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**MULTIDIMENSIONAL
PERSPECTIVE ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-
EFFICACY AND WORK
ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEES**

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this article is to analyse the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement among local government employees, understood as a multidimensional construct comprising vigor, dedication, and absorption. The analysis is grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which conceptualise self-efficacy as an important personal resource supporting the functioning of public sector employees. The study was conducted using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach. In the quantitative stage, 272 employees of a selected local government unit located in southern Poland were surveyed. To this end, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) were used. The quantitative analyses were supplemented by qualitative research using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The results indicate statistically significant relationships between self-efficacy and the overall level of work engagement as well as all three of its dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The qualitative analysis provided a deeper understanding of these relationships, highlighting the importance of professional experience, strategies for coping with procedural burdens, and the subjective sense of agency in everyday work. The findings emphasise the role of strengthening personal resources in human capital management within local government administration.

Keywords: self-efficacy, work engagement, local government administration, psychological resources, Poland

Introduction

In recent years, research attention in the field of public administration management has increasingly turned towards psychological factors that are associated with work quality and employee engagement. The complexity of tasks carried out by local government institutions, combined with high social expectations, means that particular importance is attached to the analysis of personal resources that enable employees to effectively cope with the demands of the work environment. One such resource is self-efficacy, which is a key predictor of motivation, perseverance, and undertaking actions oriented towards achieving organizational goals. Importantly, this resource gains significance under conditions of high job demands, while simultaneously serving as a factor that protects against the negative effects of work overload and reduces the risk of burnout.

Empirical studies indicate that self-efficacy is associated with a higher level of work engagement and better job performance (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011; Llorens et al., 2007). In turn, employees engaged in their work are fully connected to their professional roles (Bakker, 2011). Despite growing interest in this issue, these relationships remain relatively poorly understood in the context of local government administration, revealing a significant research gap regarding the psychological mechanisms that support employees' job effectiveness in this sector (Vigoda-Gadot & Meiri, 2008).

Addressing this research gap, the aim of the article is to analyse the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement among local government administration employees, with particular attention to its three key dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The theoretical basis is provided by A. Bandura's social-cognitive theory (1997) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which explain the links between personal resources and employee functioning in the work environment (Xanthopoulos et al., 2007).

This article presents the results of mixed-methods research encompassing a quantitative phase and a supplementary qualitative phase (an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach was applied). In the quantitative part, a survey technique was used with two research instruments: the Polish adaptation of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Juczyński, 1999; 2012) and the 9-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b). In total, 272 employees were surveyed, and the study was conducted in a selected local government administration unit located in the southern part of Poland. In the subsequent supplementary phase, partially structured in-depth interviews were conducted, aimed at deepening the results obtained in the main quantitative analysis.

For the purposes of the study, the main research question was formulated as follows: What is the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement among local government administration employees? To refine this query, three specific research questions were identified: (1) What is the relationship between self-efficacy and the level of vigor among local government administration employees?; (2) What is the relationship between self-efficacy and the level of dedication among local government administration employees?; (3) What is the relationship between self-efficacy and the level of absorption among local government administration employees?

This article contributes to the development of theory and practice of public management in several ways. First, it focuses on the importance of self-efficacy in relation to the engagement level of local government administration employees, demonstrating how personal resources can strengthen professional functioning under increasing demands and organizational pressure. Furthermore, it expands the existing theoretical body of knowledge by empirically verifying the relationships between self-efficacy and the three dimensions of engagement in the context

of local government administration, which remains relatively under-researched. The article also provides practical recommendations for public service managers and decision-makers, highlighting the importance of enhancing self-efficacy in designing human resource management strategies, including development and motivation programs, training sessions, and initiatives supporting employees' well-being. Such a long-term orientation can contribute to increased organizational effectiveness and improved quality of public services through better utilization of employees' potential and strengthening their adaptive capacities in the face of changing environmental demands.

The article is divided into five main parts. The first section presents the theoretical underpinnings concerning self-efficacy and work engagement of employees in local government administration. The second section describes the methodological assumptions of the conducted research, including the characteristics of the mixed approach used and the justification for choosing an explanatory sequential strategy. The third section presents the study results based on statistical analyses and respondents' statements. The fourth section discusses the findings, and the article concludes with the fifth section, which indicates directions for further research, limitations of the adopted perspective, and recommendations for future researchers on this topic to support the design of more in-depth analyses of the relationship between self-efficacy and employee engagement in local government administration.

1. Literature review

1.1. The concept of self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was introduced by A. Bandura as part of social-cognitive theory, and refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute the actions required to achieve designated goals and to handle future situations (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy thus concerns the evaluation of one's own action capabilities, and in this sense it pertains to the action itself rather than its anticipated outcome (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura's theory, people with high expectations of their own self-efficacy are healthier, function more effectively, and achieve greater success than those with low self-efficacy expectations (1997). Consequently, individuals with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to perceive difficulties as challenges rather than threats, and they recover more quickly from setbacks (Bandura, 1997; Mishchuk et al., 2023).

In the work context, a high self-assessment of one's abilities plays a similar role as in overall psychological functioning – it becomes a key personal resource that fosters motivation, effective action, and employee well-being. In the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R model) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), self-efficacy is viewed as a personal resource which, together with organizational resources, plays an important role in motivational processes and mitigates the negative impact of excessive job demands. Personal resources such as self-efficacy are linked to the interpretation of work situations in a way that encourages viewing challenges as manageable, and they strengthen employees' belief in their ability to influence their work environment (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Hajduova et al., 2025). From this perspective, self-efficacy is associated with greater stress resilience, lower risk of burnout, and the process of building engagement, because it strengthens energy, perseverance, and identification with work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a). Empirical studies indicate that individuals with higher self-efficacy exhibit greater job satisfaction, adapt more easily to change, and show a more proactive attitude toward their duties (Bargsted et al., 2019; Hernik et al., 2025).

Bandura identifies four principal sources of self-efficacy (1997):

- *Mastery experiences*: Successful performance of a task strengthens the belief in one's own competencies, whereas repeated failures can weaken it;
- *Vicarious experiences*: Observing others, especially those similar to oneself who are succeeding, increases the belief that one can achieve similar outcomes;
- *Verbal persuasion*: Encouraging messages and constructive feedback from supervisors or coworkers can enhance self-assessment and the sense of competence;
- *Physiological and affective states*: How an individual interprets arousal, stress, or fatigue affects their self-evaluation of capabilities; a positive interpretation of these states promotes an increased sense of self-efficacy.

The notion of self-efficacy was adopted into the Polish literature by Z. Juczyński, who defined it as an individual's subjective belief in their own competencies enabling them to deal with tasks and difficulties, emphasizing that self-efficacy is a key determinant of behavior that influences initiating activities and perseverance in striving for a goal (Juczyński, 2000). It is noted that self-efficacy is associated with both the initiation of work behaviors and the maintenance of psychological resilience and long-term engagement through a so-called gain spiral-positive work experiences strengthen the sense of competence, which in turn *beneficially* affects higher levels of energy and work motivation (Salanova, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2011). Thus, a strong belief in one's capabilities helps in unpredictable, stressful situations and is positively associated with an employee's psychological well-being (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2015). In this context, developmental approaches that reinforce employees' belief in their own effectiveness become particularly important. One such approach is Appreciative Inquiry, a concept that emerged in the 1980s and posits that uncovering resources, successes, and organizational strengths fosters the construction of positive beliefs about one's capabilities and personal impact on organizational reality (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Focusing attention on positive elements strengthens self-efficacy and activates motivational mechanisms that encourage positive organizational change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010; Bushe, 2013; Młyński et al., 2024; Wójcik-Chodorowska, 2025a; Wójcik-Chodorowska, 2025b).

