

Expression of Resilience of Social Service Organizations in Lithuanian Regions

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Summary. The article examines how to strengthen the resilience of social service organizations in the regions of Lithuania when faced with extreme situations and unexpected events in the country. The research has established that, in order to overcome challenges and difficulties, social service organizations need to plan their actions in advance, quickly adapt to changes and strengthen resilience, which depends on factors that strengthen the resilience of social service organizations, such as: standardized risk management procedures, continuous strengthening of competencies, strategic planning, enabling leadership and management of business continuity processes. The research has identified measures to overcome difficulties: targeted staff involvement, inspiring organizational culture, effective risk and challenge management and the ability to adapt and maintain balance, while ensuring the continuity of activities. It has been revealed that the development of social services in the region is important for the resilience of social service organizations.

Keywords: social, organizations, resilience, Lithuania, regions.

Introduction

The expression of resilience of social service organizations (hereinafter referred to as SSO) becomes a particularly important aspect, as SSO operate in an environment of uncertainty, change and extreme situations. Scientific sources lack recommendations based on empirical research on how to strengthen the resilience of SSO in Lithuanian regions. Thus, strengthening the resilience of SSO in the context of Lithuanian regions is a relevant research object both from a theoretical and practical point of view.

The novelty of the article is justified by the fact that the research on resilience factors and coping mechanisms that affect the resilience of SSO is a relatively recent phenomenon in the scientific literature. In addition, the analysis of SSO resilience in Lithuanian regions is still a scarcely studied topic. The State Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030” emphasizes that, in the modern world, rapid trends in change are not accurately predictable, and therefore it is difficult to predict in advance and quickly prepare the necessary

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adaptation mechanisms. Thus, this study is relevant in order to identify factors and measures for strengthening the resilience of SSO.

There are many scientific studies that separately analyze the problems of organizational resilience, but, in Lithuania, the resilience of SSO is not characterized by significant scientific research, and therefore there is a persistent gap in the analysis of scientific data about the resilience of SSO. In Lithuania, the resilience of SSO in the context of regional social sustainability was revealed in the doctoral thesis by Gečienė (2023), SSO resilience was analyzed by Gečienė and Raišienė (2019), Gečienė, Raišienė, and Rapuano (2020), etc. Meanwhile, to the best of the knowledge of the author of this paper, presently, no studies by foreign authors on SSO resilience can be found. Previous studies covered the resilience of public organizations, the resilience of organizations in the context of their ability to adapt, etc. The concept of organizational resilience, theoretical along with empirical perspectives on resilience, resilience and adaptation to change have been analyzed by the following scientists: Ramezani and Camarinha-Matos (2020), Sanchez, Canetta, and Poler (2020), Bradley and Alamo-Pastrana (2022), Khalif and Slim (2024), etc. These pieces of research reveal that balance and structural mechanisms contribute to organizational resilience.

The aim of the article is to identify factors and measures pertaining to strengthening the resilience of SSO operating in the regions of Lithuania.

The objectives of the article are as follows:

- To examine the strengthening of resilience of SSO in a changing environment;
- To define the expression of SSO resilience in the context of Lithuanian regions;
- To identify key factors and measures for strengthening the resilience of SSO.

The theoretical part of the article defines the importance and expression of strengthening the resilience of SSO in Lithuanian regions, describes the factors of strengthening resilience, and reveals the resilience of SSO in the context of Lithuanian regions. Empirical research identifies the factors of strengthening the resilience of SSO along with measures intended to help strengthen the resilience of SSO.

Strengthening the resilience of SSO in a changing environment

SSO are sensitive due to the specific nature of their work, which requires constant adaptation to changing internal and external environmental conditions. These organizations experience difficulties related to the lack of resources, employee qualifications, changing customer needs and the ability to respond effectively and in a timely manner to changes. The laws of the Republic of Lithuania define SSO as state, municipal, non-governmental and private institutions providing assistance and social care to a person who, due to age, disability, and/or social problems, partially or completely lacks, has not acquired or has lost the abilities or opportunities to independently take care of his/her personal (family) life and participate in public life (Catalogue of Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 2006). An SSO is a legal entity or other organization established in the Republic of Lithuania or another Member State of the European Union or another state of the

