

RELATION BETWEEN THE POLITICAL FACTOR AND THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: SURVEY AT THE LEVEL OF THE DOROHOI MUNICIPALITY CITY HALL IN BOTOȘANI COUNTY

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Abstract:

Controversial subject and not obsolete in scientific research in the field, the relation of the political factor with public administration is indestructible, both sectors having shared roles in carrying out the activity at the level of the public institution. The purpose of this micro-research is to analyze the opinions of human resources in the public institution on the influence that politics can have on administrative activity, with particularization at the City Hall of Dorohoi Municipality in Botosani County. Asking both elected officials and civil servants and contract staff in the institution about the positive or negative role of the political factor in their activity, from the interpretation of the answers, we found: most respondents perceive a close link between the two spheres - politics and administration; human resources expertise serves politicians in the public policy process; approximately equal weights for respondents who state either that the actions taken in their position are the effect of the decisions of political actors or deny this influence; either claim that in the performance of their duties they feel pressured under the influence of the political factor or declare that they do not feel compelled to act in a certain way in the performance of their duties; the political factor contributes moderately to the non-respect of the rights of the staff in the public institution; in relation to the dissatisfaction that the political factor may generate among the staff of the public institution, the respondents either declare themselves dissatisfied or have a neutral position.

Key words: *elected officials, civil servants, contract staff, need for political presence, staff expertise, public actions, political pressure, non-respect of rights, dissatisfaction, complementarity*

JEL classification: D73, D78, H83

1. INTRODUCTION

Regarding the political factor and its relation with the public administration, various opinions have been and are expressed in the literature. D. Ferraz writes about this connection, from which we learn that its importance comes from the fact that the public administration is a determining structure in the governing process, constituting an essential segment in the configuration and architecture of the state. The political-administration dichotomy is one of the oldest issues addressed in the scientific research of the public administrative sector, the study of this topic being just as current despite the multiple opinions written over time on this subject. The quoted author summarizes the fact that a total separation between politics and administration is impracticable or even undesirable. (Ferraz, pp. 1167-1168)

The relation between politics and administration in the work of public organizations must be characterized by balance, especially since, not infrequently, the interests of these two sectors are not always convergent. Politicians are interested in the implementation of the electoral programs on which they were voted, for which they need the expertise and information that civil servants have on the real needs of the electorate. On the other hand, the civil servants can be reluctant if they perceive that the electoral political program endangers their procedures and work, without this adverse reaction being deliberately directed against politicians, but rather as a defense. (Radu, pp. 71-72)

Often, in the specialized theory, the relationship between politics and administration is approached by reference to the stages of policy-making and policy implementation. According to the classical approaches, the public administration fulfills a pure function of policy implementation, the politics setting the objectives that the administration will have to achieve from a technical point of view. (Schedler, Eicher pp. 370-371)

The relation between politics and administration can best be highlighted with reference to the recruitment and selection processes of civil servants. Not infrequently, due to this political influence, there are frequent cases of selection of candidates not on the basis of professional merits, but on the basis of membership in a political party, a situation that can affect the activity of that public institution in general. Moreover, if those in leadership positions are not part of the ruling political party, politicians may resort to manipulation and coercion to obtain various benefits, or may hinder or even block the activity of the public institution concerned. (Baltaru, p. 10)

Trying to explain the involvement of civil servants in the policy-making process, on the one hand, and the involvement of politicians (elected officials) in the administration, on the other hand, Demir T. and Reddick G. C. conclude that in understanding the relation politics - administration the vision of complementarity must be addressed. Such a vision, the quoted authors tell us, involves shared roles, which means mutual influence, mutual support and overlapping responsibilities between politicians (elected officials) and civil servants (Demir, Reddick, pp. 533).

2. METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS REGARDING THE PRESENT MICRO-RESEARCH

The micro-research developed in the pages of this paper aims to analyze the opinions of human resources in the public institution on the "imprint" that politics can put on administrative activity, with particularization at the City Hall of Dorohoi Municipality in Botosani County.