1.2. The concept of work engagement

Work engagement, the second key factor in the title of this publication, is defined as a positive, fulfilled psychological state related to one's work, characterized by a high level of energy, strong identification with one's professional role, and deep cognitive and emotional absorption in task performance (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It should be noted that work engagement is not the same as job satisfaction. Engagement involves actively investing personal resources in one's work, and is not limited solely to evaluating one's job or relationship with the organization (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a; Šakyatė-Statnickė et al., 2023).

Contemporary research operationalizes work engagement as a three-dimensional construct comprising vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This is reflected in the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). The three dimensions are defined as follows:

- *Vigor*: A high level of energy, mental resilience, and willingness to invest effort in work, even in the face of difficulties, challenges, and setbacks (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In an administrative work context, this factor serves as an energetic resource that sustains efficiency and quality in task performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Hobfoll, 2001);
- *Dedication*: A strong identification with one's work, accompanied by a sense of purpose, significance, and value, as well as enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration related to one's

professional role (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a). Given the specifics of work in the public sector, this factor is particularly important, underlining the significance of prosocial motives and an orientation toward the common good (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a; Wright & Pandey, 2008);

- *Absorption*: A state of deep emotional and cognitive immersion in work, whereby time seems to pass quickly and the employee finds it difficult to detach from the task at hand (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a). Here it is important to distinguish absorption from workaholism, because absorption is part of a positive work experience and need not be associated with excessive workload (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In administrative work, this factor may become evident in crisis or atypical situations requiring the resolution of complex procedural problems (Bakker, Demerouti & Verbeke, 2004).

Modern views of work engagement increasingly emphasize its dynamic and relational nature, including its social dimension, noting that engagement is not solely an individual disposition of the employee but the result of interactions between job demands, organizational resources, and personal resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Mishchuk et al., 2021). Work engagement is treated as a kind of motivational mechanism that mediates between working conditions and work outcomes such as efficiency, innovation, quality of services provided, and employees' psychological well-being (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011; Szostek et al., 2024).

The local government administration environment is a work setting with specific institutional conditions in which employees contend with extensive procedures, legal and formal pressures, high social responsibility, and expectations from external stakeholders (Rainey, 2014). In such conditions, work engagement gains particular importance and plays a stabilizing role in job performance, helping to limit bureaucratization of work. It promotes active management of job demands and resources and supports efforts to imbue work with meaning (Kim & Beehr, 2017; Jiang et al., 2022). Organizational leadership also becomes very significant in this context, as it helps build positive attitudes (Kerse et al., 2023; Tummers & Bakker, 2021). High engagement levels positively influence, among other things, the quality of public services provided, citizens' and external partners' trust, and relations with the institutional environment (Wright, Moynihan & Pandey, 2012; Vigoda-Gadot & Beerli, 2012). It also contributes to changing the image of public institutions into workplaces characterized by professionalism and citizen orientation, which strengthens public trust in local government administration (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003).

A crucial aspect of work engagement in local government administration is its connection to a sense of work meaning – employees who perceive their work as significant and socially useful more often engage emotionally and cognitively in their tasks (Allan, Autin & Duffy, 2016). Leadership styles in public and educational institutions have been identified as significant moderators of this process, with transformational and participative approaches consistently linked to higher levels of employee commitment in non-profit and public sector contexts (Maama, 2024). In this context, self-efficacy serves as an important mechanism enabling individuals to interpret their own actions as effective, which strengthens the vigor and dedication components (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). In the context of local government administration, this means that efforts to boost work engagement should not be limited to structural or procedural changes, but should also include developmental interventions that strengthen personal resources, including self-efficacy (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

1.3. Conceptual model of the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement

The theoretical perspectives presented above suggest that work engagement in local government administration develops through the interplay of personal resources, in particular self-efficacy. This justifies the need to empirically capture the relationship between these constructs in the form of a conceptual model shown in Figure 1. The proposed model assumes that self-efficacy - a key personal resource in Bandura's social-cognitive theory (1997) and the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) - is associated with the level of work engagement among local government administration employees. In the model, it is assumed that self-efficacy is related to the three dimensions of work engagement: vigor (energy and strength), dedication (sense of meaning and enthusiasm), and absorption (immersion and flow). This model provided the basis for operationalizing the research objectives and formulating the hypotheses tested in the study.

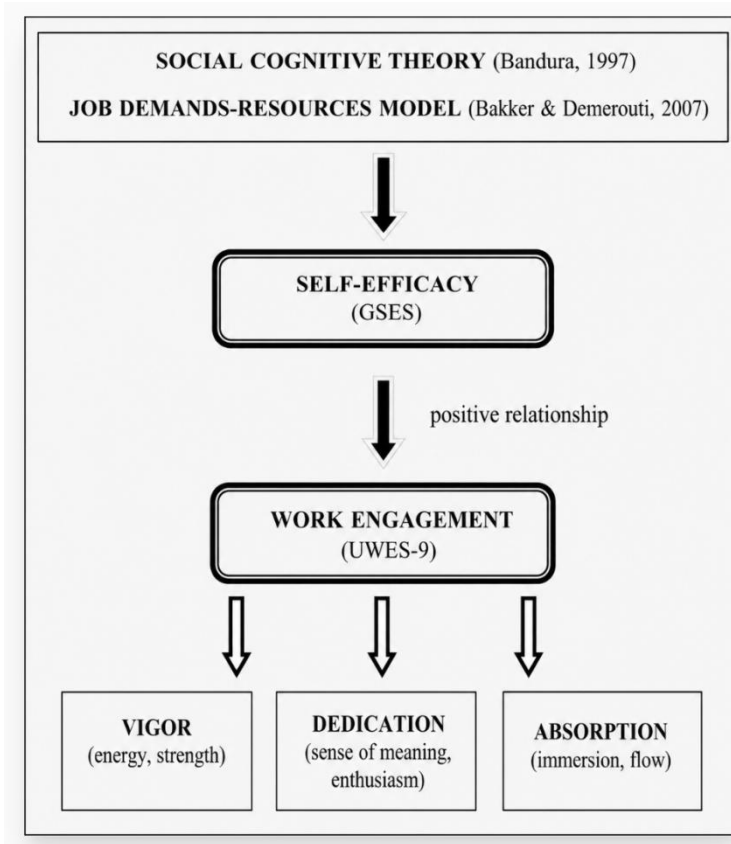


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement
Source: *own study*

2. Methodological approach

The results presented in this article pertain to a study conducted in November and December 2025 among employees of a selected local government administration unit. The study aimed to analyze a specific aspect of public administration employees' functioning, taking into account the relationship between self-efficacy and the declared level of work engagement.

The research was carried out in a local government administration unit located in southern Poland, in a city of over 200,000 inhabitants. This unit was intentionally chosen due to both its accessibility for research and its organizational characteristics, which allowed for analyzing the relationship between self-efficacy and employee engagement. An additional justification was the region's diverse socio-economic structure and dynamic changes in the public sector, which made the context particularly conducive to studying the role of self-efficacy as a personal resource associated with work engagement.

The main goal of the study was to analyze the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement among local government administration employees. Corresponding to this main goal, the following specific objectives were defined: (CS1) to identify and determine the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and the vigor level of local government administration employees; (CS2) to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and the dedication level of local government administration employees; (CS3) to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and the absorption level of local government administration employees.

In the research model, self-efficacy was treated as the main explanatory variable, understood as an individual's belief in their own ability to effectively cope with occupational demands (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Work engagement was treated as the main outcome variable, conceived as a positive, fulfilled work-related state manifested in three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a). The study did not aim to establish causal effects, but to examine the relationships between self-efficacy and work engagement as well as its three dimensions.

The established research objectives operationalize the stated research problems and guide further empirical verification. Corresponding to the research questions, research hypotheses were also formulated: Main research hypothesis (H1): There is a relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement among local government administration employees. Specific hypotheses: (H1a): There is a relationship between self-efficacy and employees' vigor; (H1b): There is a relationship between self-efficacy and employees' dedication; (H1c): There is a relationship between self-efficacy and employees' absorption.

