

## Personality of Social Worker

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### *Abstract*

This article provides insight into the performance of social work by social workers. The article briefly describes the concepts of social work, social worker, and personality. Social work is a profession that promotes the healthy development of human ties and the right social changes in society, leading to greater prosperity and solidarity. Through social work, therefore, professionals are social workers who are to act on certain positive factors related to an individual, group or community. In the theoretical paper we examine the specifics of the performance of professional social work by social workers. We can say that social work is important in this millennium because it focuses on relations between subjects and their surroundings.

**Keywords:** social worker, social work, client, help.

### 1. Introduction

The aim of the paper is to characterize the competences and personality of the social worker, which are enshrined in the Code of Ethics of the social worker. At the same time, it is the first, basic and most important element in his own profession. Through the paper, we will discuss the common characteristics of what a graduate social worker as a personality should meet. A period of changes, reforms, socialization and interconnection of countries has led to high demands on social workers today. It is very important nowadays to discuss theoretical and practical questions, goals and issues from various humanitarian areas of the social sciences. Talk and write about their interconnection, determination and collaboration of scientific disciplines, such as management, economics, etc. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for differences between people are at the heart of social work. Social work is suitable for people with empathy.

### 2. Social work

Social work is a profession that promotes the healthy development of human ties and the right social changes in society, leading to greater prosperity and solidarity. Through social work, therefore, professionals are social workers who are to act on certain positive factors related to an individual, group or community. Social work finds its theoretical and methodological foundations in the field of social sciences and humanities.

The aim of social work is to improve the living conditions of people in unfavorable social structures through theories of social work and other humanities, social sciences. Social work is essential to promote the quality of life in accordance with universal human rights (Balvín & Prokaiová, 2013).

Therefore, we can say that social work is focused on relations between subjects and their surroundings. Social work has a long and proud history of engagement and struggle for social justice, solidarity and a common social well-being.

Pursuant to Act No. 219/2014 Z.z. on social work and on the conditions for carrying out certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and family and on amendments to certain acts<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter referred to as the “Social Work Act”), it is stipulated that social work is defined as:

“Professional activity performed social worker or social work assistant for the purpose stipulated by a special regulation. A professional activity is a set of work activities for which the knowledge and skills acquired by completing a university degree in a social work field of study are necessary.”

Social work as a scientific discipline is focused on relations between subjects and their environment. Its purpose is to explore and convey human beings to be able to develop fully. We can say that it ultimately seeks to make positive changes to an individual, group, or community. Social work is a professional activity that seeks to promote the healthy development of human ties and social changes that lead to prosperity not only of the individual but also of the society in which it is located and manifested (Tokárová et al., 2009).

Slovak authors Botek, Žáková and Bánovičová (2017: 7) define social work:

“As a practice-based profession and a scientific discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, strengthens people's rights and freedom. It is based on the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for differences. Supported by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and traditional knowledge, social work engages people and structures in addressing life challenges and enhances social well-being.”

The International Federation of Social Workers (2014), through the General Assembly of IFSW and IASSW, approved a global definition of the profession in social work. They stated that social work is a practice-based profession, but it is also an academic discipline that promotes social change, development, social cohesion and the liberation of people from their life situations of crisis. They also stressed that the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are key to social work. Promoting social and human sciences and original knowledge is important for the development of social work. Furthermore, the involvement of professionals, professionals, but also lay people in a structure that can solve various life challenges to improve the well-being of the country. Finally, the International Federation states that each country can expand or adapt the definition of social work at national or regional level.

We can state that nowadays social work does not only take place in a small office, but it is increasingly common to do fieldwork, monitor, visit clients at home, cooperate and visit other cooperating institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Act No. 219/2014 Z.z. on social work and on the conditions for the performance of certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and the family and on amendments and supplements to certain acts of § 2, paragraph 1.

### 3. Personal and qualification assumptions of the social worker

A social worker works with people who face many social problems and difficulties in their daily lives and help them find solutions to their situations. The work of social workers is broken down by age and type of social problem.

According to the Social Work Act,<sup>2</sup> “social worker and social work assistant apply approaches corresponding to the aim of social work performed and the knowledge of social work department using professional methods of work depending on the focus of social work. Social work shall be a social worker and social work assistant in conjunction with other professional activities in the fields of psychology, law, medicine, education, sociology and other fields.”

In order to perform the role of a professional social worker, one has to fulfill certain personality requirements. Everyone cannot do social work because one is unique and versatile. As in other professions, in social work, a social worker must meet certain specifications, such as: empathy, values, abilities, endurance, coherence, etc. Of course, the social worker is growing through long-term education and the practice of social work. We can state that education is an important tool for a social worker to perform efficiently at work (Morongová, 2017).

A social worker is a trained expert to identify the proper functioning and problems of society, community, and human behavior. Promoting equality and distributing justice are key core values for a prosperous society.

