



PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL BODIES REGARDING LIFELONG LEARNING AND EDUCATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract:

In this paper, part of the results of research conducted within the framework of the PhD studies of the first author is presented. The aim of the research is to explore the variety of perceptions held by institutional social bodies regarding the education of human resources and social services in the field of human rights. A qualitative research method was employed to achieve this goal. Data collection took place through semi-structured interviews between February and June 2024. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants who hold positions within institutional bodies involved in the design and implementation of social policy. The interpretation of the data was carried out using thematic analysis. The results of the research indicated that these institutional bodies support the value of investing in lifelong learning, particularly in the education of human resources in human rights, as a means of building knowledge, cultivating soft skills, and changing attitudes in ways that can subsequently lead to the provision of quality services to vulnerable social groups.

Keywords: lifelong learning, human rights education, human resources of social services, institutional social bodies, soft skills, motivation, quality services, vulnerable social groups

1. Introduction

The primarily ethical dimension of human rights, and the fact that they derive from significant human interests and needs, are the points from which institutional protection is expected to originate and exert influence on the broader organization of the welfare

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state (Campbell, 2005: 30). In agreement with these points is the fact that the dimensions of the protection and the enjoyment of human rights of the beneficiaries are taken seriously on an international level both in the setting of organizational service goals and in the development of ethical and professional conduct codes (European Commission, 2022; European Ombudsman, 2015; Ministry of the Interior & National Transparency Authority, 2022). These strategic plans and codes are to be implemented by the human resources of every social organization, structure, center, and service.

However, despite the regulatory framework of strategic planning and the necessity of adhering to ethical and professional codes of conduct, there are evident behaviors that reveal their circumvention. Specifically, some employees hold stereotypes and prejudices, ignore the specificities of disadvantaged individuals, display discriminatory treatment and refusal of service, and even exhibit racist behavior. The consequence of these actions is that beneficiaries become hesitant and suspicious in their «dealings» with organizations, institutions, and services. Moreover, the beneficiaries become skeptical, lose their trust in social inclusion mechanisms to the point of doubting (Tsekos, 1998; National Centre for Social Research, 2012: 282-283; Houston *et al.*, 2016; Moschos *et al.*, 2018: 41-45; NCPAS, 2018; National Human Rights Commission - Racist Violence Reporting Network, 2021; ROM, 2022).

All the above raise serious concerns about the full access of vulnerable social groups to public goods and services, as well as the consequent protection and enjoyment of their Human Rights. This concern becomes more acute in the case of the welfare state and its critical decisions, particularly in social services, where human resources are called upon to implement policies and strategies related to Human Rights and to guarantee their protection and enjoyment (Ombudsman, 2021: 47).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Lifelong Learning (LL) and Human Rights Education (HRE)

As the nature of job changes rapidly due to the quality of the services provided and the composition of the population that receives those services, human resources are called upon to manage this reality by mobilizing and harmonizing their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The harmonization between an individual and their job -specifically, the extent to which a person's characteristics are suited to the demands of a profession- results in higher productivity in their respective roles. In fact, as individuals carry into their work personal abilities and traits cultivated beyond the workplace, their personalities influence the level of success in specific professions (Greenberg & Baron, 2013: 241-242).

More specifically, these professionals bring into their work environments their cultural and educational capital, perceptions, and attitudes, all in all, their overall cognitive load, as well as a set of experiences and values (Rogers, 1999: 92, 94), which can lead to organizational success (Misra, 2012; Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Pfeffer, 1994), influence social trust (Houston *et al.*, 2016: 1212), and even shape the public value of public administration (Hallerod *et al.*, 2013).

Therefore, since the performance and effectiveness of an organization are directly linked to and dependent on the quality of its personnel, the importance of developing and utilizing that quality becomes evident. And one way to foster and capitalize on this quality of human resources is through education.

Specifically, the contemporary and constantly changing social environment almost necessitates those organizational members, who are part of broader social groups, continue not only to learn but also to be educated. Within this context, international organizations, through interconnected programs and complementary strategies, emphasize the value of Lifelong Education and Learning both for the personal and professional development of human resources and, more specifically, for the provision of quality services. Through Lifelong Education and Learning, employees' knowledge about their work environment and conditions is enhanced, work-related problems are more quickly and deeply understood, knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward work issues are cultivated, changes in thinking and acting occur, and their involvement in problem-solving processes is increased (United Nations General Assembly, 2015; United Nations, 2016; UNESCO, 2015, 2016; OECD, 2005 & 2010).