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach (QUAN -> qual) (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2017; Toyon, 2021). In the first stage, extensive quantitative research was conducted using a survey, followed by qualitative research to deepen the obtained results- specifically, partially structured in-depth interviews. It should be noted that the qualitative phase was supplementary in nature and served to provide a more in-depth interpretation of the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Toyon, 2021).

2.1. Stage I: Quantitative research

In the first stage, a quantitative method was used in the form of a survey. The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts followed by a demographic section. To measure self-efficacy, the first part included the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by R. Schwarzer and M. Jerusalem (1995) in Z. Juczyński's Polish adaptation (1999; 2012). This scale has been previously used in studies of public administration employees (Czechowska-Bieluga et al., 2023) and public institution staff (Bidzan et al., 2020), confirming its validity in the context of public sector work. The instrument contains 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 ("no") to 4 ("yes"). The total score ranges from 10 to 40 points, with a higher score indicating a stronger sense of self-efficacy. The scale is unidimensional and has high reliability: Cronbach's α in adaptation studies ranges from 0.76 to 0.90 (Juczyński, 2012). In the present study, scores ranged from 13 to 39 points, and Cronbach's α was 0.76.

To measure the level of work engagement, the second part used the Work Engagement Questionnaire (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, UWES) by W. Schaufeli and A. Bakker (2004b), available in Polish on the author's official website (Schaufeli, n.d.). Three versions of this instrument exist (9, 15, and 17 items). For this study, the 9-item questionnaire (UWES-9) was used, comprising 9 statements about the respondent's work, rated on a 7-point scale from 0 ("never") to 6 ("always"), grouped into three subscales: vigor, absorption, and dedication. This structure made it possible to analyze both the overall level of work engagement and its three dimensions included in the revised hypotheses: vigor, dedication, and absorption. It is noted that using the 9-item version reduces respondent burden while maintaining high reliability (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b; Wołpiuk-Ochocińska, 2015), with Cronbach's α from 0.80 to 0.90 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b). In the present study, Cronbach's α was 0.84.

The use of two different response scales (GSES and UWES) stems from the psychometric norms adopted in the literature for each instrument (DeVellis, 2017). Differences in the number of scale points do not affect the correctness of analysis, since the values of both tests were standardized to comparable scales (Kline, 2016).

Regarding the organization of the study, the questionnaires were distributed to respondents in paper form. Completion took on average 10 minutes. Employees were informed that participation was voluntary and were assured of complete anonymity and that the results would be used for research purposes only.

The study sample comprised 272 respondents. The sampling was non-probabilistic and proceeded in two stages. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used- 17 departments of the studied unit were selected. The selection was guided primarily by the size of departments (including those with the largest staffing), and functional diversity (including departments performing different task profiles). In the second stage, voluntary self-selection sampling was used, as questionnaires were distributed to all employees of the selected departments, and only those who willingly agreed participated in the study.

The two-stage, non-probabilistic sampling approach has both advantages and important limitations. A benefit of purposive sampling is the ability to focus on those segments of the organization that are most representative from the perspective of the variables of interest, as was done in this study, namely departments with large staff and diverse task profiles. This approach allows capturing internal diversity of organizational structure and work specifics (Patton, 2015). Meanwhile, voluntary participation supports the ethical dimension of the research- participation is voluntary, which increases respondents' comfort and may lead to more truthful responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Babbie, 2021).

On the other hand, this approach carries limitations. Purposive sampling raises the risk of sample bias, as not every unit in the population had an equal chance of inclusion, limiting the ability to generalize results to the entire population of the given administrative unit. Likewise, self-selection sampling carries a risk of selection bias: respondents who decide to participate may be more active, motivated or positively inclined, which can skew the overall picture of the population and limit the external validity of the findings (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2015; Świdarska et al., 2023).

In the sociodemographic structure of the respondents, women predominated (57.0%), and the largest age group was 36–45 years (34.6%). The vast majority (95.6%) were employed in mid-level clerical positions in the unit. Respondents with 1–5 years and 6–10 years of tenure each constituted 29.4%. Detailed data are presented in Table 1.

The calculations were performed using SPSS Statistics 26. The statistical tests used included the Shapiro-Wilk test (to assess normality), and nonparametric tests such as the Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test, as well as Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Relationships were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 1. Sociodemographic structure of respondents (N=272)

Sociodemographic characteristic		N	%
Gender	Female	155	57.0
	Male	117	43.0
	Other	0	0.0
Age	Up to 25 years	21	7.7
	26-35 years	55	20.2
	36-45 years	94	34.6
	46-55 years	84	30.9
	Above 55 years	18	6.6
Job position in unit	Support staff	8	2.9
	Mid-level official (clerical)	260	95.6
	Senior official (managerial)	4	1.5
	Other	0	0.0
Job tenure in unit	< 1 year	35	12.9
	1-5 years	80	29.4
	6-10 years	80	29.4
	11-20 years	57	21.0
	> 20 years	20	7.4
Total		272	100.0

Source: *own study*

2.2. Stage II: Qualitative research

The second phase consisted of qualitative research in the form of partially structured in-depth interviews. The aim of conducting these interviews was to deepen and supplement the quantitative results (in line with the logic of the explanatory sequential design). The data obtained made it possible to connect quantitative indicators with narrative descriptions of employees' experiences, allowing a fuller capture of the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement.

Data integration was sequential and interpretative (connecting & interpreting), where the quantitative results formed the starting point for developing the interview scenario and guiding the qualitative analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Participants for the interviews were selected purposively, with the criteria for inclusion being both willingness to participate and representation of diverse organizational units within the studied institution to ensure maximum variation of perspectives (Patton, 2015). In total, 8 interviews were conducted.

The total duration of all interviews was just over 7 hours. Each interview was transcribed and edited for language clarity while preserving the original meaning of respondents' statements. The analysis was carried out using NVivo software, and the analytical process involved multiple rounds of coding- open, axial (ordering), and analytical- conducted within an abductive paradigm (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Hulst & Visser, 2024; Conaty, 2021).

The interview guide contained questions addressing issues such as: interpretation of one's own engagement, ways of coping with challenges at work, manifestations of self-efficacy in daily tasks, and organizational factors influencing work activity. All questions were open-ended to provide respondents the freedom to express and elaborate, which is consistent with recommendations for conducting in-depth interviews in organizational research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

For the purpose of reporting the results, quotes that were most prevalent in the transcripts and key to particular categories were selected. To preserve full anonymity of the participants, quotes are labeled with symbols R1, R2, R3, R4, and so on.

Finally, it is worth noting that the use of a mixed approach allowed for triangulation of results and integration of data of different natures, which increased interpretative validity and enabled a deeper understanding of the relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement among local government administration employees (Fetters, Curry & Creswell, 2013).

3. Results

In the first stage of the survey analysis, the level of self-efficacy measured by the GSES was evaluated. The GSES score typically ranges from 10 to 40; in this study it ranged from 13 (lowest value) to 39 (highest value), with an average score of $M = 29.90$ ($SD = 4.68$).

According to this assessment, 58.8% of participants exhibited a high level of self-efficacy, 29.8% a medium level, and 11.4% a low level. Detailed results are presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Level of self-efficacy among employees (N=272)

Sten score	Score	N	%
1-4 (scores 10-24)	Low	31	11.4
5-6 (scores 25-29)	Average	81	29.8
7-10 (scores 30-40)	High	160	58.8
Total		272	100%

Source: *own study*

The mean item scores for the individual GSES statements ranged from 2.37 to 3.47, with an overall mean of 2.99.