European Economic Area, or their unit, providing social services, meeting the requirements set out in the Law on Social Services (Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 2006). Thus, summarizing the concept of SSO defined in legal acts, it can be stated that SSO is an institution that provides various social services to individuals or communities, aiming to help them solve social problems and ensure personal and public well-being. SSO can provide special, general and preventive social services – these are complementary services focused on meeting the social needs of an individual or a family, strengthening independence, reducing social exclusion and preventing social problems, adapting them to the individual needs and situations of the person. Thus, taking into account the specificity of SSO activities and work with vulnerable client groups, it is of importance to analyze the issue of strengthening the resilience of these organizations in the face of changes in the environment. In the scientific literature, various definitions are presented in an attempt to describe resilience. Some authors analyze resilience as the ability to return to a stable equilibrium and avoid a tipping point. Having avoided a tipping point, it is important to be able to adapt and strengthen in the face of a crisis, which means being resilient. In the studies of other authors, resilience is presented as the ability of organizations to maintain a balance of various elements in extreme situations, mobilizing available resources and competencies, and the ability to manage needs, challenges, and changes (Gečienė, 2023). Ben-Hador and Yitshaki (2025) define the term ‘resilience’ as a dynamic development process that responds to changes in the external and/or internal environment. Thus, the resilience of an SSO is defined as responding to shocks, the ability to plan, adapt to the current situation, maintain its functionality, overcome difficulties in responding to external shocks and changes, continue operations or become even stronger in the context of the changes that have occurred. Strengthening the resilience of an SSO is a complex process that requires constant attention to various aspects, such as empowering leadership, strengthening the organizational culture, effective risk management, developing employee competencies, strengthening inter-institutional cooperation, etc. (Khuan, 2024). By implementing these strategies, SSO can not only better adapt to emerging challenges, but also ensure the long-term continuity of their activities. Research reveals that strengthening the resilience of SSO is necessary for a number of reasons:

- to ensure the quality of services, as resilient SSO are able to maintain the quality of services even during extreme situations;
- to effectively manage resources, as SSO with developed resilience respond quickly to crisis situations and can manage their resources more effectively;
- to reduce risks in the future, as, by applying a proactive approach and strengthening resilience, SSO can not only respond to extreme situations in a timely manner, but also anticipate emerging challenges (Butkus, Schiuma, Bartuseviciene, Volodzkiene, Rakauskiene, and Dargenyte-Kacileviciene, 2024).

The resilience of SSO can be developed through training, competence development and professional development. Strengthening the resilience of SSO can also be achieved through networking, i.e., through inter-institutional cooperation between various organi-

zations, which allows for the sharing of good practices and resources and increases resilience (Khuan, 2024). SSO should constantly assess their level of resilience and adapt strategies according to the results of the assessment, as strengthening the resilience of SSO is a key factor in ensuring the continuity of their activities and the quality of services (Gečienė, Raišienė, and Rapuano, 2020). Resilience not only helps SSO adapt to challenges and changes, but also promotes a proactive approach to problem solving. Research shows that well-structured SSO with strong leadership and a culture of collaboration can withstand crises more effectively (Khalifi and Slim, 2024).

In summary, it can be stated that strengthening the resilience of SSO is a key factor that allows them to respond effectively to constantly changing internal and external environmental conditions, as well as ensuring the quality and continuity of services. Resilience includes the ability to plan, adapt and maintain functionality, and its strengthening requires attention to leadership, organizational culture, development of employee competencies and inter-institutional cooperation. Investments in these areas help SSO not only overcome challenges, but also proactively anticipate and manage difficulties in the future.

Factors for strengthening the resilience of SSO

SSO resilience factors are defined as different elements that help organizations successfully cope with unexpected situations. These elements are formed within the organization itself (Magis, 2010). The results of research by Bailey and Breslin (2021) show that, in order to overcome difficulties, SSO should clearly define each continuous aspect of their activities and identify temporary, i.e., emergency response and long-term, i.e., recovery factors. Such factors would contribute to planning activities, overcoming difficulties, and creating positive changes in SSO. Thus, in order to ensure successful SSO activities, the ability to respond in a timely manner, monitor short-term changes and threats, predict long-term threats and opportunities, and learn from past events, which are influenced by external and internal environmental factors, is required. External environmental factors were described by Ruiz-Martin, Lopez-Paredes, and Wainer (2018), who found that external environmental factors include global changes, socioeconomic characteristics, social networks that determine inter-institutional cooperation processes, etc. In the external environment, two foundations of SSO resilience factors emerge: structural-organizational and economic-social. Meanwhile, Ramezani and Camarinha-Matos, (2020) defined internal environmental factors, which include internal social competence and the ability to act, whereas organizational, human resource management and leadership characteristics are formed during certain processes. Researchers have attributed to internal environmental factors the adaptive operating models developed by the organization, allowing for rapid innovation, the ability to strengthen and maintain its value during and after disruptions (Bailey and Breslin, 2021). After analyzing scientific sources, it becomes clear that the resilience of SSO is influenced not only by external and internal environmental factors, but also by organizational, economic and social resources:

- SSO recovery capabilities and infrastructure solutions, learning information management, strengthening knowledge about activities related to SSO resilience;
- implementation of a standard or a model in SSO, reducing the impact of disruptions through continuous improvement of results and development of competencies, work methods, technology updates;
- economic stability – financial management, ensuring financial stability, material resources;
- social characteristics – social justice, political decisions, social policies and welfare, social networks, effective risk management (Sanchis et al., 2020).