In this way, the workers are substantially involved not only in a formative process but also in a transformative one, helping them adapt to the changes at hand (Jarvis, 2003: 25). Through learning, individuals are capable of critically reshaping personal beliefs, mental habits, perspectives, and reference frameworks, gaining greater control over their lives. Thus, the creation of socially responsible citizens can be achieved, which is of particular significance in modern democratic societies, as understanding and improving one's actions through meaningful learning processes have both individual and social dimensions and implications (Mezirow, 2007: 47-48).

Moreover, this transformative process can take on dynamic dimensions, establishing actions and behaviors—generally attitudes—of responsibility and democracy when specific learning processes and subjects in the professional field can be integrated into the framework of Human Rights Education (HRE) (General Assembly, 2012). HRE, as a lifelong process, permeates the design of programs for organizations, both public and private, for individuals of all ages, categories, professions, and professionals. It characterizes all levels and forms of education (formal education, non-formal education, informal learning), including continuing professional education, public awareness, and sensitization activities (United Nations, 1948; UN, 1966; United Nations - OHCHR, 1993; United Nations General Assembly, 1994, 2001, 2005, 2010).

Specifically, concerning the benefits of HRE, it is noted that such education is linked not only to cognitive outcomes but also to changes in human behavior in the areas of their actions, contributing to their development as responsible members of the broader social collective (Tibbitts, 2017: 6 & 15). The awareness of the principles and values of human rights and the knowledge of mechanisms for their protection empower individuals to demand and claim not only their own rights but also those of others (Levin, 2012: 239). Furthermore, through this educational dimension, individuals develop social empathy and tolerance toward diversity, engage in collectives, are encouraged to make

decisions on social concerns, and, in their daily lives, defend and uphold Human Rights, acting as active and responsible professionals (United Nations, 2010; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013).

The significance of raising awareness, sensitization, and mobilization of human resources regarding human rights becomes even more emerged in the case of social services, as the foundation and operational goals of these services are based on human rights (Irish Human Rights Commission, 2010).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Purpose and Research Question

The data obtained from the quantitative research conducted for the Phd studies of the first author (Chaidas, Balias & Karalis, 2024) on the one hand provided an in-depth examination of how education and lifelong learning in the field of human rights impact the ability of human resources in social services to support the human rights of vulnerable social groups, and on the other was highlighted the moderate care provided by institutional bodiesⁱⁱ involved in the design and implementation of social policy regarding the education of human resources in this field.

This, coupled with the fact that these bodies are institutionally responsible for both the design and implementation of social inclusion policies and for the training of the human resources tasked with carrying out these policies, places these institutional bodies at the center of interest for this research.

Considering the above, the researcher's aim was to trace (basic research) the prevailing perceptions of institutional bodies regarding the education of human resources in social services in the field of human rights and to connect them with issues of protecting the human rights of vulnerable social groups.

Based on this objective, the following research question was formulated:

Research Question: What are the prevailing perceptions of institutional social bodies regarding the education of human resources in social services in the field of Human Rights?

3.2. Research Approach: Data Collection and Analysis

To achieve the research objective, qualitative research was conducted, as our aim was to emphasize the interpretation of the individualized behavior of each research subject (Bairagi & Munot, 2019), which in many cases cannot be measured through a quantitative approach and terms (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

ⁱⁱ The choice of studying the perceptions of the institutional bodies referred to is reinforced by the fact that "The competent ministry where your social service/organization belongs" and "The social service/organization where you work" are ranked by human resources as the two most prevalent preferences in the question about which body they consider most suitable for their continuing professional education and training in the field of human rights, with percentages of 23.8% and 22.7%, respectively.

Data collection was carried out using the semi-structured interview method, which is a flexible technique in qualitative research and a tool for studying perceptions, value codes, and experiences of participants rather than merely collecting structured data (Bell, 2001; Alshenqeeti, 2014). For these reasons, an interview grid was designed, without strict structure, with pre-defined open-ended, closed-ended, and scale-based questions, allowing for the modification of question order and the inclusion of follow-up questions (probes) to clarify and further explore certain points.

The qualitative data collection through interviews lasted from February to June 2024, following the quantitative data collection. After the researcher obtained the consent of the participants by signing a consent form (Creswell, 2011: 259), eight in-depth interviews were conducted. The average duration of the interviews was forty-five minutes. In two cases, follow-up clarification questions were sent by the researcher later. Regarding data analysis methodology, thematic analysis was employed. This technique was chosen as it allows the researcher to identify numerous patterns of meaning and focus on those related to the topic and that answer the research questions (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). Thus, our research question guided this analysis. Additionally, the specific method used to analyze and interpret the material from the interviews was inductive, starting from detailed specific data, moving to codes, and then to broader themes.