The highest average rating, $M = 3.47$, was for the seventh questionnaire item (“When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions”), which mainly measures one’s confidence in their ability to generate alternative strategies to handle encountered difficulties. Respondents’ comments suggest that this ability is practical in nature and relies on organizational experience and a flexible approach to problems: “If I can’t solve a given problem one way, I immediately try another. I check the procedure, use my professional contacts, ask colleagues. I don’t give up easily.” (R1) Another employee noted: “Practice and experience cause several scenarios for handling a single case to form in my mind, which is helpful, especially when things get complicated and the first idea for a solution fails or turns out to be impossible for various reasons.” (R5)

The second highest score, $M = 3.19$, was for the first statement (“I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough”). This item measures an individual’s belief in their ability to effectively solve challenging problems provided sufficient effort is invested. In the interviews, this topic emerged as a conviction about the necessity of carrying a task through to completion. One interviewee remarked: “When a task is difficult and complex, I know that it’s not so much a question of whether I will actually do it, but rather how long it will take me. There are no tasks that cannot be done; you have to break down the issue and get it done.” (R3) Participants also pointed to the importance of being systematic in one’s work: “You can’t allow yourself to put things off or pretend that a difficult task doesn’t exist. It’s best to tackle it immediately and carry it out step by step.” (R1)

The third highest score, $M = 3.12$, was for the penultimate statement (“If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution”). This item gauges one’s belief in their ability to independently

find a solution in a difficult situation. In the interviews, respondents described this ability as the skill of breaking down a problem under conditions of work pressure: “In crisis situations, I break the problem down into smaller parts; I try to first complete the part that is most urgent or strategic, and I also think about whom I can involve for support or advice in areas that are unclear to me.” (R4). They also highlighted the need to make decisions independently: “There isn’t always someone I can ask for advice, so my first step is always to recall the laws and regulations, in which I often find the solution.” (R5)

The same result as the previous item ($M = 3.12$) was obtained for the fifth item (“Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations”), which examines the belief in one’s efficacy in dealing with unpredictable situations. In the interviews, this ability was understood as the skill of mobilizing resources: “When a situation is crisis-like and unpredictable, I try not to panic, but to look for a solution.” (R6). At the same time, some participants underscored the burdensome nature of unpredictable situations: “In my job, surprise tasks are everyday life; I wish it were a bit calmer.” (R7); “Sudden situations stress me out; they make me lose my sense of professional security.” (R2).

A comparable result ($M=3.10$) was achieved by the last item (“I can usually handle whatever comes my way”), which is intended to measure one’s belief in their ability to deal with a variety of demands and difficulties. Most respondents indicated that they can handle whatever happens to them professionally, but they emphasized the need to frequently adapt to changing organizational conditions: “The variety of tasks in my department is quite large, starting from contact with external people, through verifying current documents, up to carrying out long-term tasks.” (R7)

The final item with an average above 3.00 was the third statement (“It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals”), with $M = 3.03$. It measures an individual’s belief in their ability to consistently pursue set goals. In discussions with respondents, this was reflected as maintaining priorities despite organizational disruptions: “I stick to the set goals that I consider most important. Even if additional, side issues arise, then after dealing with them I return to the main course of my duties and concentrate on achieving the key goals.” (R1)

The item closest to the overall mean ($M = 2.98$) was the seventh statement (“I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities”), which gauges one’s belief in their capacity to stay calm in the face of difficulties thanks to confidence in their own coping skills. Respondents stressed that their composure and calm were professional and procedural in nature: “In official situations I never show any worry in front of people from outside the office, but it happens that I feel it afterward in my personal life- I have to let it out.” (R4). Others pointed to the necessity of developed adaptive mechanisms: “Calm saves every situation, and one needs to learn it. Experience and practice help; it doesn’t come overnight.” (R5)

The lowest scores pertained to three items: the sixth, second, and fourth (“I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort”: $M = 2.85$; “If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want”: $M = 2.67$; “I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events”: $M = 2.37$). Respondents’ statements allow these results to be interpreted in the context of structural constraints: “I can do everything I can, but if a signature is missing, the matter won’t move forward.” (R2). The issue of others’ opposition was addressed with a degree of caution: “I’m not a confrontational person; I don’t escalate tensions; instead, I seek a formal solution and don’t force anyone to agree with me.” (R3); “I don’t get into conflict because I consider it destructive and draining of energy.” (R6). Moreover, some events were associated by respondents with work overload and high time pressure: “The worst for me are situations when a difficult case comes up unexpectedly, overnight.” (R7). It should be noted that these three items measure the belief in one’s own effort in problem-solving, the

ability to achieve goals despite opposition, and handling unexpected events. Detailed quantitative results for each GSES item are presented in *Figure 2*.

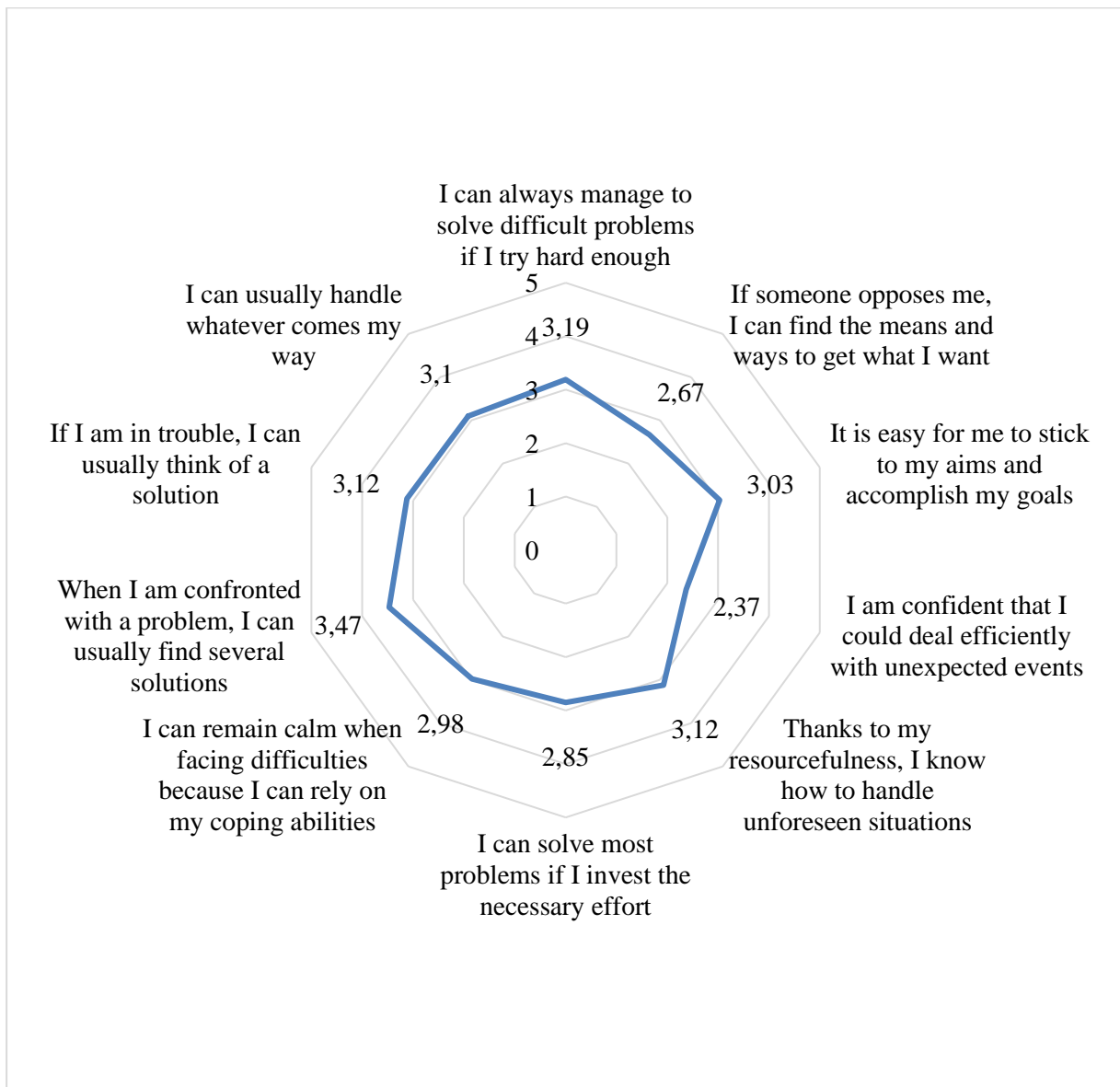


Figure 2. Distribution of responses to the GSES questionnaire

Source: *own study*

No statistically significant differences were observed between women and men-women had an average GSES score of 29.7, while men had 30.17. The lack of between-group differences is further supported by the Mann-Whitney U test ($U = 9828.5$, $p = 0.199$).