To achieve this goal, we aim to meet the following specific objectives:

O1: specifying the relation between public administration and the political factor

O2: determining the role of the political factor in fulfilling the duties in the position exercised

O3: highlighting the negative connotation of the influence of politics in the activity carried out.

The tool used to conduct this study is the questionnaire, which we will address to human resources working at the level of this public institution, namely public dignitaries, local councilors, civil servants and contract staff. By applying the questionnaire, it will be possible to investigate, based on the answers collected, the perception of human resources in the City Hall regarding the political factor and its implications on the activity carried out.

The sampling base brings together a number of 186 human resources from the public institutions concerned, the weights for each category of staff being found in the following table. The collection of answers took place between March 22-26, 2021 through the isondaje.ro website. After application of the questionnaire, the micro-research sample brings together 152 valid instruments, as follows:

Table no. 2. The micro-research sample

Sampling basis			Sample	
Staff category	City Hall human resources no.	Percent	Number of respondents	Percent
Public dignitaries	2	1.08%	1	0.66%
Local councilors	19	10.22%	10	6.58%
Leading civil servants	8	4.30%	8	5.26%
Execution civil servants	57	30.64%	52	34.21%
Contract management staff	8	4.30%	9	5.92%
Contract execution staff	92	49.46%	72	47.37%
Total	186	100%	152	100%

Source: processing of authors based on the data contained in the Structure of posts and public positions at the level of the specialized apparatus of the Mayor of Dorohoi Municipality and Composition of the Dorohoi Local Council - mandates 2020-2024, available at

https://www.primariadorohoi.ro/files/2019/PERSONAL/organigrame/HCL%20nr_200%20din%202019%20privind%20structura%20de%20posturi%20si%20de%20functii%20publice%20Primaria%20Dorohoi%20din%2001%20oct%202019.pdf, https://www.primariadorohoi.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4079&Itemid=1149

3. PERCEPTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE CITY HALL REGARDING THE RELATION ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM - POLITICAL FACTOR

From the following figure, it can be seen that more than half ($57.24\% = 38.16\% + 19.08\%$) of the surveyed human resources claim that the administrative system is closely linked to political power, and a percentage of 25.66% of respondents consider that this link is moderate. On the other hand, only 17.10% ($6.58\% + 10.52\%$) of the surveyed human resources state that public administration is not related to politics (see Figure no. 1):

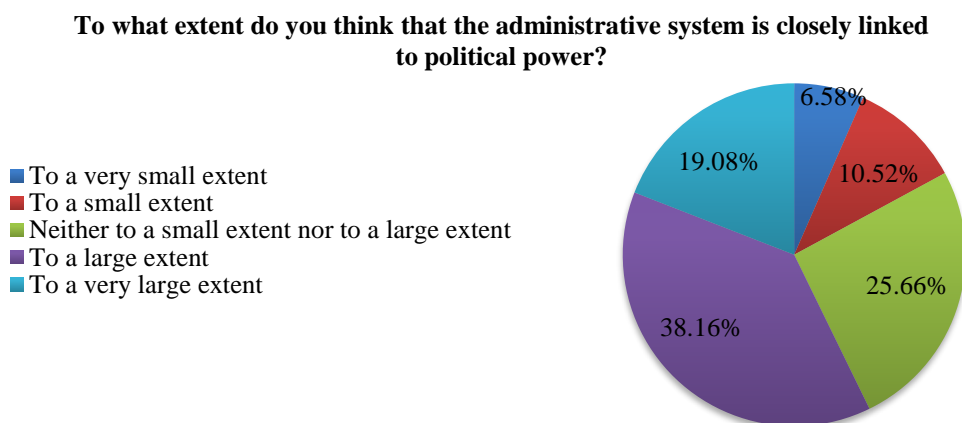


Figure no. 1. The link between the administrative system and political power

4. OPINIONS ON THE POSITIVE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL FACTOR IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE LIFE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE CITY HALL

