

An Assessment of Institutional Resilience Capacity of the Local Public Administration: Evidence from Romania

Alina Georgiana Profiroiu^{*}

Corina Cristiana Nastacă^{**}

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The present research is a pilot study that aimed to investigate the concept of institutional resilience in the local public administration of Romania. The main objective of the research was to assess the capacity of institutional resilience in two of the six District Halls of the Bucharest Municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research

^{*} Alina Georgiana Profiroiu, Professor, Department of Administration and Public Management Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania (profesorica na Odjelu za upravu i javni menadžment, Sveučilište ekonomskih znanosti u Bukureštu, Rumunjska, email: alina.profiroiu@amp.ase.ro).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5605-8736>

^{**} Corina Cristiana Nastacă, Teaching Assisstant, Department of Administration and Public Management Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania (asistentica na Odjelu za upravu i javni menadžment, Sveučilište ekonomskih znanosti u Bukureštu, Rumunjska, email: corina.nastaca@amp.ase.ro).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3062-141X>

methodology consisted of a sociological survey conducted using a questionnaire, designed by the authors based on a previously designed conceptual framework for assessing resilience capacity. The capacity of institutional resilience in the local public administration was measured using four dimensions: capacity for innovation and learning, strategic capacity, stakeholders' involvement in decision-making, and transparency and communication. The research was conducted in a comparative manner, aiming to establish if there were any differences between the capacity of institutional resilience in the two District Halls. The research revealed that both District Halls demonstrated a medium to high level of resilience. District Hall 3 exhibited a higher capacity of resilience compared with District Hall 2.

Keywords: institutional resilience, local public administration, strategic capacity, innovation, transparency and communication, stakeholders

1. Introduction

In the last 15 years, a vast literature on the concept of resilience has been developed due to various types of disruptions that society has experienced, such as terrorist attacks, natural disasters, political instability, economic and financial crises, recent health crises caused by coronavirus, and now the Ukrainian conflict. Consequently, adaptability seems to be the main solution to all these imminent challenges. In particular, Romanian society has experienced many changes over time, from the fall of communism, transition to a market economy, European Union accession, the development of new institutions, and the necessity for rapid solutions to the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic outburst showed one more time that societies, economies, and organisations should focus more on developing and strengthening their resilience capacity. Meanwhile, researchers from different fields of study started to be more interested in examining the concept of resilience and the main factors that impact its development. However, the concept of institutional resilience began to gain more popularity due to the pressure felt by public and private organisations to continue to meet the citizens' and customers' needs while trying to cope with the

negative direct or indirect impacts of the pandemic and, more recently, of the conflict in Ukraine.

More than ever, it is necessary to continue the study of institutional resilience, with a greater focus on public administration which plays a key role in managing all types of crises and unforeseen events. Institutional resilience within the public administration becomes a rather big challenge, both for the civil servants who focus their efforts on satisfying the citizens' needs under all conditions, and for the beneficiaries of these changes. However, within local public administration institutions, resilience seems to be more difficult to develop due to constraints such as: the legal framework, low capacity for adaptability exhibited by human resources, political pressures, or budgetary limitations.

In this regard, the present study focuses on the concept of institutional resilience in the local public administration. The research aims to investigate the resilience capacity of two District Halls in Bucharest, Romania's capital, in order to establish to what extent they were prepared during the COVID-19 crisis. The originality of the study stems from the fact that it uses an instrument developed based on a framework previously designed by the authors. After analysing the results, the instrument will be improved and applied on a larger scale. The research is valuable for the scientific literature and for practitioners given the importance of local public administration institutions in managing crises. The lessons learned in the COVID-19 pandemic showed the need for strengthening the institutional resilience capacity of organisations at the local level, consequently, an assessment of this capacity is highly needed.

The study started with the following research questions:

RQ1: Did the two District Halls prove to be resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: Which are the most and the least developed dimensions of institutional resilience capacity in the two District Halls?

RQ3: Which are the main differences in institutional resilience capacity of the two District Halls?

The study is structured in three parts. The first one presents the theoretical background of the study. The second part explains the research methodology and the main characteristics of the study. The last section presents the main findings of the research trying to respond to the designed research questions. The study ends with conclusions and research limitations.

2. A Brief Insight into the Concept of Institutional Resilience

As we could see in the literature, the concept of resilience has been used to explain the responses to crises, but also the capacity of people/organisations/economies to adapt to them and their impact (Manca, Benczur & Giovannini, 2017). Although this concept has been the subject of many debates in various areas such as psychology, sociology, and education, it has had a spectacular evolution regarding organisations, and in this respect, the present research will address the concept of institutional resilience in public administration.