Based on theoretical analysis, the factors that are important in assessing the resilience of an SSO were identified, including: human resource management, enabling leadership, collaboration, standardized risk management procedures, optimization of activities and continuous improvement, innovation and proactivity, strategic planning, improvement of knowledge and competencies, financial stability, technological development and knowledge expansion, and management of business continuity processes (Gečienė and Raišienė, 2019).

In summary, it can be stated that the performance of SSO in a changing environment is influenced by internal and external environmental factors and organizational, economic, and social resources. Factors that strengthen the resilience of SSO include various elements that help organizations effectively cope with unexpected events. Important factors include economic stability, social characteristics, infrastructural solutions and the ability to introduce innovations and improve business models in order to ensure the resilience and successful operation of SSO in the long term.

SSO resilience in the context of Lithuanian regions

The resilience of SSO in Lithuanian regions begins with the concept that people, society, institutions, and SSO are resilient when they return to their original state in the event of an emergency, that is, they maintain balance or even become more successful. The resilience of SSO operating in Lithuanian regions arises from dynamics and processes that are quite flexible and are formed in such a way that SSO can successfully cope with unexpected situations (Bux, Zhang, and Ali, 2024). The region in which the SSO operates must also think about overcoming unexpected situations, because the ability of not only organizations, but also the region itself to respond promptly to shocks is a very important factor in strengthening the resilience of SSO (Komp-Leukkunen and Sarasma, 2024). Analysis of scientific research reveals that SSO operating in regions experience undesirable events and shocks that affect the SSO's ability to operate and ensure resilience (Dawley, MacKinnon, and Pollock, 2019). In the environment of the development of modern technologies and organizational reforms, in order to overcome unforeseen changes and strengthen the resilience of the SSO in the region, an interaction of knowledge, experience, political understanding and decision-making is required, in which public, private and non-governmental sector organizations are required to partici-

pate (Raipa, 2013). By acting in the interaction of the above elements, SSO, faced with disasters, tensions and unforeseen changes, seek adaptation and positive results in the region (Bradley and Alamo-Pastrana, 2022). Analysis of scientific sources reveals that strengthening the resilience of the SSO is a process that requires constant renewal, and therefore, first of all, strategic decisions create the beginnings and prerequisites for the resilience of the SSO in the regions of Lithuania at the individual, team, organizational, and national levels of resilience strengthening (Shepherd and Williams, 2022). Although the strengthening of the resilience of SSO is influenced by internal and external factors, resilience is also influenced by social, economic and political changes at the national and international levels (Wang, Li, He, Li, Wang, and Zhao, 2024). It should be emphasized that the possibilities of strengthening the resilience of SSO also depend on the geographical location of the region – SSO operating in large urban regions are often characterized by the fact that they seek greater competitive advantage, implement new technologies and innovations, and expand the areas of services provided beyond the borders of the region and the country, while the strengthening of SSO operating in regions which are more remote from larger economic centers is more focused on the needs of the local population and the use of local resources (Giannakis and Bruggeman, 2020). On the one hand, for successful long-term operations of SSO, the implementation of strategically based solutions is important, however, for SSO to achieve resilience and plan to operate in the long term, strategic management and strategic decisions are not enough; it is also necessary to understand the causes and consequences, to assess the chain of actions, the already existing and potential connections, to be flexible, and be able to use the potential of SSO (Hagebakken, Reimers, and Solstad, 2021). Upon analyzing the aspects of strengthening the resilience of SSO in Lithuanian regions, it was found that small and medium-sized SSO suffer the most and are less resilient during unforeseen situations and crises. Such SSO, compared to large ones, have a different operating environment and are more sensitive to financial fluctuations, changes in laws and technologies, changing customer needs, and political instability (Zhou, 2023). To strengthen the resilience of SSO operating in the region, relationships that create partnerships and connect SSO into a network in which operating entities share experience, knowledge, make decisions that reduce operating costs and ensure effective results are considered crucial (Cuesta, Madrigal, and Pecorari, 2022). Resilient SSO in the region can ensure a rapid and dynamic response to frequent and unpredictable changes.

Thus, the resilience of SSO in Lithuanian regions is a key factor that allows SSO to successfully respond to crises and maintain functionality, as the ability of regions to adapt to changes directly affects the efficiency of SSO operations and the possibilities for strengthening SSO resilience.