The data recorded in the following figure show that more than $\frac{1}{4}$ ($26.97\% = 21.05\% + 5.92\%$) of the surveyed human resources state that in the position they hold the politics is a necessity. A considerably higher percentage ($42.76\% = 11.84\% + 30.92\%$) is registered for the respondents who do not consider that the political factor is necessary for the activity carried out. It is also noted that 30.27% of civil servants, contract staff, dignitaries and councilors who responded are of the opinion that the presence of politics brings neither pluses nor minuses in the administrative activity carried out (see Figure no. 2):

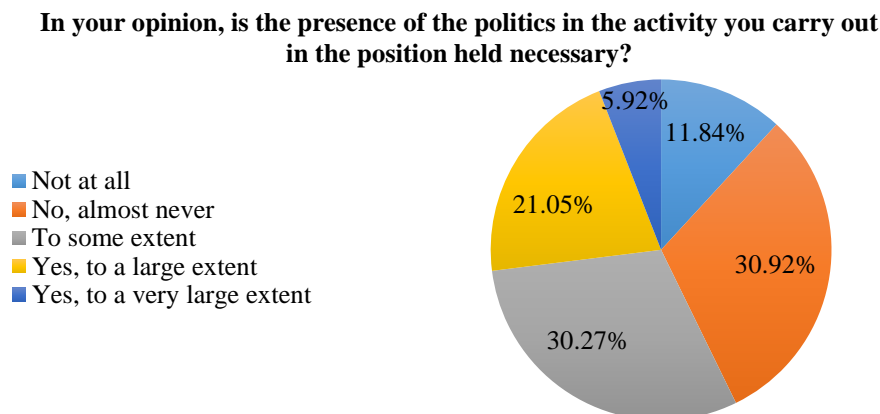


Figure no. 2. The need for the presence of the politics in the position held

The analysis of the data summarized in the following graph shows that more than half of the surveyed human resources ($55.27\% = 16.45\% + 38.82\%$) state that they play an important role in

making decisions regarding the community by providing information and expertise to politicians in the policy-making process. On the other hand, a percentage of 14.47% ($9.21\% + 5.26\%$) of respondents disapproves of the fact that they can support politicians in the public policy process through their actions (see Figure no. 3):