Analysis of the results by respondents' age indicates that in all age groups the highest percentage of scores were high, ranging from 52.4% to 65.5%. The second most frequent category was average scores (22.2% to 35.1%), whereas the smallest share was low scores (ranging from 9.1% to 22.2%). Detailed results are shown in *Figure 3*.

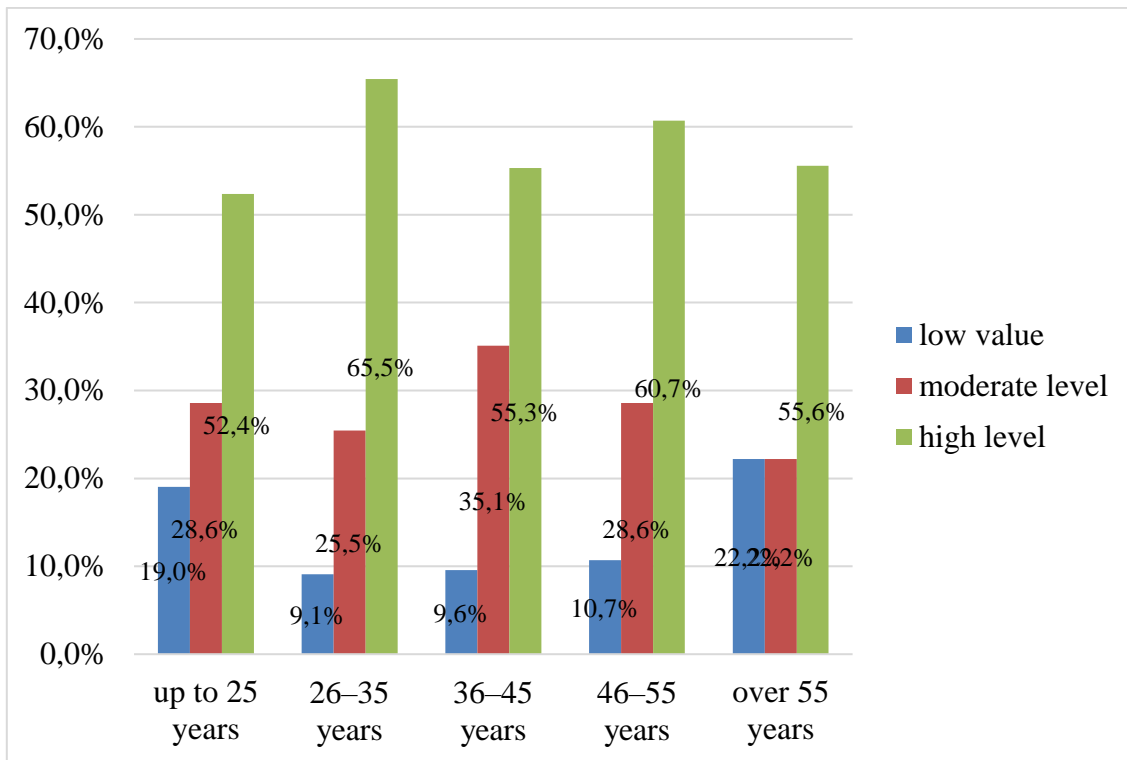


Figure 3. GSES questionnaire results by age of respondents

Source: own study

A nonparametric one-way ANOVA (Kruskal-Wallis test) revealed no statistically significant difference among the age groups ($H = 4.60$, $p = 0.331$).

Analyzing the data by respondents' length of service in the studied unit revealed variation in self-efficacy levels between groups. The highest proportion of high self-efficacy scores was noted among employees with the shortest tenure (below 1 year- 71.4%) and in the group with over 20 years of tenure (70.0%). The lowest percentage of high scores was observed in the 6-10 years tenure group (50.0%). Regarding average scores, the highest percentage was found in that same tenure group (6-10 years- 37.5%) and the lowest among employees with the shortest tenure (below 1 year- 17.1%). Low self-efficacy levels were relatively minimal across all groups, ranging from 6.3% to 17.5%.

The distribution of scores points to a clear trend: employees with less than 1 year of tenure in the unit exhibit a relatively highest level of self-efficacy, which then declines, reaching its lowest values in the 6-10 years tenure group. After this period, the trend reverses, and self-efficacy levels rise again, peaking among those with more than 20 years of tenure. A different pattern applies to average self-efficacy results, whose percentage increases early in the career up to 6–10 years of tenure, then steadily decreases. The smallest changes were observed for low self-efficacy levels, whose share remains relatively stable regardless of tenure length. This observed statistical pattern corresponds with the qualitative findings: respondents with shorter tenure in the unit (< 1 year and 1-5 years) described a high level of self-efficacy and adaptive motivation, whereas those with 6-10 years of service pointed to procedural burden and organizational pressure. In turn, respondents with the longest tenure (> 20 years) emphasized the role of experience in rebuilding and stabilizing self-efficacy. The detailed distribution of quantitative results is presented in *Figure 4*.

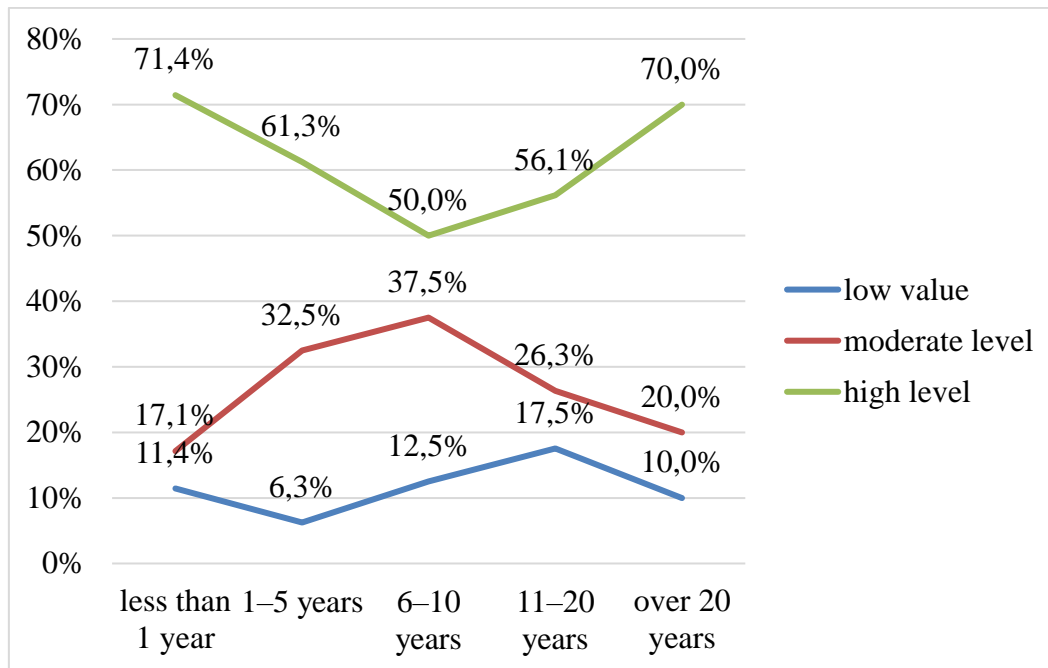


Figure 4. GSES questionnaire results by respondents' job tenure
Source: *own study*

Additionally, a Kruskal–Wallis ANOVA test found no statistically significant difference between the tenure groups ($H = 0.95$, $p = 0.917$).