Research methodology

The study used a mixed methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, covering data collection and analysis.

The aim of the study is to identify key measures and factors for strengthening the resilience of SSO.

Research objectives:

- to determine which factors of strengthening the resilience of SSO are the most important;
- to determine which measures applied by SSO help to ensure resilience to difficulties.

The empirical study was carried out in stages (see Figure 1):

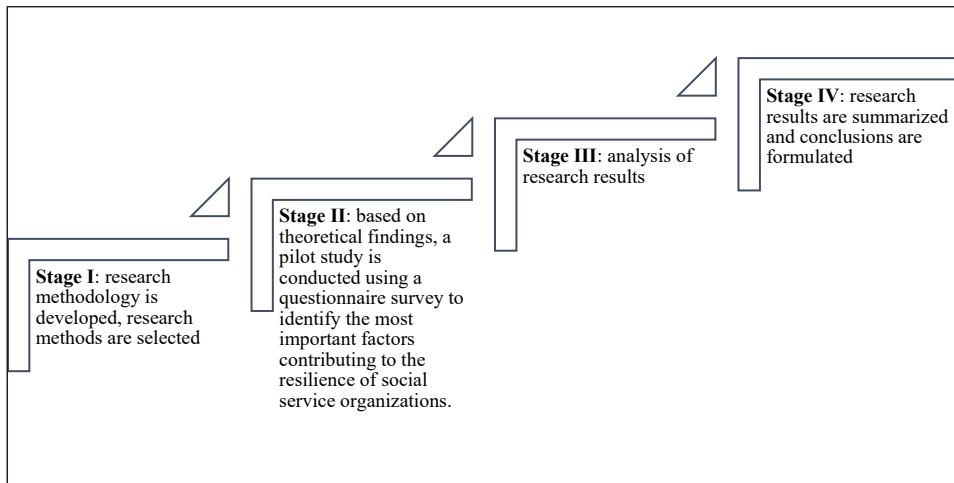


Figure 1. Stages of empirical research

For a qualitative study aimed at determining which SSO resilience factors are the most important in operating during an emergency and ranking them by importance, the multi-criteria *Analytical Hierarchy Process* (AHP) method was chosen, which allows qualitative assessments to be converted into quantitative ones, when expert assessments are converted into numerical values by using an evaluation scale (Chou, Chang, and Shen, 2008). AHP is based on the theory of relative measurement, according to which, the values and weights of criteria in a comparative system can be determined according to the competences and practical experience of experts (Saaty, 2008). In this way, the best alternative is selected by assigning ranks to the selected factors according to importance (Podvezko and Podvezko, 2014). By using the AHP method, expert opinions and assessment scores are integrated into an elementary hierarchy system. When conducting a study by using the AHP method, the scales of this method are applied, which increase the consistency of expert opinions, and thus the reliability of the study results.

The quantitative study measures the resilience of HPOs operating in the regions of Lithuania. A questionnaire was developed for this study, and a survey was conducted to collect the necessary information and interview representatives of HPOs operating in the regions of Lithuania. Taking into account the structure of the quantitative study ques-

tions and the characteristics of the classified answers, nominal and ordinal scales were chosen to create the questionnaire.

Sample characteristics. In the course of the qualitative study, 11 experts were interviewed who met the criteria set for experts:

- experts are required to have a higher university education and, based on their level of knowledge, and be familiar with the specifics of SSO activities;
- they must belong to SSO operating in the regions of Lithuania;
- they can be SSO managers who are familiar with management processes, and the institutions they lead are characterized by high achievements and significant results;
- they must have at least 5 years of work experience in the represented SSO, as such a period of time ensures accumulated experience in various operational situations in a changing environment;
- they are required to have obtained the highest qualification category according to the requirements of the Description of the Procedure for Improving the Professional Competence of Social Service Workers and SSO Managers (Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, 2006).

Table 1. Sociodemographic data of experts

Category	Variants	Frequency	Part, percent
All Experts	All experts	11	100
Gender	Women	10	90.9
	Men	1	9.1
Age	40–49 years	2	18.2
	50–59 years	7	63.6
	60 and over	2	18.2
Education	Higher university degree (Master's degree)	10	90.9
	Doctoral degree	1	9.1
Employment Experience	5–9 years	1	9.1
	10–14 years	4	36.4
	15–19 years	2	18.2
	20–24 years	3	27.2
	25 and over	1	9.1
Region Represented	Kaunas County	1	9.1
	Klaipėda County	3	27.2
	Marijampolė County	2	18.2
	Panevėžys County	1	9.1
	Šiauliai County	1	9.1
	Utena County	2	18.2
	Vilnius County	1	9.1