The stages of the research were as follows (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tsiolis, 2018; Cohen *et al.*, 2008): a) Organizing and transcribing the qualitative data, b) Identifying excerpts corresponding to the research questions, c) Coding the data, d) Describing and thematizing the data, e) Reviewing the themes, f) Defining and naming themes, g) Presenting and interpreting the data – writing the findings. It is worth noting that themes and codes were not derived solely from the recorded words of the participants but reflected the language and concepts of their responses, too (Braun & Clarke, 2012: 61).

3.3. Research Tool

The interview grid was created based on the thematic sections used in the closed-ended questionnaire completed in the previous phase of the research (quantitative research) by four hundred and fifty-three professionals from social structures, centers, organizations, welfare institutions, and social services in the three Regional Units of Western Greece (Chaidas, Balias & Karalis, 2024). Specifically, the questions focused on the causes of non-compliance with professional ethics, the extent to which the characteristics of vulnerable groups are considered as obstacles to providing quality services, the importance of continuous education and training of human resources in social services on human rights, the people and bodies responsible for this education, the design of strategies, seminars, programs, and actions related to human rights training, the importance of soft skills in service provision, and the suggestions participants had regarding continuous education in the field of human rights.

3.4. Research Participants

Initially, eleven individuals were selected who aligned with the research goal and had the ability to offer sufficient and appropriate information as “experts” (Patton, 2002: 402). Ultimately, after phone and in-person contact, eight responded. The selection of participants was purposive, based on their job positions (senior positions in national and regional administration). As key informants, they theoretically possessed the knowledge and experience to contribute to a better understanding of the central research phenomenonⁱⁱⁱ.

Additionally, the selection was made using homogeneous sampling, as the interviewees belonged to a subgroup with similar characteristics. More specifically, the group consisted of all the employees, namely the human resources who work in institutional bodies involved in the design and implementation of social policy, and the subgroups from which the interviews were taken are the holders of specific positions in those institutional bodies.

3.5. Survey Reliability and Validity

To ensure the highest possible reliability, the interview data were systematically recorded to allow future researchers to verify them. Additionally, to avoid deviation from research objectives, an interview protocol with pre-designed thematic sections and categories was created, guided by the research objectives and questions (Bell, 2001).

Subsequently, appropriate participants were selected, and an introductory email was sent with detailed information about the purpose, format, and confidentiality of the interviews.

Before the interviews began, the researcher and the interviewees signed the consent form, which included detailed information on the dissertation’s title, the research’s purpose, methodology, approximate interview time, restrictions on publication and use of results, and the maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity.

Moreover, the finalization of the order and format of the questions, time management, and identification of weaknesses and omissions occurred after two pilot in-depth interviews with participants possessing similar characteristics to the final interviewees (Isari & Pourkos, 2015).

Furthermore, the number of eight interviewees was deemed sufficient to provide qualitative information, achieving theoretical saturation regarding the studied phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

To ensure validity, clear, unbiased, and non-leading questions were posed during the interviews. The agreed-upon start time was adhered to, personal opinions and commentary on participants’ responses were avoided, and conventional rules of discretion and politeness were followed.

ⁱⁱⁱ For reasons of anonymity, data that can identify the research participants either directly or indirectly, such as gender, age, years of service, organization and job position, are not reported.

For accurate transcription of interviews into Word documents, Beecut^{iv} software was used. After transcription, the transcribed texts were cross-referenced with the recorded interviews, and non-verbal and paralinguistic elements were added to the texts (Robson, 2010).

Finally, as qualitative research is interpretative, beyond merely describing and thematizing, the study involved layering and interconnecting these findings for greater precision (Creswell, 2011).

4. Research Findings

Research Question: What are the prevailing perceptions of institutional social bodies regarding the education of human resources in social services in the field of Human Rights?

