

Abstract

Public image of social workers – the role of the media in shaping the image of the profession

Social workers are one of the key professional groups of the social assistance system. By law, social work is defined as professional activity that aims to help individuals and families in strengthening or regaining their ability to function in society by performing appropriate social roles and creating conditions conducive to this goal.

The profession of a social worker is one of the regulated professions, i.e. the possibility of performing it fully depends on meeting formal criteria, including, above all, having the appropriate education, which guarantees having the right knowledge and skills. Statutory regulations also cover the professional development path of a social worker, the system of professional promotion and the need to undergo periodic employee evaluations, as well as the guarantee of access to supervision. All this is aimed at ensuring an appropriate standard of services provided by representatives of this profession.

Unfortunately, high qualification requirements do not go hand in hand with the high prestige of the profession, which is relatively low compared to other professions, such as teaching, computer science or medicine. In the light of the research cited in this paper, a large part of social workers blames, among others, media which, in their opinion, show a negative image of employees of the social assistance system.

This stereotypical belief, shared by social workers, became an impulse to conduct research, the results of which are presented in this paper, and the aim of which was to find an answer to the question “How are social workers presented in the media?”.

This paper consists of four chapters and a conclusion.

The first chapter contains: a description of the evolution of the social assistance system (from charitable organizations operating before 1923, through the social assistance system, to the current social assistance system), public perception of the social assistance system in the light of the results of surveys conducted by CBOS, a description of public relations activities used in public institutions and a description of the promotion of social assistance as part of projects implemented with the European Union funds, with particular emphasis on the series entitled “Głęboka woda”.

The **second chapter** consists of a presentation of: the history of the development of the social worker profession in Poland (from social workers to professionals), the process of professionalization of the profession (including the strengths and weaknesses of the formation of the social worker profession in Poland), the system of principles and values that should be followed in professional duties of representatives of the profession (with particular emphasis on the client’s right to self-determination), areas of activity of social workers and the difficulties and dangers associated with practicing social work (including exposure to occupational burnout).

The research methodology was presented in the **third chapter** – the methods, techniques and tools used in the research process were indicated, including content analysis and survey

research. This chapter also presents the organization of the research, defines the purpose of the research and formulates the research questions.

The results of own research and the resulting conclusions regarding the image of a social worker are presented in the **fourth chapter**.

This paper ends with a **conclusion**, which includes a summary of the research results and recommendations based on them, including for social welfare institutions.

Keywords: social worker, social work, social assistance, media, public relations, external communication, image, press, intervention program, media relations, society relations