Place of Operation Represented	One of the major Lithuanian cities (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys)	7	63.6
	Another major town (i.e., not in the list of the five major Lithuanian cities)	3	27.3
	Town	1	9.1
Sector Represented	Public	11	100

In a quantitative study, the essential criterion for selecting respondents is SSO managers, deputy managers, heads of departments – these are persons who make decisions and are included in decision-making. A survey was conducted to collect empirical data, with the questionnaire submitted to the *survey.lt* system. The size of the population relevant to the study is associated with the sample size, which is necessary to ensure the representativeness of the quantitative study and the desired accuracy. In quantitative studies, results are considered statistically reliable when $p > 0.95$ (Singh and Masuku, 2014). After calculating the sample size according to the formula, when 95 percent probability and 5 percent error was selected, it was determined that 217 respondents should participate in the survey. The questionnaire link was sent to the entire study population – 496 individuals, and 355 respondents participated in the study.

Research results

Results of the qualitative study. In order to reveal the purpose of the study, a qualitative study was conducted by using the AHP method. Experts assessed which resilience strengthening factors are the most important when operating in an SSO during emergency situations. The results of the qualitative study are calculated by using the AHP priority calculator. The study was carried out in stages:

- a decision-making task was created – the 8 most important SSO resilience factors were identified during the pilot study are used: knowledge and competence development, innovation and proactivity, technology development and knowledge development, activity optimization and continuous improvement, enabling leadership, strategic planning, business continuity process management, standardized risk management procedures;
- the above-mentioned factors were presented to the experts to perform a pairwise comparison and determine which of them is more important;
- on the AHP scale from 1 to 9, it is noted which criterion is more important than the other by choosing: 1 – equal importance, 3 – medium importance, 5 – high importance, 7 – very high importance, 9 – extremely high importance (values 2, 4, 6, 8 are intermediate estimates);
- by using the AHP priority calculator tool, consistency is checked, and inconsistencies are eliminated;
- the obtained results are calculated by using the AHP priority calculator (Saaty, 2008).

After the experts performed pairwise comparisons of criteria (resistance factors) by using the priority calculator, the research results were obtained, based on the main matrix decision vector. After the experts performed pairwise comparison matrix calculations, the factors determining the resilience of SSO were ranked by importance, where 1 – the most important factor, 8 – the least important factor for SSO resilience.

According to expert estimates, the 5 most important factors in the operation of SSO during emergencies are: standardized risk management procedures, improvement of knowledge and competencies, strategic planning, enabling leadership, and management of business continuity processes (see Figure 2).

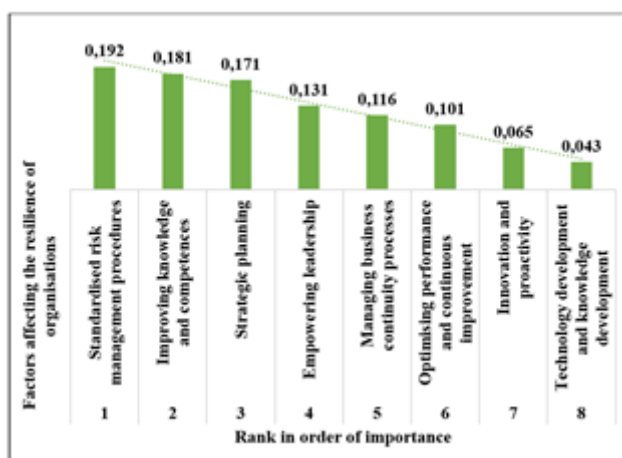


Figure 2. Factors determining the resilience of SSO in order of importance

As the results of the study show, in case of emergencies, the most important factor determining the resilience of SSO is standardized risk management procedures. The results of the study showed that, in case of emergencies, it is important to properly prepare for difficulties by strategic planning, improving personnel competencies and applying leadership methods that help to effectively manage risks.

Quantitative research results. Multivariate statistical methods are used to analyze the results obtained during the empirical research – descriptive statistics (absolute and percentage frequencies, means and standard deviations), exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha). Factor analysis was performed in order to move from a large number of variables to a smaller number of common factors, thus concentrating information. First of all, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was checked. The obtained KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value is 0.907, and this value is higher than 0.8. Hence, it can be stated that the data is well suited for factor analysis. It turned out that the following factors are most correlated:

- Challenges faced by SSO;
- Effective measures implemented by SSO to help prevent threats and overcome challenges;

- Collaboration is important to SSO – to what extent SSO collaborate with other organizations operating in the region to strengthen resilience.