A Shapiro–Wilk test was performed to assess the normality of the GSES score distribution. The results indicate a significant deviation from normality ($W = 0.95$, $p < 0.001$). The descriptive statistics show a unimodal distribution with slight skewness, which means it can be regarded as approximately normal. Detailed results are presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of GSES questionnaire results (N=272)

Descriptive statistic	GSES
Mean	29.90
Standard error	0.28
Median	31.00
Mode	34.00
Standard deviation	4.68
Sample variance	21.92
Kurtosis	1.02
Skewness	-0.90
Range	26.00
Minimum	13.00
Maximum	39.00

Source: *own study*

In the second part of the study, work engagement was measured using the UWES. Overall, 12.5% of respondents achieved low engagement scores, 80.1% medium, and 7.4% high. Detailed data are presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4. Level of work engagement among local government administration employees (N=272)

Average score	Level	N	%
0.0 - 2.9	Low	34	12.5
3.0 - 4.4	Average	218	80.1
4.5 - 6.0	High	20	7.4
Total		272	100.0

Source: *own study*

The UWES results ranged from 0.67 to 5.00, with a mean of $M = 3.66$ and a standard deviation of $SD = 0.73$. Among the three components, participants scored highest on the absorption subscale ($M = 3.78$), which was above the overall mean of the instrument. The second highest subscale was dedication ($M = 3.63$), and the lowest was vigor ($M = 3.56$). These results indicate a moderate level of work engagement both overall and within each component. Detailed data are presented in *Table 5*.

Table 5. Level of work engagement among local government administration employees by subscale (N=272)

UWES Subscale	Mean	Standard deviation
Vigor	3.56	0.82
Dedication	3.63	0.97
Absorption	3.78	0.92
Overall	3.66	0.73

Source: *own study*

The mean scores for the individual UWES statements ranged from 3.24 to 4.19. The highest average was recorded for the statement “I feel happy when I am working intensely” from the dedication subscale ($M = 4.19$), which was the only item exceeding four points. This finding corresponded with respondents’ statements, who indicated that an intense workload is satisfying and enhances the sense of meaning in their tasks: “When I have a lot of tasks to do, I feel that I’m needed at my workplace.” (R1) Another respondent emphasized: “Having a large number of responsibilities makes me feel responsible for the institution, and that feeling gives me pleasure.” (R3).

The next two highest-rated statements belonged to the absorption subscale: “I get carried away when I’m working” ($M = 3.87$) and “I am immersed in my work” ($M = 3.81$). In the qualitative research, absorption appeared in respondents’ comments about being “drawn into” tasks and losing the sense of time while working: “When I’m doing an important task, I try to be 100% engaged in it, to the point that sometimes I lose track of time.” (R3); “When a topic is difficult, it often absorbs me completely.” (R8)

Also noteworthy is the statement “I am proud of the work that I do” from the same subscale, which obtained an average of $M = 3.66$. Participants’ accounts allowed a better understanding of this point, showing that the reported pride was linked to experiencing self-efficacy and the belief that their work produces results: “I feel proud when I can help solve a city resident’s problem.” (R8); “Pride comes when I know that my work made something change for the better.” (R6); “I feel proud when I know for myself that the task couldn’t have been done any better.” (R2)

A similar result was noted for the statement “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” from the vigor subscale ($M = 3.70$). Interview results illustrated that for respondents, “energy” was a situational variable- it depended on workload, time pressure, and the quality of teamwork. “I generally have a lot of energy, especially when we can work as a team, and that happens

often and I really like it. Working on my own is less energizing.” (R5); “On some days I have little energy, but that’s because there are too many tasks, which overwhelms me and drains my energy.” (R7)

The lowest-rated items were two from the vigor dimension- “I am enthusiastic about my job” (M = 3.54) and “At my job, I feel strong and vigorous” (M = 3.45)- as well as two statements from the dedication subscale: “When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work” (M = 3.46) and “My job inspires me” (M = 3.24). The interview findings in this respect also aligned with the quantitative data. The lower scores regarding enthusiasm and inspiration were explained by respondents in terms of task routine, formalization, and rigidity of procedures. Participants stressed that procedural constraints reduce the emotional component of engagement, despite their pronounced sense of responsibility: “I wouldn’t describe myself as professionally enthusiastic- rather responsible and dutiful.” (R2); “I value stability and certainty in my work, but I don’t know if I would call it inspiring.” (R7). Additionally, the statement “When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work” revealed an ambivalent pattern of morning motivation, one that was highly dependent on the expected workload. Respondents noted that their readiness to start the day was greater on occasions of predictable stability, and weaker when facing anticipated difficulties: “When I know a calm and stable day awaits me, I’m eager to go to work.” (R5); “It’s hardest to go to work when you already know that inevitable tension or conflict awaits.” (R7). Detailed quantitative results for the individual UWES statements are presented in *Figure 5*.

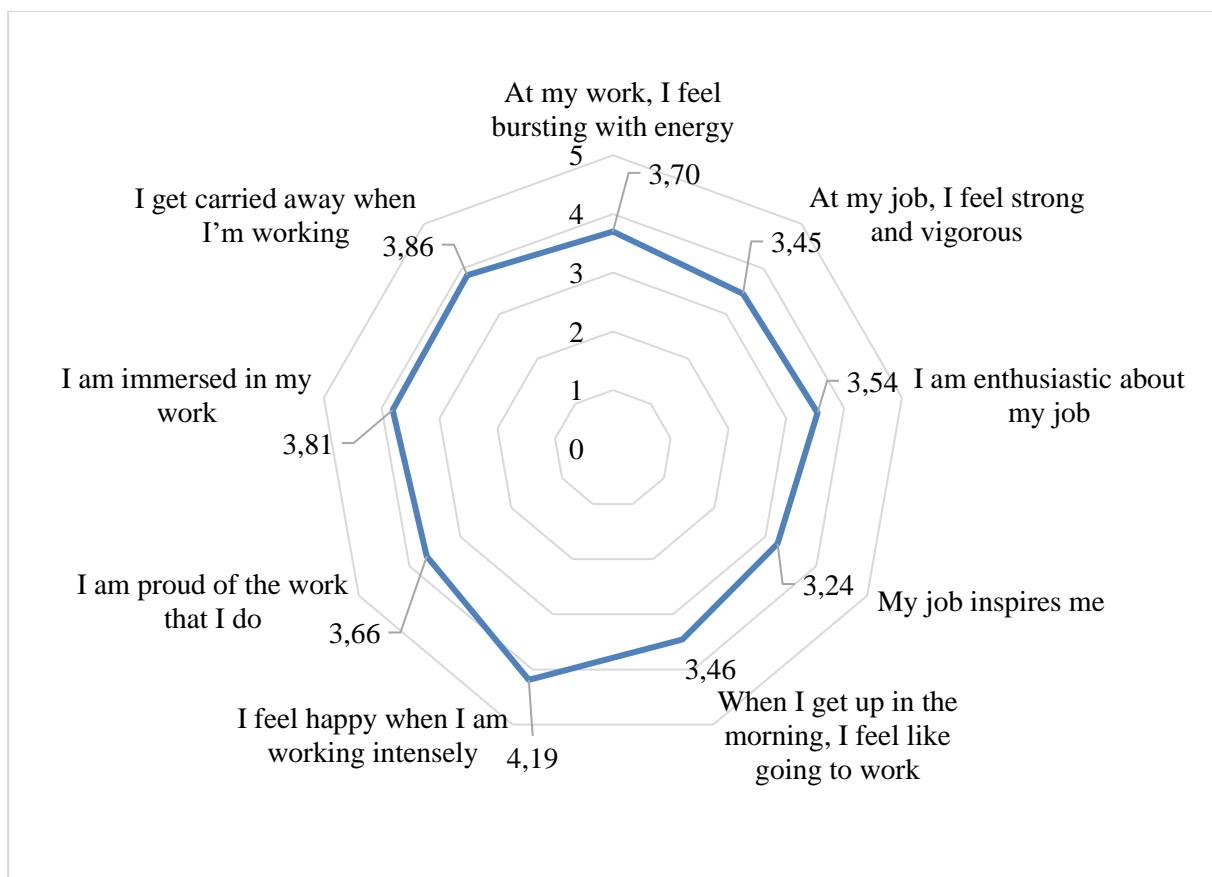


Figure 5. Distribution of responses to the UWES questionnaire

Source: *own study*

Taking into account respondents' gender, no statistically significant differences were observed in the declared engagement level (mean score for women: 3.67; for men: 3.64). This is also confirmed by the Mann-Whitney U test ($U = 8515.5$, $p = 0.623$).