In a general approach, resilience is considered to be the capacity to adapt to shocks or other unforeseen events that do not affect the nature of relationships built within the sphere of activity in which an individual is active (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2021). In particular, institutional resilience is defined as the capacity of an organisation to anticipate future events, shocks, or stressors, and use all its resources to continue to perform and continuously develop in the long term (Denyer, 2017; Van Trijp et al., 2019; Raetze et al., 2021).

Grotberg (1995) argued that through resilience, an organisation becomes immune to the disruptive factors affecting it when a crisis is triggered. Resilience also generates performance because the more an organisation acquires through the continuous development of its human resources, the stronger the foundation on which it lays will be (Aligică & Tarko, 2014).

Other authors (Strollenwerk, Börzel & Risse, 2021) affirmed that resilience is needed within an organisation for three main reasons: (1) it eliminates imbalances and tackles risks by continuously adapting to change; (2) it creates a close link between social needs, the legal framework under which the organisation operates, and the achieved results; (3) it opens new horizons and generates innovation.

To improve resilience, an organisation must develop two capacities: anticipation and adaptation (Duckek, 2019). Consequently, institutional resilience creates two spheres of action (Denyer, 2017): 1) the defensive one, in which imbalances and potential impediments to performance are eliminated using the capacity of anticipation; 2) the progressive one, through which adaptability is developed and the main resources available in the organisation are trained. Furthermore, strengthening institutional resilience presupposes different activities (Denyer, 2017): preventive control, vigilance to act, optimisation of performance, and adapting to innovation.

Xiao and Cao (2017) considered institutional resilience as a reaction of an organization that wants to prevent the degradation of its institutional framework, a process that is distinguished by several features, such as: (1) it is not observable in the daily work of an organisation, but only in difficult situations; (2) it does not imply adaptation of the institutional framework to change, but a reconstruction; (3) it depends on both vertical and horizontal communication.

Thus, resilience research highlights the ability of institutions to adapt permanently to changes in the organisation's internal and external environment, but also outlines new trajectories through which the organisation can perform and introduce innovative elements. Resilience is an essential element to be addressed also in public organisations as they are more prone to crises and change. This is why there has been a high interest among researchers in studying the concept related to public administration.

Authors (Van de Walle, 2014) stated that resilience appears to become a link between human resources, which have knowledge, skills, and responsibilities, and public organisations, which have set goals, a vision, but also objectives to meet the citizens' needs and eliminate the imbalances generated by current and future crises (Păceșilă & Colesca, 2019). Within public administration, the institutional approach is seen from the perspective of traditional bureaucracy, through standardised procedures, but also according to clear rules, which at first glance seem to stop the response to crises (Van de Walle, 2014).

However, the formalisation process in public administration has many advantages, such as: increasing the ability to predict crises through standard procedures, increasing institutional performance through general and specific objectives, increasing efficiency, and operationalising tasks (Duit, 2015). All these elements build the institutional resilience mechanism, which will serve to increase institutional performance, but also the degree of satisfaction of public services beneficiaries.

In recent years within local public administration, the efforts to introduce resilience as a strategic element have been based on increasing transparency and legitimacy, to help public organisations gain competencies and build a clear trajectory to act in limited situations (Van de Walle, 2014; Steyvers, 2019). However, the development of institutional resilience in the local public administration is slowed down by the phenomenon of overformalisation, and the implementation of unique procedures that renders more difficult the processes of anticipation and adaptation (Van de

Walle, 2014). However, resilience within the local public administration also depends on the way the institution is built, on the human resources training process, and also on the organisational culture that dominates the institutional framework (Duit, 2015).

Other authors (Andrianu, 2020; Karataş, 2021) argued that resilience in public administration is closely related to new public management, due to the positive changes brought within the main institutions serving citizens' needs (Androniceanu & Şandor, 2006). Indeed, new public management has brought numerous changes to public administration institutions, but institutional resilience goes beyond this concept because it brings a new element—innovation. Research reveals that the two concepts have a number of similarities, and in fact, new public management supports the development of institutional resilience (Andrianu, 2020).

In addition, institutional resilience is closely linked to governance. It is perceived as a binder between governance and its effects on the society, being the only means for public administration to become able to adapt to constant changes in the external environment (Milley & Jiwani, 2014). Ţiclău, Hinţea and Andrianu (2020) explained the relation between resilience and two concepts of governance developed in the literature: adaptive governance (Hatfield-Dodds, Nelson & Cook, 2007) and turbulent governance (Ansell, Trondal & Ûgærd, 2017), two forms of governance appropriate in time of crisis.