Further analysis of the correlations revealed that there is a fairly strong correlation between the measures applied by SSO and the importance of joint activities. The correlation shows that the more measures an SSO applies to avoid threats and overcome difficulties, the more important the joint activities and close cooperation are for it. The results of the quantitative study were calculated by using the *IBM SPSS Statistics* data processing software.

A quantitative study assessed the resilience of SSO. In order to determine which SSO partnerships help strengthen resilience and whether there is a connection with the region and the organizations operating there, the following question was asked: “With which organizations does your SSO cooperate?” (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. SSO collaboration network

The results of the study show that SSO mostly (22.2%) cooperate with organizations providing the same services and public sector organizations (20.7%). The least cooperation was detected with organizations of the private and business sectors (10.4%). Based on the study data, it can be concluded that, in order to strengthen the resilience of SSO, it is important to cooperate and share practical experience among SSO. The results of the study confirm the research data of researchers Stanković, Marjanović, Papathanasiou, and Drezgić (2021), which show that the activities of SSO operating in regions during changes are affected by the ability to engage in cooperation processes.

In determining what difficulties SSO experience most often, and with which indicators (provided in the answer options) this is most related, the respondents were asked:

“What threats does your SSO experience and what difficulties does it face?” (see Figure 4).

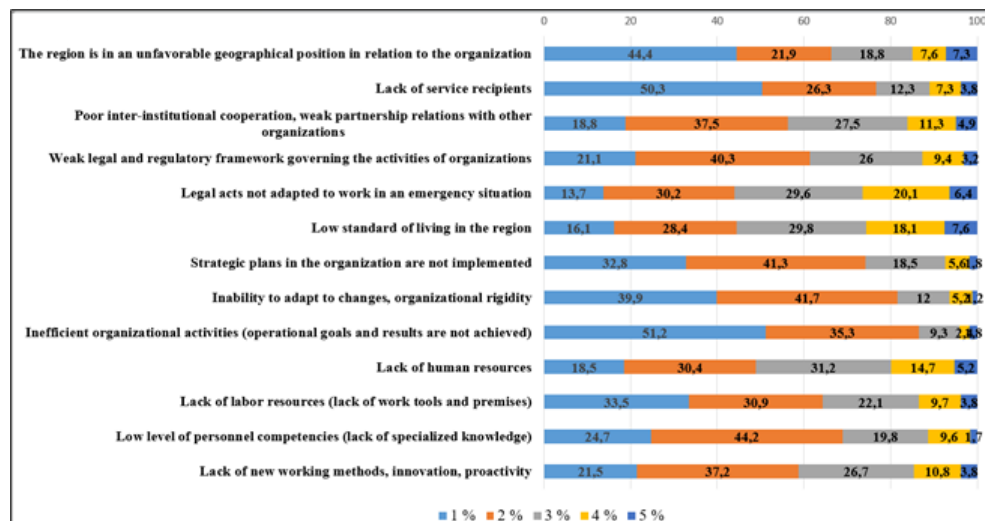


Figure 4. Difficulties faced by SSO

As the results of the study show, SSO do not experience difficulties very frequently and often. This is a good indicator, which allows us to draw conclusions that SSO rarely experience difficulties, because they are able to ensure resilience. Rarely (several times a year), a lack of human resources can be evident (31.2 percent). This indicator shows that SSO sometimes lack specialists. Very rarely (in emergency situations) do we encounter a low level of personnel competencies (lack of specialized knowledge) (44.2 percent), inability to adapt to changes, SSO inflexibility (41.7 percent), unimplementable strategic plans of SSO (41.3 percent), weak base of laws and legal acts regulating the activities of SSO (40.3 percent). These indicators show that very rarely experienced difficulties lie within the internal resources of SSO. 50.3 percent of our respondents indicate that SSO never experience a lack of service recipients, which means that the need for social services is very high, whereas 44.4 percent of the respondents state that they do not experience difficulties due to the region’s unfavorable geographical location in relation to SSO. This indicator shows that the need for social services is high and constant, and that the boundaries of the regions in which SSO operate are favorable for them. Based on the survey data, it can be stated that SSO sometimes face difficulties related to the region’s geographical location, legal framework, and organizational indicators.

In order to determine the vulnerability of SSO in relation to the region, the respondents were asked to answer the question: “In which case does SSO become vulnerable?” (see Figure 5).