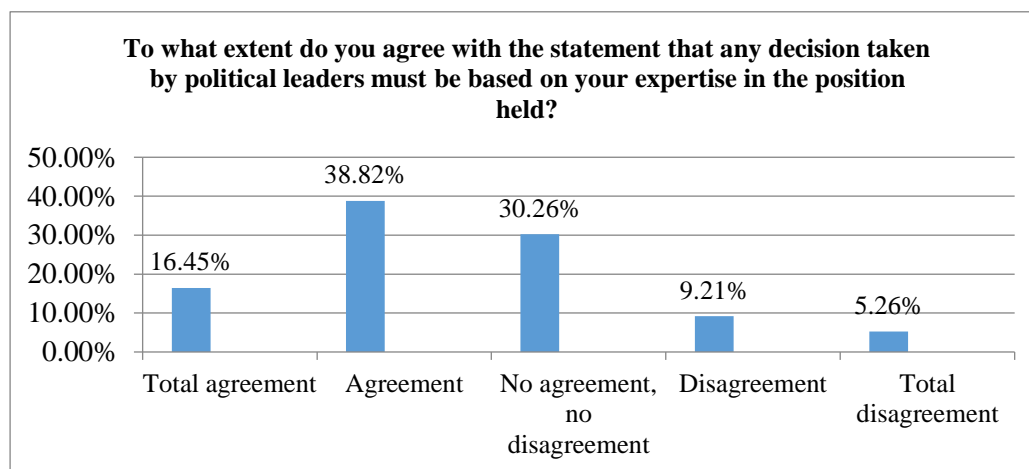


Figure no. 3. Supporting political decisions based on staff expertise

The study of the opinions of the City Hall staff regarding the fact that the actions taken in the position they exercise are the effect of the decisions of the political actors shows almost similar percentages of respondents who either support this assertion ($40.13\% = 5.26\% + 34.87\%$) or are at the opposite pole ($36.80\% = 7.24\% + 29.60\%$). Such a result can be explained by the fact that, on the one hand, the human resources surveyed recognize the dominance of the political factor in their administrative activities, and on the other hand, respondents rather deny the effect of political decisions on their public actions (see Figure no. 4):

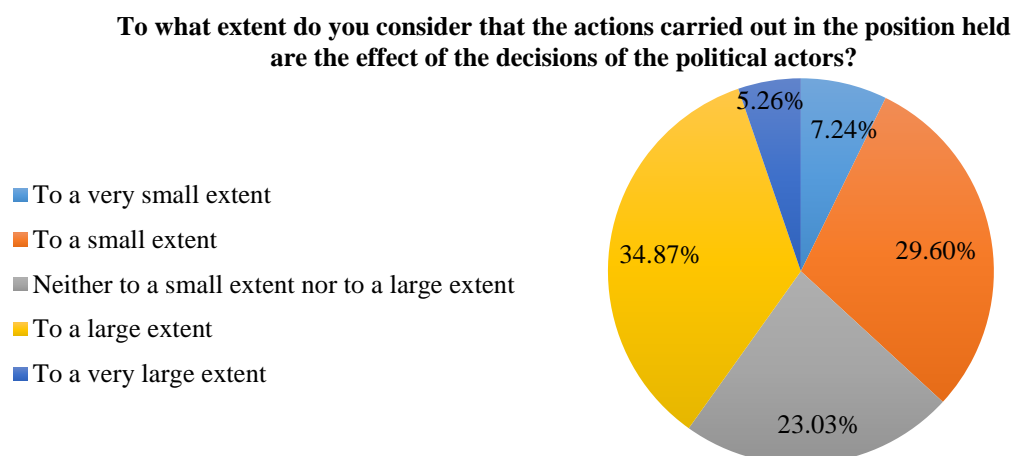


Figure no. 4. Actions in the position held - effect of the decisions of political actors

5. OPINIONS ON THE NEGATIVE SIGNIFICANCES OF THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS ON THE ACTIVITY CARRIED OUT IN THE CITY HALL

The visualization of the graph below shows that over 1/3 of the surveyed human resources ($38.16\% = 4.61\% + 33.55\%$) appreciate that in fulfilling the attributions of the held position they feel pressured under the influence of the political factor. On the other hand, an almost identical percentage is registered for the respondents ($33.55\% = 6.58\% + 26.97\%$) who declare that they do not feel forced to act in a certain way in fulfilling their duties. These results indicate a certain

balance between responses to such a negative effect of the political factor on staff actions. Although the weight of the answers is higher in the case of those who consider this influence high, the fact that a close weight supports the opposite highlights the existence of a balance in this respect at the level of the City Hall institution (see Figure no. 5):