3. Research Methodology

The present research is a pilot study, based on a comparative analysis of the capacity of resilience of two District Halls in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bucharest municipality is divided into six subdivisions, which are called districts, each one led by a mayor. The capacity of resilience was analysed in two of the six District Halls: 2 and 3. This study is the second phase of a wider research regarding institutional resilience. In the first phase, we designed a conceptual framework for assessing the capacity of institutional resilience and now we created an instrument for measuring this capacity based on this framework (Profiroiu & Nastacă, 2021). The purpose of this pilot study is to analyse the results and continue to improve the instrument for measuring the capacity of institutional resilience.

The main objective of the research is to analyse the capacity of resilience of two District Halls in the Bucharest municipality. Based on the research

questions stated in the introduction, the specific objectives of the study were designed, as follows:

- Ob. 1: To analyse the dimensions of institutional resilience and assess the capacity of resilience of the two District Halls.
- Ob. 2: To identify which are the most developed dimensions measuring the capacity of resilience in District Hall 2 as well as in District Hall 3.
- Ob. 3: To investigate whether there are differences regarding the dimensions defining the capacity of institutional resilience between the two District Halls.

In order to establish the capacity of resilience, it is important to analyse what the main factors are that influence institutional resilience in public administration. Some authors (Van Trijp et al., 2019; Țiclău, Hinteă & Andrianu, 2019; Hinteă, Profiroiu & Țiclău, 2019) considered that public administration institutions could become resilient through constant communication, human resources' professional training, responsiveness to employees' needs, and adaptability. Other factors could be transparency, stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process, the development of anti-corruption strategies, digitalisation, and the consolidation of legal frameworks (United Nations, 2020; Shkarlet et al., 2020).

In our previous research (Profiroiu & Nastacă, 2021), which was the first step in the process of developing a valid framework for measuring the institutional resilience of public administration, we conducted a meta-analysis of the relevant studies in the field and extracted 11 capacity factors that should determine institutional resilience, such as: digitalisation, strategic capacity, transparency, participatory management, cooperation, human resources, innovation, strategic planning, quality management, and performance-based management. For each factor, based on information from other studies, we established quantitative and qualitative indicators that could be used in order to measure them. Taking into consideration the high number of capacity factors and the difficulty of collecting such complex data for measuring them, we decided to group these factors into four dimensions, which were divided in different subfactors.

Consequently, based on our previous research (see Profiroiu & Nastacă, 2021), in this second phase of the research, we chose the following four dimensions to assess the resilience capacity of local public administration. These dimensions represent the variables of this study, namely:

- The capacity for learning and innovation;

- Strategic capacity;
- Stakeholders’ involvement in the decision-making process;
- Transparency and communication.

The research methodology consists of a sociological survey based on a questionnaire, designed by the authors, which comprised 17 questions grouped into the aforementioned dimensions. The questionnaires were distributed by convenience in the two District Halls through the Human Resources departments in the May–June 2022 period. The respondents were civil servants from the two District Halls.

The questionnaire was structured in five parts. The first part contained questions about the respondents’ main characteristics such as gender, age, level of education, and job position. The second part contained 13 questions designed to assess the four dimensions of institutional resilience, which are divided into subitems. We used closed questions with one-choice or multiple choices answers, or answers measured on a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

3.1. The Sample Involved in the Study and Its Main Characteristics

The sampling method used for this study is the snowball sampling method, as the questionnaire was sent to the HR department in each District Hall and distributed to the Directors and then to their subordinates. Of the total number of civil servants, 50 civil servants in District Hall 2 and 70 in District Hall 3 agreed to participate in the study. The sample is not representative, but after analysing the results, the next step will be to widen the number of organisations in which the research will be further conducted.

Table 1: *Main characteristics of the sample*

Item	Categories	District Hall 2	District Hall 3
Gender	Female	75.86 %	53.33%
	Male	24.14%	46.67%
Age	18-35 years	17.24%	73.33%
	36-55 years	65.52%	26.66%
	Over 56 years	17.24%	0%

Education	Bachelor's degree	86.21%	93.33%
	Master's degree	17.24%	6.67%
Hierarchic levels within the state public administration	Management level	17.24%	0%
	Executive level	82.76%	100%

Source: Authors.

4. Data Analysis and Main Findings

Table 2: Perception of the capacity to respond to crises

Distribution of answers		1 (very poor)	2 (poor)	3 (neither poor nor good)	4 (good)	5 (very good)	Average of answers
District Hall 2	No.	0	0	3	18	8	4.17
	%	0.00%	0.00%	10.34%	62.07%	27.59%	
District Hall 3	No.	0	0	1	4	9	4.27
	%	0.00%	0.00%	6.67%	26.67%	60.00%	

Source: Authors.

