that the obtained empirical results did not provide sufficient evidence to confirm the above - formulated research hypothesis. Negative verification of this hypothesis does not mean that there were no differences in the degree of advancement of HRM practices in both types of studied HOs, but rather that more advanced HRM practices in PPMFs were not predominant. This is because in some HRM aspects, the percentage of respondents in MHMUs and PPMFs was similar, which may indicate the occurrence of the convergence process, leading to blurring HRM boundaries between the two housing management sectors. This applied in particular to the importance of people in the organization, recruiting suitable employees, focusing on long-term employment, using simple selection procedures, as well as the perception of the role and tasks of HRU, and focusing on information and integration meetings, etc. In other HRM aspects, the opposite of the hypothesized relations were found, i.e., MHMUs used more advanced HRM practices than PPMFs. This is concerned in particular with the more frequent use by MHMUs, such as HRM practices, as balancing the goals and needs of the organization and its employees, creating a climate conducive to interpersonal relations, using a "soft" approach based on communication and cooperation, shaping desirable working relationships, developing procedures and documents related to employment, and preparing workplace descriptions, etc.

Based on a review of the literature and the identified differences between the HRM models studied, it can be concluded that public organizations managing MHS should place a greater emphasis on competency development, motivation, and employee engagement. Where legally possible, MHMUs should strive to implement more advanced HRM tools, such as work performance assessment, variable performance-based pay, and extra-wage benefit schemes. It is also advisable to increase the importance of such HR processes as career planning and employee development, as well as using flexible forms of work organization. Greater employee involvement in decision-making processes and improved information

sharing within the organization should also be promoted. In addition, MHMUs that more frequently use a "soft" HRM model focused on employee well-being should consider implementing more elements of "hard" HRM, aimed at improving organizational performance, leading to a greater focus on the effective use of HR and the achievement of organizational goals. The statistical verification confirmed that ownership structure is a primary determinant of the strategic approach to HRM in the social housing sector. For greater consistency and effectiveness of HRM, it is also necessary to fill gaps in procedures for recruiting and selecting, training and development, career planning, and internal communication. In turn, private organizations managing MHS (PPMFs), which more often use a "hard" HRM model, should pay attention to maintaining a balance between the pursuit of efficiency and employee well-being, including interpersonal relationships and the work environment. In larger PPMFs, the strategic role of HRU should be strengthened so that it actively supports executives in HRM. Furthermore, the use of flexible forms of work organization and training in "soft" skills should be more widespread in PPMFs, as this can improve the adaptability, innovation, and agility of these organizations. It is also worth strengthening those HRM practices in PPMFs that link remuneration even more closely to actual competences and work performance. The disparities in instrumental HRM were most evident in remuneration policies, where the reliance on seniority-based pay in public entities contrasted sharply with the performance-oriented systems in private firms. These findings are directly derived from the empirical data and highlight the impact of the Self-Government Employees Act (Act, 2008) on public sector management. It should be added that in both groups of HOs, deficiencies were found in the application of HRM practices such as work in project teams, employee opinion implementation programs, solutions facilitating work-life balance, or mentoring and talent management programs.

The limitations of the study stem from the discussed structural characteristics of both sub-samples of HOs and the research methodology used. Among MHMUs, SGBUs, and SGBEs were dominant, where HRM practices were more strictly regulated by law, which limited flexibility and the possibility of full implementation of solutions from the private sector. In contrast, small organizations dominated among PPMFs, where HRM is less formalized and more intuitive. Respondents' declarations regarding HRM practices may also not always fully reflect actual

activities, especially in the context of the PPMFs' structure. A deeper analysis of the specifics of HRM in both types of HOs requires further research towards monitoring changes in HRM models and assessing their impact on the quality and efficiency of MHS management services, and on employee and resident satisfaction in different regulatory and market conditions. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that this unique study has provided valuable insight into the state of HRM models applied in MHS management in Poland. The results may also be of interest in other countries where the social housing management system is undergoing institutional or market transformations.

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