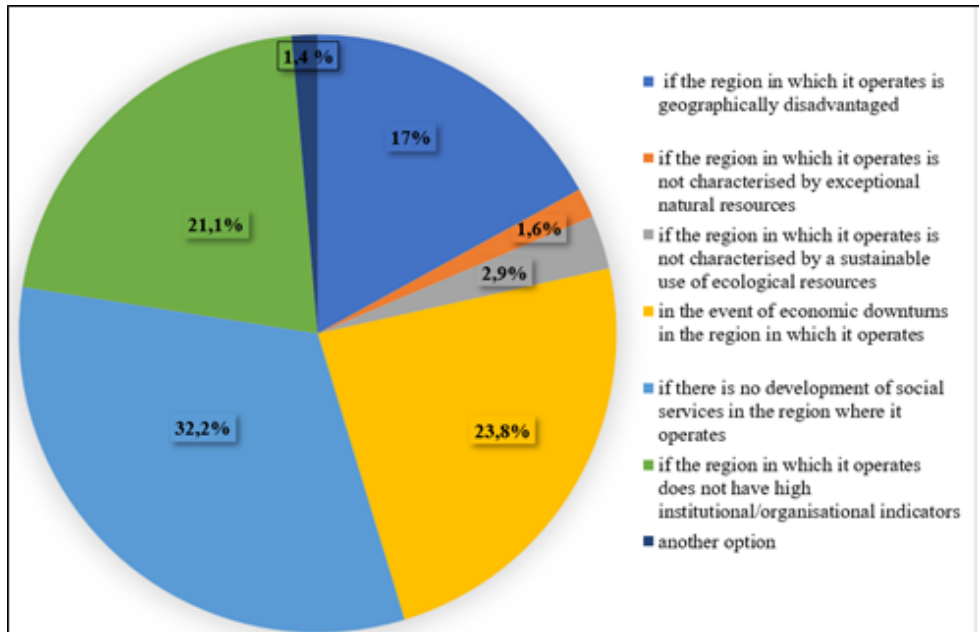


Figure 5. Vulnerability of SSO by region

As the research data show, most often (32.2%) SSO are vulnerable if: the region in which they operate does not develop social services, and if the region in which they operate experiences economic declines (23.8%). Some respondents (21.1%) note that SSO may be vulnerable if the region in which they operate does not have exceptional institutional/organizational indicators. When choosing another option (1.4%) on the issue of SSO vulnerability in relation to the region, respondents expressed their opinion, which, after systematizing, was divided into two groups:

- internal factors – if there is no close inter-institutional cooperation in the region, if society in the region has a negative view of residents of social care homes, if residents of surrounding villages cannot reach their workplace by public transport, and legal acts limit the employers' ability to pay for employee fuel costs, if there are no strong communities in the region (in cultural, artistic activities);
- external factors – if emergencies are frequent in the region, if state policy is only interested in short-term projects absorbing funds, and not in the long-term strategy of the activities being carried out.

The study aimed to identify which measures help strengthen the resilience of SSO and overcome difficulties. The respondents assessed the provided answer options, by marking the presented statements from 1 to 5, where 1 – not applicable, 2 – very rarely applied (in emergency situations), 3 – rarely applied (several times a year), 4 – often applied (at least once a month), 5 – very often applied (once a week and more often) (see Figure 6).