At first, respondents were asked to assess the organisation's capacity to respond to crises. In both institutions, respondents had a very good perception. The majority (89.86% in District Hall 2 and 86.67% in District Hall 3) considered their institutions to have a high capacity for coping with crises. The average of responses shows that the overall perception was that both organisations had a fairly high capacity of coping with crises, with the average of 4.17 in District 2, and 4.27 in District 3.

4.1. The Capacity for Learning and Innovation

The capacity for learning and innovation was assessed using three sub-dimensions: the process of learning, the level of digitalisation, and the innovation process.

The first question focused on the learning process and consisted of seven statements that respondents had to agree or disagree with. The purpose

was to determine which of the above-mentioned situations apply most effectively to the studied institutions.

Table 3: *Civil servants' perception of the process of learning within their organisation*

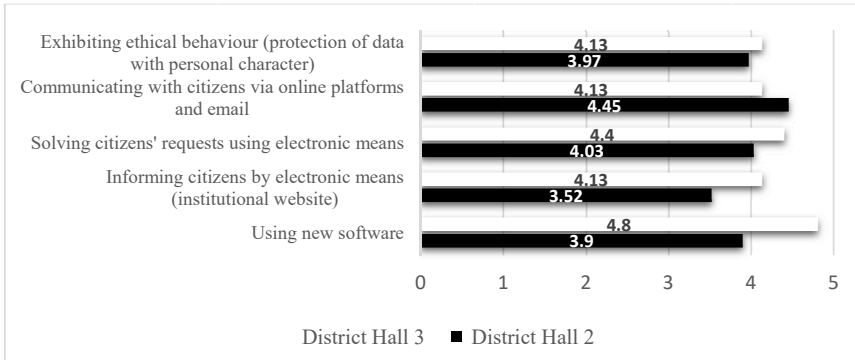
Main aspects characterising the learning process	District Hall 2		District Hall 3	
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
The institution is concerned with innovation and delivers qualitative services through new technologies.	100.00	0.00	93.33	6.67
Cooperation between the institution and the citizens is achieved using electronic tools: email, website, and social media platforms.	89.66	10.34	86.67	13.33
The institution is oriented towards the development of human resources through activities that lead to improved performance.	79.31	20.69	60.00	40.00
The institution aims to improve the working environment by organising team-buildings.	27.59	72.41	46.67	53.33
Frequent reorganisations occur within the institution in order to improve burden-sharing.	51.72	48.28	66.67	33.33
The institution aims to introduce new quality management systems.	82.76	17.24	53.33	46.67
The institution promotes the digitalisation of administrative procedures.	100.00	0.00	66.67	33.33

Source: Authors.

Table 2 shows the frequency of responses in the two District Halls. The two organisations differed in perception, particularly in the following areas: a higher proportion of respondents from District Hall 2 compared to District Hall 3 considered their institution to be more focused on the human resources development, digitalisation, and the introduction of new quality management systems. In addition, more respondents from District Hall 3 believed that their institution is more oriented toward improving working conditions and burden-sharing. Regarding the concern with

innovation, the use of new technologies and electronic tools, there were no differences of opinion between the two organisations.

Figure 1: *Civil servants' perception regarding the digitalisation process within their organisations*

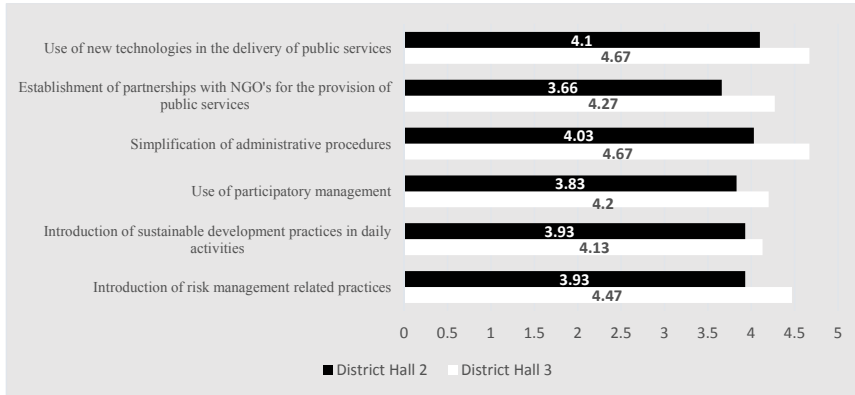


Source: Authors.