Analyzing the various age groups, no statistically significant differences were noted either. The lowest mean score was for respondents aged 46–55 ($M = 3.52$) and the highest for those aged 36–45 ($M = 3.78$). Detailed results are presented in *Figure 6*.

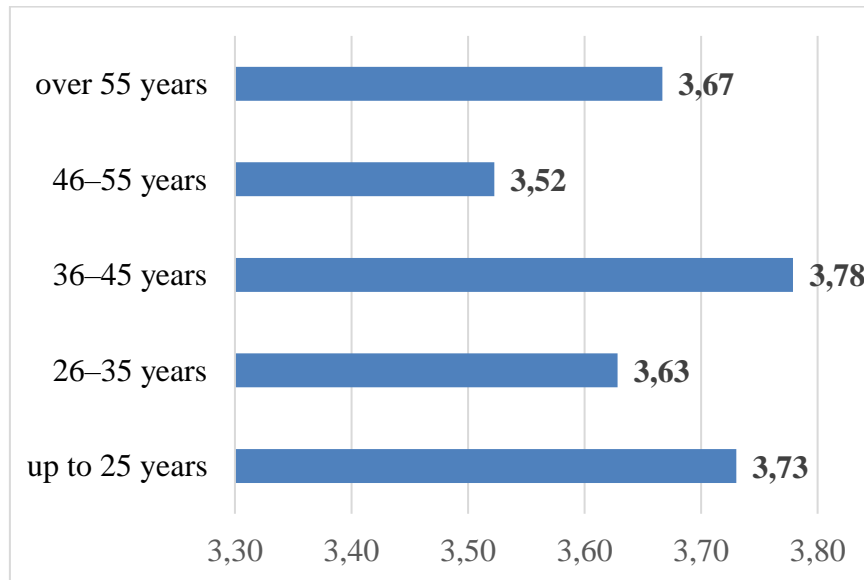


Figure 6. UWES questionnaire results by respondents' age

Source: *own study*

The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test did not confirm any statistically significant differences among the age groups ($H = 0.87$, $p = 0.833$). An analogous conclusion applies to the results of each subscale across the age groups.

Analysis of respondents' answers by tenure in the studied unit did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the defined groups. In all tenure categories, scores classified as average dominated. Both low and high engagement scores had relatively the lowest percentage shares. Detailed data are shown in *Figure 7*.

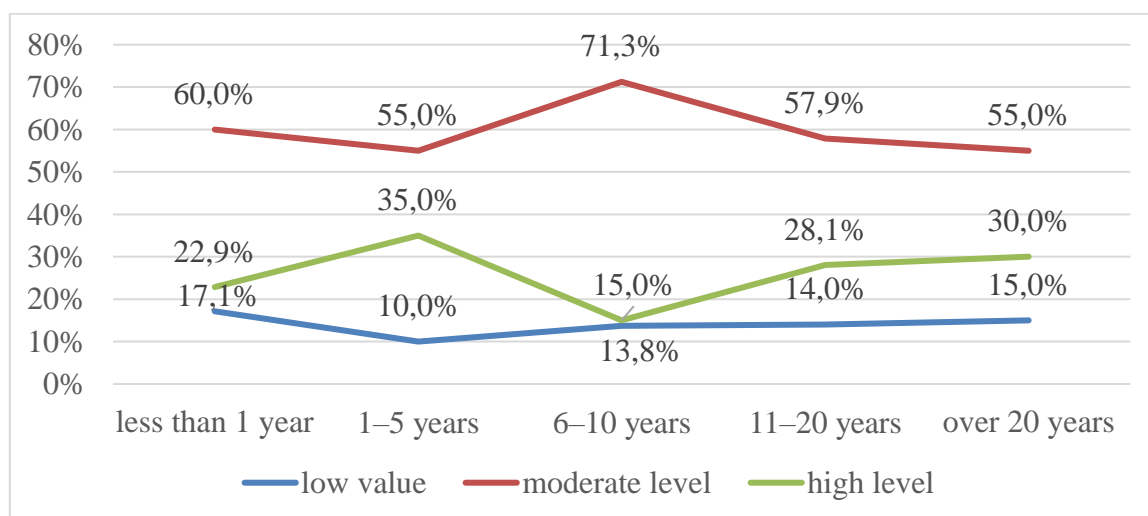


Figure 7. UWES questionnaire results by respondents' job tenure

Source: *own study*

Furthermore, a Shapiro–Wilk test was conducted to assess conformity with a normal distribution. Detailed results are presented in *Tables 6* and *Table 7*.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of UWES results (N=272)

Descriptive statistic	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Overall
Mean	3.56	3.63	3.78	3.66
Standard error	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.04
Median	3.67	3.67	4.00	3.78
Mode	3.33	3.67	4.00	4.22
Standard deviation	0.82	0.97	0.92	0.73
Variance	0.68	0.95	0.84	0.53
Kurtosis	2.50	1.60	0.79	2.41
Skewness	-0.69	-1.09	-0.74	-1.31
Range	5.67	5.67	5.33	4.33
Minimum	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.67
Maximum	6.00	5.67	5.67	5.00

Source: *own study*

Table 7. Normality tests of UWES results (N=272)

UWES Subscale	Shapiro–Wilk W	p-value*
Vigor	0.909	p < 0.001
Dedication	0.903	p < 0.001
Absorption	0.918	p < 0.001
Overall score	0.952	p < 0.001

* p < 0.05.

Source: *own study*

The Shapiro–Wilk test confirmed a significant deviation from normality for the overall engagement score, as well as for each subscale. However, considering that the sample size is large (over 270 respondents) and given the visual analysis and descriptive statistics indicating unimodal distributions with moderate left skew, all data can be considered close to normal. The absence of significant differences with respect to gender, age, and tenure was also reflected in the interviews, where respondents- regardless of demographic characteristics- described engagement primarily through the prism of current task load and the nature of interactions with clients, rather than as stable individual dispositions.

Moving on to the verification of the main hypothesis (H1), which assumes that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement among local government administration employees, Spearman’s rank correlation test was applied. The analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($\rho = 0.14$, $p = 0.020$). However, the strength of this relationship should be interpreted as weak. Detailed data are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Spearman rank correlation matrix between GSES and UWES results (N=272)

Variables (GSES – UWES)	Spearman ρ	p-value*
Vigor	0.18	0.002
Dedication	0.12	0.048
Absorption	0.22	0.0003
Overall engagement	0.14	0.020

* p < 0.05.

Source: *own study*

The first specific hypothesis (H1a) assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and employees' vigor. Spearman's correlation analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship between these variables ($\rho = 0.18$; $p = 0.002$). Nevertheless, the observed relationship should be interpreted as weak in strength (see Table 8).

The second specific hypothesis (H1b) assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and employees' dedication. Spearman's rho also indicated a statistically significant relationship ($\rho = 0.12$; $p = 0.048$). However, the strength of this relationship was weak (see Table 8).