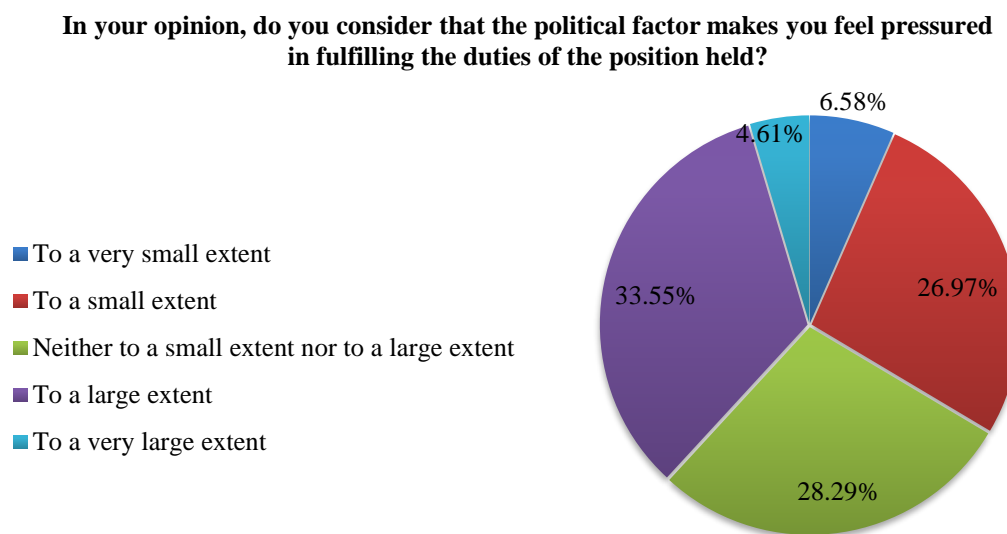


Figure no. 5. Pressures under the influence of the political factor

In the conception of most of the surveyed human resources (40.13%), the influence of the political factor on the non-respect of their rights is high (37,520%) and very high (2.63%). However, 1/3 of the respondents (33.55%) state that in the institution where they work, staff rights are violated to a small extent (11.18%) and to a very small extent (22.37%) under the political footprint. These results agree with those obtained in the above question, a situation that confirms that within the City hall institution such a negative connotation is moderate (see Figure no. 6):

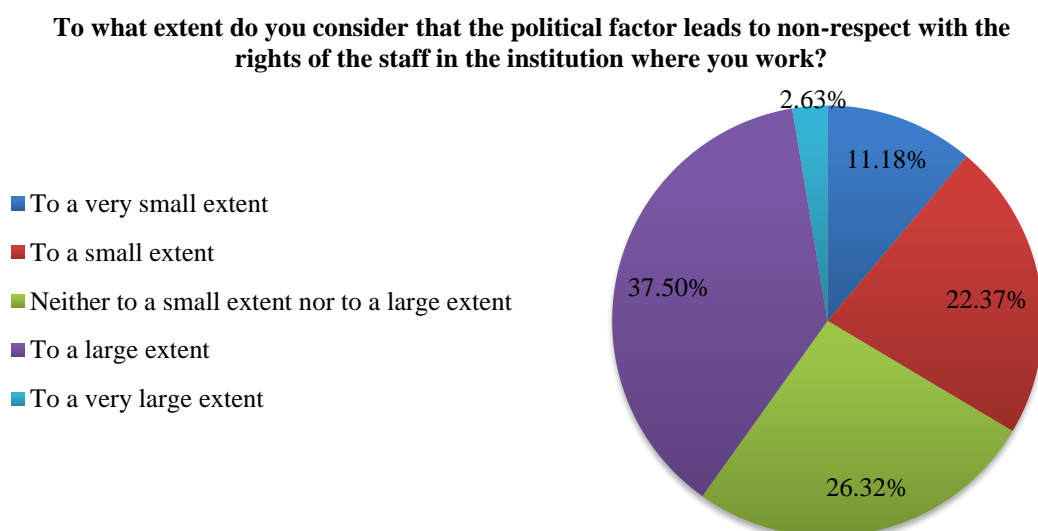


Figure no. 6. Non-respect the rights of City Hall staff

Regarding the perception of human resources in the City Hall institution regarding the dissatisfaction that the political factor may generate among them, the analysis of the answers shows that for the largest weights of the surveyed staff either there is agreement and total agreement (38.16% = 15.79% + 22.37%), or the respondents declare a neutral position (38.81%). It should also

be mentioned that in the case of this item there was disagreement and total disagreement for a share of 23.03% (15.79% + 7.24%) of the surveyed human resources (see Figure no. 7):