Then, another group of questions was related to different aspects of the digitalisation process, such as: the usage of new software in the civil servants' daily activities, communicating and informing citizens via electronic means, solving citizens' requests electronically, or compliance with the GDPR. The responses were measured on a Likert scale of 5 points (1=to the smallest extent and 5=to the highest extent). It can be observed that both organisations integrate measures related to the process of digitalisation and use electronic means in their activities from a high to the highest extent. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that, on the whole, in District Hall 3 the process of digitalisation seems to be more developed than in District Hall 2.

The third subdimension was related to the innovation process. In this respect, the civil servants were asked to assess on a scale from 1 to 5 (1=to the smallest extent, 5=to the highest extent) to what extent innovative practices are used in their organisations. Several innovative practices were listed such as: using risk management and sustainable development practices, simplifying administrative procedures, using participatory management in the decision-making process, or developing partnerships with NGOs. Civil servants from both institutions declared that all the mentioned practices are used in their organisations from a high to the highest extent. Thus, as can be observed, District Hall 3 introduced these practices to a higher extent and significant differences compared to District

Figure 2: Perception regarding the process of innovation within their organisation

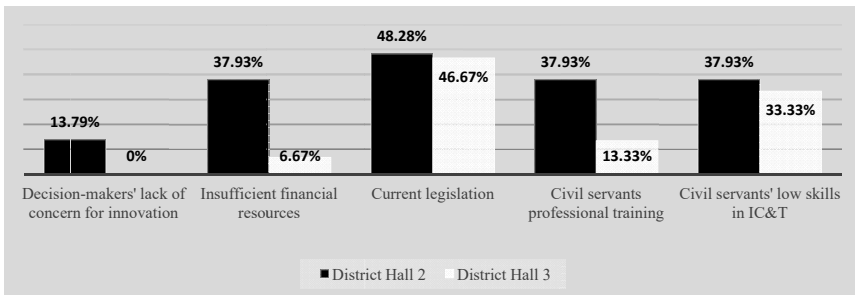


Source: Authors.

Hall 2 can be noticed, especially related to aspects such as: establishing partnerships with NGOs, simplification of procedures, and risk management. Consequently, District Hall 3 seems to use innovative practices in daily activities more than District Hall 2.

In addition, civil servants were asked to name the factors that could stand against using innovation in public administration.

Figure 3: Main factors that hinder innovation



Source: Authors.

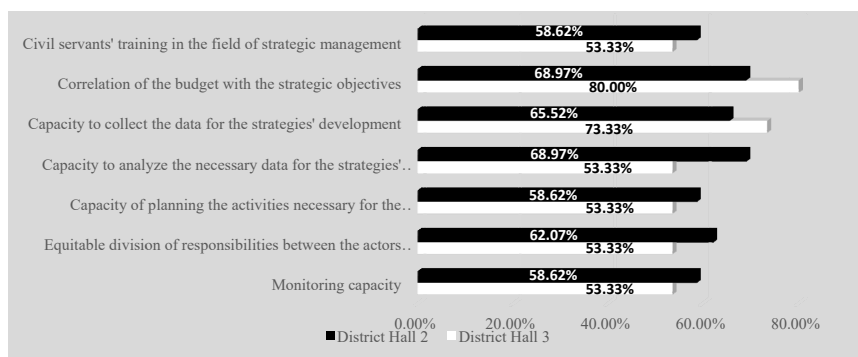
In both organisations, the common opinion is that the main factors are the legislation in force and civil servants' low digital skills. Respondents from District Hall 2 attributed great importance to two more factors, namely, insufficient financial resources and the poor quality of professional training of civil servants.

Summarising the results on the first dimension – the capacity for learning and innovation, it can be said that District Hall 2 is focused more on the process of learning, implementing measures in this direction, while in District Hall 3 the digitalisation and innovation processes are more developed.

4.2. Strategic Capacity

The second dimension that was assessed is the organisation’s strategic capacity. Respondents were asked to choose the main factors that defined the strategic capacity of their institution.

Figure 4: *Main factors defining the strategic capacity*

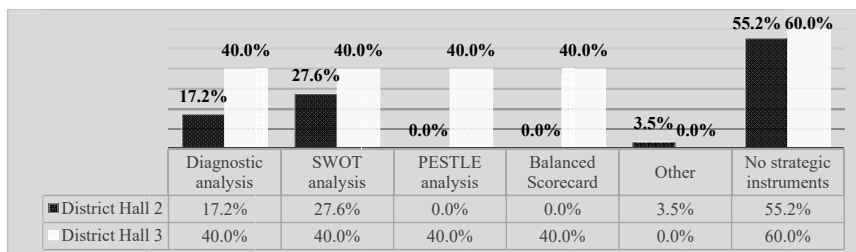


Source: Authors.