The third specific hypothesis (H1c) assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and employees' absorption. Following the adopted procedure, Spearman's rank correlation was statistically significant, indicating an association between these two variables ($\rho = 0.22$; $p < 0.001$). However, this association should also be interpreted as weak in strength (see Table 8).

4. Discussion

The results of the study supported the main research hypothesis (H1), which assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and employees' work engagement. This finding is consistent with Bandura's social-cognitive theory (1997) and with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; 2017). The results indicate that employees are characterized by a relatively high level of self-efficacy. Based on respondents' statements, this level is related to professional experience, familiarity with regulations and procedures, and practical organizational knowledge. It should be emphasized that this is a qualitative conclusion, not a statistical predictor. This finding corresponds with earlier public-sector research, which highlights that self-efficacy functions as a buffer against formal pressure and excessive procedural demands (Vigoda-Gadot & Meiri, 2008; Rainey, 2014). In the public sector, personal resources, including self-efficacy, play a role in weakening the negative impact of high job demands on employee well-being (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Cross-sector evidence confirms this pattern: in hospitality organizations, sustainable personnel management has been shown to enhance both employee engagement and organizational commitment, demonstrating the generalizability of the JD-R model's predictions beyond the public sector (Vovk & Vovk, 2024). The supplementary qualitative research indicated that self-efficacy has an ambivalent character. Respondents primarily pointed out structural constraints on their autonomy stemming from the hierarchical structure of their workplace, decision-making dependencies, and formalities. These factors lowered their subjective sense of agency in situations that required efficient and quick responses to crises, which also corresponds with the findings of Wright and Pandey (2008), who noted that in the public sector self-efficacy more frequently relates to executive rather than decision-making competencies.

Specific hypothesis H1a, which assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and vigor, was supported by the study. Self-efficacy was found to be significantly associated with vigor, and respondents with higher self-efficacy reported greater energy, mental resilience, and willingness to invest effort at work. This was the case even in the face of difficult and unpredictable situations. This outcome aligns with the findings of Xanthopoulou and colleagues (2007), who indicate that self-efficacy is a primary mechanism initiating the so-called gain spiral. This conclusion is also in line with research by Salanova, Llorens, and Schaufeli (2011), who emphasize that positive work experiences strengthen the sense of competence, which in turn is associated with higher levels of energy and work motivation. Analyzing respondents' interview responses suggests that vigor was dependent on situational context, mainly the intensity of tasks and the quality of collaboration within the team. This

confirms the relational and dynamic nature of work engagement pointed out by Bakker and Demerouti (2017). The results also fit into the meta-analysis by Christian, Garza, and Slaughter (2011), who emphasize that vigor, as a component of engagement, is particularly strongly linked to personal resources that enable the mobilization of energy under conditions of high work demands.

Specific hypothesis H1b, which assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and dedication, was also supported by the study. Self-efficacy was significantly associated with the level of dedication, understood as identification with one's work, a sense of its purpose, and pride in one's professional role (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). This is particularly important in the context of local government administration, where prosocial motives play an invaluable role in shaping employee attitudes (Perry et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2012). As Sweetman and Luthans (2010) point out, a high level of self-efficacy can strengthen positive interpretation of one's work and may be associated with the perception of one's professional role as meaningful. According to Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010), the sense of work meaning is shaped, among other things, by beliefs about one's own agency and real influence on the organizational environment. The analysis of respondents' statements additionally indicates that dedication was driven more by a sense of professional responsibility and professionalism than by enthusiasm, and this is in line with the specificity of work in the public sector, where dedication often takes the form of duty (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004a; Kim & Beehr, 2017). Such a profile of dedication supports the stability of public organizations' functioning, though it simultaneously limits the expression of enthusiasm and innovativeness among employees.

Specific hypothesis H1c, which assumed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and absorption, was also supported by the study. Spearman's correlation showed a statistically significant relationship between the variables, although the strength of this relationship was weak. This means that higher self-efficacy is associated with a higher level of absorption, but the relationship should be interpreted with caution.

Considering theory and existing studies, this result is consistent with the assumptions of the JD-R model, according to which self-efficacy, as a personal resource, is associated with better work functioning and higher engagement, although this relationship may not manifest itself with the same strength in each of the three engagement dimensions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; 2017). It should also be noted that absorption describes a deep emotional and cognitive "immersion" in work and, simultaneously, difficulty in detaching from tasks (Schaufeli et al., 2002), which in practice depends on the specifics of job tasks.

Absorption is often more strongly linked than the other engagement components to the nature of work that requires long-term concentration, a high level of cognitive autonomy, and the capability of carrying out tasks with clearly defined goals and measurable outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). In the context of local government administration, fragmented work, frequent interruptions, interactions with clients, and procedural formalism may limit the possibility of achieving a state of deep cognitive absorption, even among employees with a relatively high sense of self-efficacy (Demerouti et al., 2015). Moreover, absorption is conceptually similar to the experience of flow which, according to classical concepts, occurs when the level of challenges is matched to an individual's competencies and when the work organization is supportive (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Salanova et al., 2014).

For this reason, the confirmed relationship between self-efficacy and absorption should not be interpreted as strong or deterministic. Rather, it suggests that self-efficacy may be associated with employees' ability to become cognitively and emotionally involved in work tasks, but this association is likely conditioned by the organizational and procedural characteristics of administrative work. The interpretation adopted here indicates that the nature

of local government administration may shape the extent to which employees' personal resources are reflected in the absorption dimension of work engagement.

On the basis of the conducted analyses, several key conclusions can be formulated. First, self-efficacy functions in the local government administration sector as an important personal resource associated with employees' work engagement, including its three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Second, the nature of this engagement has a sector-specific profile; in other words, it is more strongly rooted in responsibility and procedural agency than in emotional enthusiasm. Third, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, even if only as a supplementary category, allows us to notice that high self-efficacy does not eliminate organizational tensions, but may support more effective coping with them. In particular, the engagement of the studied employees takes the form of task and cognitive concentration, which is reflected in the relatively highest scores obtained in the absorption dimension. At the same time, the moderate level of vigor and dedication indicates that this engagement is stable and functional rather than intensely emotional, which is consistent with respondents' statements emphasizing the importance of professionalism, responsibility, and coping with procedural pressure.

5. Conclusion

Although the conducted research provides important and interesting findings in the area of human resource management, it is necessary to point out the limitations of the adopted perspective. Importantly, the qualitative research only served as a supplement and commentary to the main quantitative research. Adopting a sequential QUAN -> qual research approach is a limitation in terms of integrating research methods. It should be noted here that the qualitative research using partially structured interviews was not designed as a part of the research strategy, which limits the possibilities for full triangulation of results. Next, the research was carried out in one administrative unit, which means that the results cannot be widely generalized and is also a limiting factor. Also notable is that the voluntary sampling applied in the second stage of the quantitative research entails the risk that more engaged and motivated employees participated, which could have influenced the distribution of results.

These noted limitations somewhat indicate directions for further research, which could be conducted in multiple units with results compared, allowing for a broader perspective and increasing the possibilities for generalizing results. It is also recommended to conduct longitudinal studies and time-based analyses that would capture the dynamics of self-efficacy and work engagement and allow an assessment of the durability of the observed relationships between these two concepts. It should also be pointed out that there is a need to include additional moderators in the analysis, e.g. leadership and organizational climate, which may modify the strength and direction of the relationship between self-efficacy and the level of work engagement.

The conducted research allows for the formulation of several practical implications important from the point of view of human resource management in local government administration. It should be emphasized that there is a need to design development activities that place particular emphasis on building a sense of agency among employees, which may be associated with their work engagement. It is also worthwhile to focus more attention on training in leadership style that should place greater weight on the role of feedback as a strong mechanism reinforcing the shaping of desired organizational behaviors and on building relationships based on trust and recognition. These measures can contribute to increased engagement, as well as improvement in employees' psychological well-being and the quality of the public services they provide.

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