From the thematic analysis of the data, the following theme emerged, encapsulating codes and sub-codes:

4.1 Theme: Perceptions of Institutional Bodies on the Education of Human Resources in the Field of Human Rights

A group of three codes emerged for this theme:

First Code: Importance of Education in Human Rights

Most respondents emphasized both the benefits of continuous education for human resources, particularly in the field of Human Rights, and the consequences of the absence or/and of the inadequacy of such education. Thus, this code can be divided into two sub-codes:

Sub-code A: Benefits of Human Rights Education (HRE)

Beyond general benefits mentioned by respondents, specific references were made to the advantages in the areas of a) knowledge, b) skills, and c) attitudes of human resources, allowing for the creation of three sub-codes within Sub-code A:

Sub-code 1: Knowledge Benefits

According to the participants, lifelong learning, particularly in Human Rights, is necessary as it enables human resources in social services to stay up to date with changes in relevant legislation and international conventions. It also provides continuous awareness of issues affecting vulnerable social groups, aimed at addressing their unique characteristics and alleviating social exclusion. The following excerpts illustrate this:

"...continuous training and monitoring of legislation and international human rights conventions are more than necessary." (R1)

^{iv} Video and audio transcription software. Available at <https://beecut.com/speech-to-text-online>

"We start from the fact that continuous education for staff in social services, structures, organizations, and centers plays a crucial role in developing knowledge... about many issues related to the specific groups they interact with." (R6)

"...it will equip them with information, knowledge, and new tools to fulfill their duties, especially regarding overcoming social exclusion and the specific needs of different citizen groups." (R7)

Sub-code 2: Skill Development

Another significant factor connected to the provision of quality services, viewed as a benefit of lifelong education, is the cultivation of soft skills. These skills, especially empathy and emotional intelligence, were seen as crucial in interactions between human resources and beneficiaries. The text excerpts which follow are characteristic:

"Interacting with and serving vulnerable social groups requires, above all, empathy. Socio-emotional skills help in effective communication and flexible adaptation to the needs and concerns of the people being served, fostering mutual understanding and sensitivity." (R1)

"So having all of the above, we are able to serve vulnerable social groups with compassion"... "Many times, to provide quality services to vulnerable groups, especially in social services, you must have developed EQ or -if you want- empathy." (R3)

"So the development of these skills can contribute positively to service and better-quality services"... "Especially in the context of empathy, there must also be internal motivation from the employee himself. In any case, when you have cross-cultural differences, you have, let's say, and you serve an audience with a different cultural background, so, of another color, of another third country, clearly it is legitimate to have this and to have cultivated it in the citizen, in the employee who serves the citizens them... Many times (the skills) they are cultivated." (R4)

"Soft skills play a vital role in human interactions. So, they largely determine the effectiveness of human resources in social services." (R6)

"Education is one of the most dominant and potentially powerful methods to enhance the personal and professional skills of every staff member... The continuous education and training of human resources plays an important role in the development of those skills". "Soft skills are essential in effective interaction with vulnerable social groups and reflect desirable behaviors." (R8)

Sub-code 3: Attitudes and Motivation

Respondents also focused on the role of education in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of human resources, both within and outside the workplace. This includes reducing

stereotypes, fostering social sensitivity, promoting tolerance of diversity, mutual respect, and mobilizing staff when witnessing human rights violations. As noted,

“Human rights education is crucial. It is recognized globally by academic circles, political bodies, and NGOs as a lifelong learning process aimed at changing political and social behavior, fostering tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding.” “A service-to-citizen mentality should be adopted in which public and private servants understand and embrace the principles of good governance.” (R3)

“...the most important thing is that it will reshape negative attitudes, some stereotypes, and would help significantly in this regard. Continuous education is essential in transforming attitudes and even in mobilizing employees when they recognize human rights violations.” ... “We start from the fact that the ongoing training of the staff of social services, structures, agencies, centers of a social nature contribute decisively to...changing attitudes. This is a given”....“they can even lead to a transformation of stereotypical perceptions but also action or otherwise mobilization of the employee when he finds a violation of the Human Rights of the citizens.” (R6)

Sub-code B: Negative Consequences of Lack or Unsatisfactory (inadequate) Human Rights Education

Participants attributed various negative behaviors, such as discriminatory treatment, poor care, and inadequate handling of vulnerable groups' issues, to insufficient training and education in human rights. They also believe that a lack of education leads to the formation of a value system among employees that fosters laxity in adherence to laws and ethical codes, as well as prejudice and racist behaviors. This contributes to diminishing trust in social services among the public. Notable is the phrase of R2:

“Unfortunately, the major problem in our country is education, too.” (R2)

Finally, from the responses of the research participants, it is found that the social groups which are more considered as recipients of unacceptable attitudes and behaviors from some human resources are those of: Roma, LGBTQI, Migrant-Minorities, ex-convicts, Abused women, economically weak, Women. Furthermore, as the skin color, the racial-ethnic origin and language are the most often the reasons for the existence of discriminatory attitudes on the part of human resources towards vulnerable groups.