The civil servants from District Hall 2 considered that the most important aspects that define the strategic capacity of their organisation are the capacity to analyse the data in order to develop strategies, the correlation between the budget and the strategic objectives, and the capacity to collect the necessary data for the development of strategies. Respondents from District Hall 3 considered that the most important elements are the correlation between the budget and the strategic objectives, and the capacity to collect the necessary data for the development of strategies. Overall, respondents from the two institutions seem to have quite similar perceptions of the elements that define the strategic capacity of their organisations. Consequently, the studied institutions seem to have similar strong and weak points that define their strategic capacity, with the emphasis that District Hall 2 has a better capacity for developing and implementing strategies.

Furthermore, it was also important to find out what strategic tools the civil servants use in conducting their activities.

Figure 5: Strategic tools used in the two District Halls



Source: Authors.

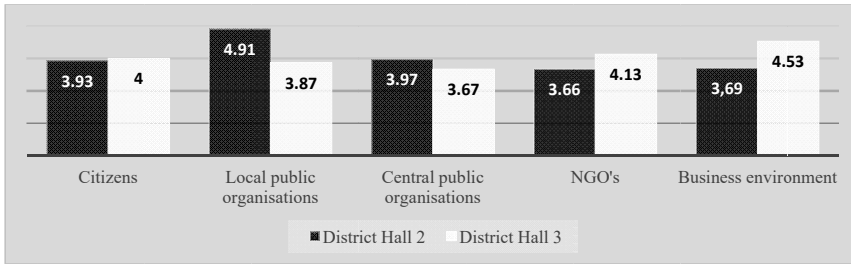
Most civil servants (50-60% in both organisations) declared that they do not use any strategic instruments at all. Of those who use strategic instruments, in District Hall 2, a small proportion utilises SWOT (27.59 %) and diagnostic analyses (17.24%). In District Hall 3, a higher proportion of civil servants (40%) used to integrate strategic instruments in their work, such as: diagnostic analysis, SWOT analysis, PESTLE analysis, and balanced scorecard.

After investigating different aspects related to the strategic capacity of the two organisations, the main conclusion is that both District Halls have medium-level strategic capacity. Moreover, it can be noted that civil servants in District Hall 3 are more accustomed to using strategic instruments, which is a strength in developing this capacity.

4.3. Stakeholders' Involvement in the Decision-Making Process

The third analysed dimension is related to the stakeholders' involvement in the decision-making process. A good relationship with stakeholders and a high degree of involvement in the decision-making process will lead also to a more transparent public administration, and will increase the quality, accuracy, and opportunity of the decisions taken and implemented at the local level. Initially, it was important to find out what categories of stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process.

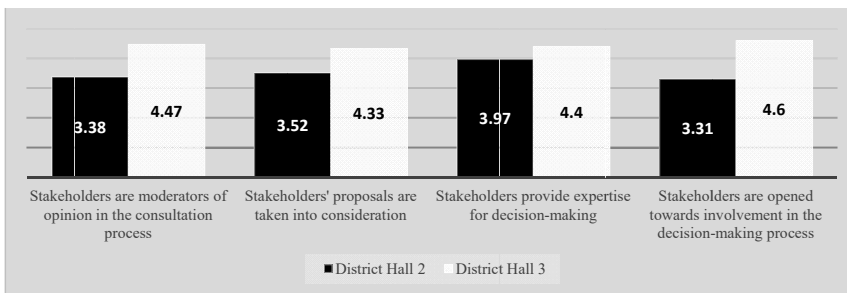
Figure 6: *Main consulted stakeholders*



Source: Authors.

Consequently, respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 the degree of involvement of the stakeholders presented in Figure 6 (where 1=no involvement and 5=very involved). The results presume a high degree of involvement in the decision-making process of all the mentioned stakeholders. Civil servants in District Hall 2 declared that their organisation involves the most, namely three main stakeholders: other local public organisations, central public administration, and citizens. In the case of District Hall 3, the situation is quite different, because they consult more the business environment, NGOs and citizens. Overall, the results reveal a very positive aspect of the two District Halls—both organisations consult and involve stakeholders in the decision-making process to a high extent.

Figure 7: *Main aspects regarding stakeholders' involvement in decision-making*



Source: Authors.

