**Paradox of Talent Management in Nonprofit Organizations.**

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are important players in achieving societal goals. Although the research on human resource management (HRM) in NPOs is growing, it mainly focuses on recruitment and retention of volunteers (Brewster & Cerdin, 2018; Baluch & Ridder, 2021). Significantly less is known about different aspects of HRM in NPOs and how the most valuable employees, namely “talents” are managed (Akingbola et al., 2013; Thunnissen et al., 2013). However, resources are often seen as a key factor in innovation (Meyer & Leitner, 2018), and talent management could be one of the important resources for NPOs especially in the times of crisis and social upheavals.

In this study, we explore such an important phenomenon as talent management (TM) in NPOs in Russia – identification of key people in the organizations and differently managing them, as compared to other employees. The paradox in NPOs is operationalized in the following way. On the one hand, NPOs are often considered as using “family-based” practices, promoting egalitarian principles, and supporting every member in their development (e.g., Ridder et al., 2012). On the other hand, NPOs often experience resource constraints and are pushed to allocate their resources carefully and selectively to those employees that are considered as the most valuable. Such differentiated management toward only valuable few might be perceived as unfair by the rest of the employees, trigger negative emotions among them and subsequent behavior (e.g., low work efforts, quitting intentions) (Sumelius et al., 2020). Therefore, in this study we try to understand how talent managers balance between egalitarian supportive culture for everyone (namely “soft” TM) and significant recognition of the selected few (“hard” TM) (Thunnissen et al., 2013; Kravariti & Johnston, 2020). Following grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1997; Gioia, 2021), we interviewed 20 talent executives from 20 different NPOs in Russia. Using inductive and abductive approaches in our analysis (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007), we found and conceptualized three approaches that NPO executives use to balance the “soft” and “hard” TM logics. Understanding how NPO executives explain their intentions and actual implementations of TM sheds light on this paradox, helps us to better understand the mechanism of TM in the third sector and provides fruitful ground for developing recommendations, especially in the times of during and after crisis and social upheavals.