From these observations, three sub-codes within Sub-code B can be created. The following text excerpts are representative:

Sub-code 1: Consequences of Lack of Knowledge and Information

"The root of the problem is that people do not recognize human rights, which are connected to gender, color, religion, and all these factors." (R4)

"Bad service and improper treatment can result from a lack of awareness on the part of employees who are supposed to serve."(R5)

"Okay, I think that the specific executives, the specific employees, may not be properly informed, ... may not have the knowledge that the specific position would require, that is, they may not be in a profession of a social nature..." (R6)

"In the insufficient training of workers in their field, especially in the form of information and instructions, the mandatory vocational orientation that must be offered and acquired through multiple means, so as to prepare the individual for the world of work and active life, i.e. lifelong learning, with all the meaning of the term"... "while there are young children who have more knowledge and greater possibilities for both postgraduate and doctoral degrees and a greater possibility of obtaining information and knowledge on the internet and through international good practices, in the management of incidents in everything that has to do with social services etc., even though they have a progressiveness in relation to the old social workers, mainly sociologists, psychologists etc., they find it difficult to work, if you want, qualitatively their incidents. I am speaking now from my point of view, not for everyone, obviously, there are exceptions, but something is happening with their education." (R8)

Sub-code 2: Consequences of Inadequate Soft Skills Development

With reference to the soft skills that are considered vital skills, we read:

"...the thorough education and training of the human potential and on the other hand empathy. Elements that, if missing, then make the essential work of the services difficult." (R1)

"That is, alas, if those who work in social services do not have this phrase, they do not have this phrase instilled in them (meaning the word: empathy). It is not possible to work, to be behind the bar and to have in front of you a person with a disability, a person with a difference, so to speak, and not understand his problem" "So...I'm not surprised by the issue of behavior in social services as well"... (R2)

"When your empathy is lacking, it is very difficult to build trust with vulnerable groups."(R3)

"There, then, awareness, self-awareness and, from there on, professionalism play a big role in how you will often manage your own emotions..." (R4)

"Soft skills play a cleansing role in human interactions. So, they largely define the effectiveness of the work and services of the human resources of the social services... If they are missing, they cannot function.... But... don't have the skill of empathy... you've failed." (R6)

"Employees usually in the public sector have a lack of social skills which... makes it difficult to form a positive culture towards vulnerable social groups and does not help to prevent phenomena such as discriminatory behaviors." (R8)

Sub-code 3: Value System and Perceptions

Respondents noted that a worker's value system significantly affects service quality, with negative outcomes arising when there is a lack of respect and adherence to social values. Examples include:

"We have built a society characterized by a lack of respect... This explains why we often see inhumane behaviors toward minorities, women, and those with disabilities." "You rarely find people who respect their neighbors, who respect the social conventions, institutions, values, principles that traditionally, if you want, we were taught by our parents, but also once existed in this country... So, I don't it is no surprise, because I have encountered it several times in my life, when you see inhuman attitudes towards diversity, towards women, towards the elderly, towards people with disabilities." (R2)

"The causes of the problem should not be sought only in chronic structural and functional pathologies, but also in the fact that due importance has not been given to moral and ethical issues." (R3)

"If beyond that (employees) are people and citizens who have their own ideology and their own, if you like, perspective on how services should work, they have their own rationale for the economic models that should be applied in a country, if they have an opinion about whether there should be a welfare state or not, if they also have themselves or their own persons or their own city affected by immigrants, by Roma, by delinquency, all these in everyday life, no matter how good a professional you are, because you are also human, they can affect you" (R4)

"Phenomena of poor service, impermissible service, may be due to prejudice that may have ..." (R5)

"I believe that these employees may hold certain stereotypes." (R6)

“Also, temperament is the set of crystallized results of all the influences that the person has received up to the day of his birth. The emotions of employees may seem insignificant, but they are essential contributors to the working environment. The feeling of fair treatment. The employee in every relationship weighs what he gets with what he gives; if he perceives that his offer is more, he feels injustice and reacts.” (R8)

3. Discussion and Conclusions

This study presented part of the findings from the qualitative research conducted within the doctoral studies of the first author. The purpose of the study was to explore the variety of prevailing perceptions among institutional bodies regarding the education of human resources in social services in the field of human rights and its connection to the protection of the rights of vulnerable social groups.