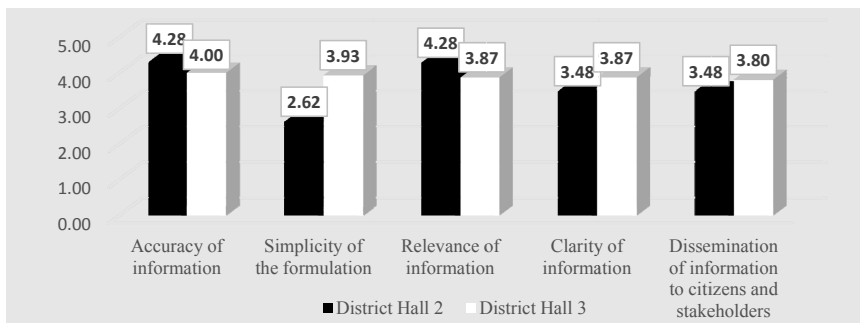
In addition, respondents were asked to express their agreement on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1=total disagreement and 5=total agreement) regarding four important statements that assessed the organisation's relations with

stakeholders. It is not only important to involve different stakeholders in the process of decision-making, but also to achieve a real contribution on their part. The consultation process and stakeholders' involvement in decision-making can easily be formal actions with no real impact. Nevertheless, considering the importance of this process, it was necessary to establish if stakeholders are really interested in being involved and if so, if their proposals are taken into account. The results show that stakeholders of District Hall 3 are more involved in the decision-making process and their opinions are taken into consideration more compared with District Hall 2. Also, a generally better perception of the relationship between stakeholders, their willingness to participate in the decision-making process as well as their impact on this process, was observed most among District Hall 3 civil servants. Therefore, the results revealed that the process of involving stakeholders in the decision-making process is better developed in District Hall 3.

4.4. Transparency and Communication

The last section envisages the assessment of the transparency process and the main means used by the two organisations to communicate with citizens. The civil servants were asked to assess the transparency process in their organisations, on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1=to a very small extent and 5=to the highest extent). Public organisations are constrained by law to publish certain types of information. Consequently, each institution is transparent to a certain level. From this point of view, the focus should be on different aspects related to public information, such as: its accuracy, clarity, relevance, simplicity, and easiness of being found.

Figure 8: *The transparency process*



Source: Authors.

It can be noticed that respondents from both organisations considered that the information they provide is accurate and relevant to a high extent. Different perceptions have been observed regarding the simplicity and clarity of the information, as well as the manner of its dissemination. In all these aspects, District Hall 3 registered higher scores.

The last question aimed to find out the main channels of communication with citizens used by the two District Halls. Both groups of respondents stated that email is the most popular means of communication. In the case of District Hall 3, a higher proportion of respondents declared that they also use social media, Tel Verde and organise public meetings, while trying to lower face-to-face contact with citizens. Civil servants in District Hall 2 stated that they usually prefer direct contact with citizens, and use fewer other means of communication.

Table 4: *Main channels of communication with citizens*

Main channels of communication	District Hall 2 (share in %)	District Hall 3 (share in %)
E-mail	100	93.33
Social media	43.86	66.67
Tel Verde	34.48	40
Traditional means of communication (e.g. face to face)	86.21	53.33
Meetings and gatherings	51.72	53.33

Source: Authors.

The analysed data related to transparency and communication showed that this particular dimension is more developed in District Hall 3.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The research investigated the capacity of resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in two organisations from the local public administration. The results revealed that both District Halls had neither a medium-level nor a high capacity of resilience.

Consequently, it can be assumed that the two organisations proved to be resilient to a fairly high extent, answering the first research question (Did the two District Halls prove to be resilient during the COVID-19

pandemic?). The results are promising and positive, showing that the two local public administrations had the necessary means to cope with this shock, but efforts for improvement and development should continue to be made.

Regarding the second research question (Which are the most and the least developed dimensions of institutional resilience capacity in the two District Halls?), the data revealed that in District Hall 2, strategic capacity is the most developed dimension, while District Hall 3 registered better results concerning the capacity for learning and innovation, the transparency process, and the stakeholder's involvement in decision-making. It should also be mentioned that in District Hall 2, the process of learning is more developed, even if when observing the whole dimension, the process is more developed in District Hall 3. In addition, both organisations need to improve all their capacities, with emphasis on strategic capacity. Furthermore, District Hall 2 should focus more on digitalisation, the introduction of innovative elements in daily activities, using modern communication channels in relation to citizens, and involving stakeholders more.

With regard to the answers to the last question (Which are the main differences in institutional resilience capacity of the two District Halls?), the results suggest that District Hall 3 proved a higher capacity of resilience compared to District Hall 2. Summarising the differences, it was observed that: District Hall 2 is focused more on the process of learning, and implementing measures in this direction, while in District Hall 3 the digitalisation and innovation processes are more developed. Civil servants in District Hall 3 use different sorts of strategic instruments to a higher extent, but on the whole, District Hall 2 proved to have greater strategic capacity. Stakeholders are more involved in the decision-making process in District Hall 3. Also, District Hall 3 is more prone to innovation, digitalisation, and modernisation.