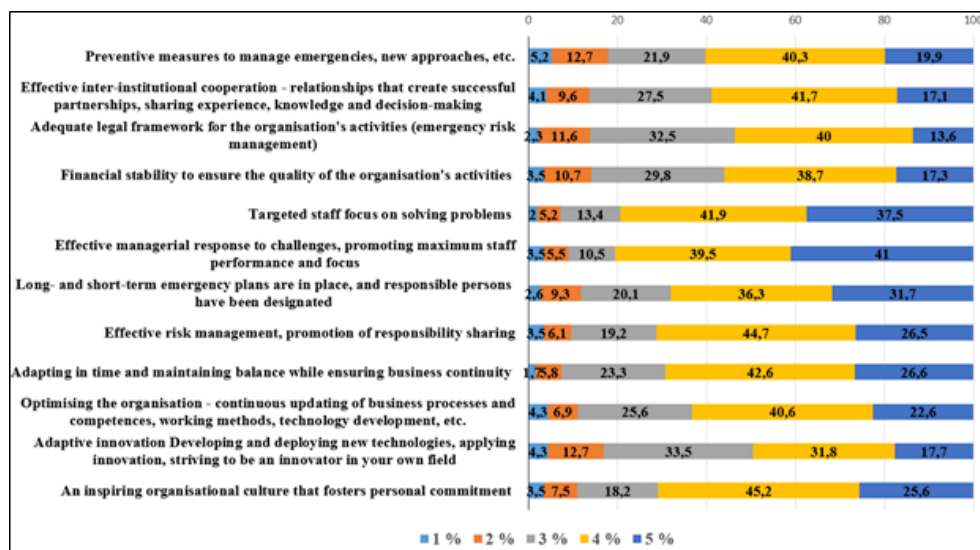


Figure 6. Measures taken by HPOs to help strengthen resilience

As the results of the study show, respondents often apply many of the listed measures in their SSO. The following most commonly used measures can be distinguished: effective response of the manager to challenges, promoting maximum employee productivity and concentration (41%), targeted focus of personnel on solving problems (37.5%), inspiring organizational culture, promoting personal commitment (45.2%), effective risk management, promoting the sharing of responsibility (44.7%), timely adaptation and maintaining balance, ensuring the continuity of activities (42.6%), targeted focus of personnel on solving problems, effective inter-institutional cooperation (41.9%), connections that create a successful partnership, sharing experience, knowledge, and decision-making (41.7%). The respondents also mentioned other measures that they apply in their SSO in order to overcome threats and difficulties. The following measures were mentioned: creating a reserve (of personnel, food supplies, protective equipment), strengthening teamwork, focusing, fostering personal responsibility, reflecting in the team in search of common successful solutions for SSO, remote work, creating flexible working conditions for the employee, educational consulting of specialists, monthly, weekly meetings, implementation of the EQUASS social services quality system, promotion and development of volunteering, involving the founder in the search for ways to solve problems, trade union activities.

Upon summarizing the results of the quantitative study, it can be stated that inter-institutional cooperation and sharing of practical experience among SSO is important for SSO seeking to avoid threats and overcome difficulties. The study has found that SSO face difficulties related to the geographical location, legal framework and organizational indicators of the region in which the organization operates. SSO are most often vulnerable in the region where social services are not developed. Measures have been identified

to help SSO strengthen their resilience – these are the professionalism of managers in responding appropriately to challenges and the focus of employees on solving problems.

Discussion

Given the limitations of the research conducted so far, the scientific literature lacks a deeper analysis of the resilience of SSO in Lithuanian regions, nor is there any relevant discussion of the factors and measures of SSO resilience in general. According to the experts of this study, the resilience of SSO in emergencies is determined by the most important resilience factors: standardized risk management procedures, improvement of knowledge and competencies, strategic planning and empowering leadership. These factors can help SSO avoid difficulties and ensure resilience. The results of the quantitative study established that cooperation with other organizations operating in the region and located in other regions is highly important in strengthening the resilience of SSO. It is important to cooperate intensively with SSO, because their activities are similar, they provide services in the same area, and they face similar risks that require various measures to manage. This indicator is related to the expert opinion that standardized risk management procedures are important for SSO resilience. The study data reveal that, in order to achieve SSO resilience, it is most important to ensure inter-institutional cooperation. The vulnerability of SSO in relation to the region has also been determined. The study analysis showed that SSO are vulnerable if they operate in a geographically disadvantaged location. The study found that SSO are most often vulnerable if the region in which they operate is not developing social services, if they experience economic downturns, and if the region in which the SSO operates does not have outstanding institutional/organizational indicators. These outcome indicators are consistent with the findings of Zhou (2023). The results of the study showed that the development of social services depends on the location of the SSO in the region. Those SSO that feel vulnerable if they operate in a region in which social services are not developed are more likely to collaborate with other organizations and develop partnerships that help strengthen the resilience of the SSO.

Conclusions

After analyzing the strengthening of SSO resilience in an environment of change, it was revealed that the strengthening of resilience allows SSO to effectively respond to constantly changing internal and external environmental conditions. SSO resilience is influenced by organizational, economic and social factors, which include various elements that help SSO effectively overcome difficulties.

Having determined the expression of SSO resilience in the regions of Lithuania, it became clear that the resilience of SSO operating in the regions arises from processes that help SSO successfully cope with unexpected situations. Resilient SSO in the Lithuanian regions can ensure a dynamic response to unpredictable changes.

The empirical study has identified the essential factors for strengthening SSO resilience that determine SSO resilience in emergency situations, including: standardized risk management procedures, improvement of knowledge and competencies, strategic planning, enabling leadership and management of business continuity processes. The study revealed that, for SSO, the following points are important: inter-institutional cooperation, geographical location of the region, organizational indicators, and social development in the region. The measures identified to help ensure the resilience of the SSO are effective management response to challenges, targeted staff focus on problem solving, inspiring organizational culture, effective risk management, adaptation and maintaining balance, and ensuring business continuity.

Study limitations

The limitations of the study are due to the specificity of the work object related to strengthening the resilience of SSO in Lithuanian regions and the choice of a specific social sector:

- the research results focus on the SSO situation, overcoming difficulties and ensuring SSO resilience, however, further research focused on healthcare and/or other organizations could also provide valuable insights in this context.

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