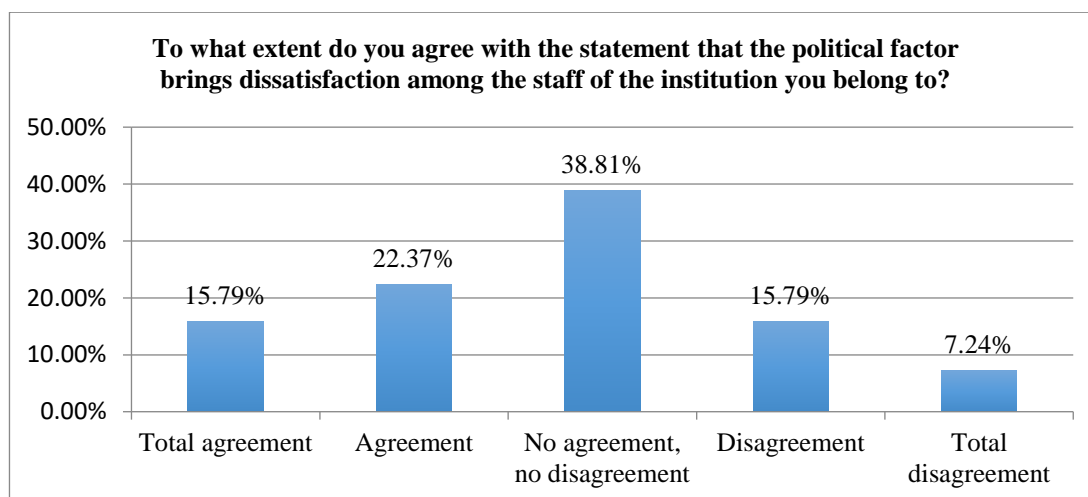


Figure no. 7. Dissatisfaction of City Hall staff

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on what is presented in the pages of this paper, it can be concluded that the current micro-research has allowed the analysis of the opinions of human resources in the public institution on the impact that politics can put on administrative activity, with particularization at the City Hall of Dorohoi Municipality in County Botoșani.

The analysis of the answers of elected officials, civil servants and contract staff confirms the relation between politics and the administrative system, with more than half of the human resources surveyed declaring a close link.

Regarding the presence of the politics in the position held, the registered results showed that most of the respondents do not consider the political factor as a necessity in the administrative activity carried out.

Studying the responses of human resources in the City Hall, we noticed that more than half of them say about them that they play an important role in making decisions about the community by the fact that their *information and expertise serve politicians in policy-making process.*

In order to identify the political influence, the human resources in the City Hall were asked if they consider that *the actions performed in the position exercised are the effect of the decisions of the political actors.* From the analysis of the answers, we found that the dominance of the political factor in the activity carried out is either recognized or denied, the percentages recorded for this variable being approximately equal.

Regarding the *political pressure perceived in the performance of duties*, the results showed that although the share of responses is higher for those who consider this influence high, the fact that a close weight supports the opposite highlights the existence of a balance at the City Hall institution.

Asking the staff of the City Hall if *the political factor contributes to the non-respect of rights*, from the interpretation of the registered answers it resulted that at the level of the public institution in which it operates this influence is moderate, a result corroborated with previous data.

Regarding the *dissatisfaction generated by the political factor among the staff of the public institution*, the analysis of the registered answers showed that the human resources surveyed, in approximately equal weights, either declare themselves dissatisfied or have a neutral position.

Finally, the investigation of different approaches in the literature, as well as applied research on the relation and influence of politics in the public administration sector has shown that there are many opinions and answers that support the complexity of this connectivity. The documentation served to conclude that the political factor is in a complementary relation with the

public administration, the separation between these two sectors being neither possible nor desirable.

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