The study was conducted on only two organisations from the local public administration due to the necessity to test the research instrument that we designed. The study showed the need to extend the research sampling in order to ensure representativeness, by adding also organisations from the central and territorial public administration. In addition, the types of questions will be improved and diversified, focusing more on questions measured on scales, in order to be able to correlate the dimensions of institutional resilience capacity. Furthermore, new subdimensions of resilience capacity will be taken into consideration, for the results to be more accurate.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE CAPACITY OF THE LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: EVIDENCE FROM ROMANIA

Summary

Over time, the Romanian society has experienced different shocks, disruptions and stressors ranging from the fall of communism, transition to a market economy, European Union accession, development of new institutions, the necessity for rapid solutions to the economic crisis, and the most recent one, the COVID-19 pandemic and its outcomes. The pandemic showed the need to develop and strengthen the resilience capacity of the public organisations that play important roles in managing all sorts of crises, including at the local level. Institutional resilience of the local public administration depends on a series of factors such as the design of the institutions, the human resources training process, and the organisational culture that dominates the institutional framework. In this respect, taking into consideration different factors that might influence resilience in public organisations, the present pilot study investigated the concept of institutional resilience in the Romanian local public administration starting from a conceptual framework for assessing the resilience capacity previously designed by the authors. The objective of the research was to assess the capacity of institutional resilience in the local public administration, namely in two of the six District Halls of the Bucharest Municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the results, the research instrument will be improved and the study will be extended to other organisations from the public administration. The capacity of institutional resilience in the local public administration was measured using four dimensions, created based on the resilience framework developed by the authors: capacity for innovation and learning, strategic capacity, stakeholders' involvement in decision-making, and transparency and communication. The research was conducted in a comparative manner, aiming to establish if there were any differences between the capacity of institutional resilience in the two District Halls. The research revealed that both District Halls proved a medium to high level of resilience. District Hall 3 exhibited a higher capacity of resilience compared with District Hall 2, with the remark that both organisations should improve the factors that influence this capacity.

Keywords: institutional resilience, local public administration, strategic capacity, innovation, transparency and communication, stakeholders

PROCJENA KAPACITETA ZA INSTITUCIONALNU OTPORNOST U LOKALNOJ JAVNOJ UPRAVI: POKAZATELJI IZ RUMUNJSKE

Sažetak

U nedavnoj prošlosti, rumunjsko je društvo doživjelo različite šokove i poremećaje kao što su pad komunizma, prijelaz na tržišnu ekonomiju, pristupanje Europskoj uniji, razvoj novih institucija, iznalaženje brzih rješenja za ekonomske krize i krizu izazvanu pandemijom bolesti COVID-19. Pandemija je ukazala na potrebu za razvojem i jačanjem kapaciteta otpornosti javnih organizacija koje imaju važnu ulogu u upravljanju različitim krizama, uključujući i onih na lokalnoj razini. Institucionalna otpornost lokalne javne uprave ovisi o nizu čimbenika kao što su institucijski dizajn, usavršavanje ljudskih potencijala i organizacijska kultura koja prevladava u institucionalnom okviru. Uzimajući u obzir različite čimbenike koji bi mogli utjecati na otpornost javnih organizacija, ova pilot-studija istražuje koncept institucionalne otpornosti u rumunjskoj lokalnoj javnoj upravi polazeći od konceptualnog okvira za procjenu kapaciteta otpornosti koji su osmislili autori rada. Cilj istraživanja bio je procijeniti kapacitet institucionalne otpornosti u lokalnoj javnoj upravi u dva od šest okruga grada Bukurešta tijekom pandemije bolesti COVID-19. Na temelju rezultata istraživanja unaprijedit će se istraživački alat koji se može proširiti i na druge organizacije javne uprave. Kapacitet za institucionalnu otpornost u lokalnoj javnoj upravi mjereno je pomoću četiri dimenzije kreirane na temelju okvira otpornosti koji su razvili autori: kapaciteta za inovacije i učenje, strateškog kapaciteta, uključivanja dionika u donošenje odluka te transparentnosti i komunikacije. Istraživanje je provedeno komparativnom metodom u cilju utvrđivanja razlike između kapaciteta za institucionalnu otpornost u upravnim tijelima dvaju gradskih okruga. Istraživanje je otkrilo da su organizacije oba gradska okruga pokazala srednju do visoku razinu otpornosti, uz napomenu da bi obje organizacije trebale poboljšati čimbenike koji utječu na ovu sposobnost.

Ključne riječi: institucionalna otpornost, lokalna javna uprava, strateški kapacitet, inovativnost, transparentnost i komunikacija, dionici