The main findings focus on both the benefits and the negative consequences that lifelong learning and education in human rights, or their absence, have on the workplace environment. Specifically, according to the respondents, continuous education in the field of human rights can foster knowledge, cultivate skills, and shape attitudes that contribute to the easier and more effective protection and enjoyment of rights for vulnerable social groups. Special emphasis was placed on the cultivation of socio-emotional skills (soft skills), which, in contrast to technical skills, are considered key to serving beneficiaries. The most prominent soft skill is empathy, which, when developed, can lead to more effective communication and collaboration between human resources and the beneficiaries from vulnerable groups.

Additionally, the respondents highlighted the benefits of education in changing attitudes and mobilizing human resources in response to diversity. The adoption of polite and tolerant behaviors, the elimination and transformation of stereotypical views, networking, and even action and mobilization within and outside the work environment when human rights violations are identified, were noted by the institutional representatives as the most important outcomes that continuous education can bring (Pitsou & Balias 2014).

On the other hand, the lack or/and the unsatisfactory (inadequate) of education in human rights, as pointed out by institutional bodies, leads to several negative consequences. Specifically, it hinders the effective work of services, prevents employees from empathizing with beneficiaries and understanding their problems, and even results in behaviors that are unacceptable and contrary to social norms. All these issues lead to a loss of trust from citizens in the institutions staffed by these human resources.

At the same time, groups such as the Roma, LGBTQI+ individuals, immigrants and minorities, ex-convicts, abused women, the economically disadvantaged, and women, in general, are highlighted by institutional representatives as those who most often experience inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, skin color, ethnic origin, and language were identified as barriers to the provision of high-quality services by human resources to vulnerable social groups.

The content of the thematization and categorization of the responses in this study aligns with the findings of studies by Manninen *et al.* (2014: 49-61), Schuller & Desjardins (2010: 229), Feinstein, Budge, Vorhaus, & Duckworth (2008: 18-19, 21-22), and Preston & Feinstein (2004). These studies support the idea that the knowledge developed in the field of human rights and the overall changes that lifelong learning brings to individuals' personalities can effectively shape tolerant attitudes and behaviors toward diversity, influencing not only social but also professional interactions.

Furthermore, the recognition of soft skills as key competencies in interactions between human resources and vulnerable social groups aligns with the findings of Korn Ferry Institute (2018), the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2015), and Cedefop (2015), which highlight the pivotal role of soft skills in delivering high-quality services.

At the same time, the responses of institutional bodies that emphasize impartiality, non-discriminatory service to citizens, respect, and adherence to laws as essential characteristics for human resources align with the goals of good governance outlined in both European and Greek codes of ethics and professional conduct (European Ombudsman, 2015; Ministry of the Interior & National Transparency Authority, 2022).

Finally, the perceptions of respondents regarding the negative consequences of a lack or/and the inadequacy of education for human resources in social services align with national findings from studies conducted in 52 Community Centers, nine Roma Branches, and three Migrant Integration Centers in the Attica region (2019), as well as similar research carried out in Alien and Migration Departments in the prefectures of the Central Macedonia region (Lagomati Lazopoulou, 2021). These studies revealed both a lack of trust in social services among beneficiaries and challenges in providing quality service, while also highlighting the need for further specialization of staff, particularly in addressing issues specific to the Roma community.

4. Limitations and Implications of the Survey

Because conducting a research is inherently a time-consuming and demanding process, it is inevitable to face limitations and shortcomings. In our case, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population, as the research was conducted during a specific time frame, under specific political and socio-economic conditions, and with specific key informants representing certain institutional bodies.

Beyond this limitation, the present study could serve as a foundation for broader research with more methodological tools. Specifically, expanding the target population to include representatives from not only the two institutional bodies focused on in our research but also those mentioned in the three less popular responses in the closed-ended questionnaire from the quantitative phase -namely, lifelong learning centers, NCPAS, and professional associations- could prompt research into new aspects of human resource training in human rights.

Additionally, the method of semi-structured interviews could be extended to key informants from private sector institutions, such as presidents of professional associations working in social sectors (e.g., the Association of Social Workers, the Hellenic Psychological Society, the Hellenic Nurses Association), as well as key informants from regional and national social structures and centers (e.g., community centers, creative centers for children, kindergartens). This would allow for comparative results with those from the institutional bodies in the present study, which originate from the public sector.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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