“The professional competences of a social worker can be defined as the ability to meet the demands that are placed on the social work profession. However, social work as a helping profession is characterized by the fact that not only the qualifications but also the personality prerequisites of a social worker, which together create professional competencies, are important factors for its effectiveness. In social work, the whole personality of a worker with all the important subsystems such as, e.g. cognition, temperament, character, motivation, will or self-perception, while knowledge, abilities, skills and values appear to be primary.” (Hudecová, 2010: 13)

A social worker is a professional who, through his own professional activities, helps different groups of people. It focuses, e.g., for work with children and young people, persons with severe disabilities, elderly, in material need, inadapted, executed or released from imprisonment, etc. When working with a client, the social worker uses and uses various types of methods and techniques. His work is distinguished from the type of service provided, the type of social security organization and the system area in which he performs his work. These can be areas such as social care, economy, healthcare, volunteering or education (Botek, Žáková & Bánovičová, 2017).

The main role of a social worker is to support and assist individuals, groups of people or the community in various social problems through methods and techniques. The scope of tasks and competencies in working with clients also depends on the area in which the social worker performs social work (Hudecová, Jusko, Vavrinčíková, Wallin Weihe, Gregorová & Papšo, 2010).

He is an expert who initiates useful and timely measures and therefore must, as an expert, offer comprehensive and competent assistance in difficult life situations. They are people in special life situations in which they cannot help themselves. As a professional and expert in the field, a social worker advises and helps clients to solve their social conflicts or difficulties and find their way back to normal everyday human life.

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<sup>2</sup> Act No. 219/2014 Z.z. on social work and on the conditions for the performance of certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and the family and on amendments and supplements to certain acts of § 2 paragraph 3.

The activity of a social worker is not just support, care, help and advice with clients. As part of its work, it carries out organizational, administrative and planning tasks. His basic role in working with clients is evidence, or documentation of individual cases. Through other institutions, they cooperate with other experts and address the social situation of people in difficulty. We can mention that in some social cases social workers act as mediators (Špáníková, 2017).

Social workers work in very diverse institutions; a social services center, a center for children and families, self-governing institutions, etc. We can state and summarize that a social worker supports people of all ages in shaping their own lives and social participation in a country. They may be employees of the state in local authorities and institutions, but they may also belong to the private or third sector.

Author Terlandayová (2007) stated that a social worker as a person should have a good perception and intuition in dealing with social situations and conflicts between people, etc. Of course, in the context of social work, a social worker develops and acquires practice in practice.

Before being called to do social work, one must have a comprehensive education. In our opinion, education must accompany a person during and during his development in psychosomatic and all phases of his life. In all his personal and professional circumstances, which should enable him to live a valuable and authentic existence. Education must accompany a person throughout his or her existence. Each state should endeavor to implement systems for its citizens that allow continuous education and open capacities of subjects that prepare citizens to face the different life situations that may arise every day (Brutovská, 2017).

A social worker cannot rely on the initial accumulated knowledge during high school or college. This built-in knowledge will not be long enough for him to work with the client, because as an executive he must constantly update his knowledge. Education must accompany him throughout his work (Schavel, 2012).

Work hazards are protected by team troubleshooting. Supervision is one of the methods of professional support and learning with an external expert who has a good knowledge of a particular professional work and has the ability to lead the way to finding solutions and conducting interviews is a form of supervision among colleagues (Kuffová, 2013).

We can say that a social worker is growing by helping people. In the practice of this profession, there is a risk that a worker gets into a routine that does not lead to his professional and personal growth. Every person should always set new ones after reaching the goal in order to be able to reach new boundaries and development. Building a relationship of trust with clients is a very important part of social work. The social worker must know very well the situation of a person in a bad life situation and decide on the basis of a thorough analysis of all available information available to the client and his surroundings.

### *3.1 Personality traits of social worker*

The term “personality” is derived from the Roman word “persona,” which in translation means the mask of ancient theater. Within psychology, the concept of personality is one of its most important theoretical concepts. In our everyday life we use and experience concepts such as identity, nature, character, temperament, habit and predisposition, or a tendency to something. These terms are synonymous with human personality.

When we specifically focus on the meaning of the word personality, we can characterize it as “what characterizes a person.” In the professional publications, the authors use extensive definitions of the term personality. The meaning of the word personality means in our view the completeness of the individual expression of the person. The basic characteristics of personality manifestation include the way a person behaves, their physical appearance, attitudes,

opinions, values, emotions and inner beliefs. We think that personality is a stable and still present collection of lifelong characters in a human being (Tobiáš, 2012).

“The personality of a social worker depends on quality education, social insight, an integrated summary of traits (honesty, fairness, truthfulness, diligence, moral attitude, raising trust in people) and professional assumptions” (Lešková, 2017: 38).

Among the basic personality traits of a person who wants to perform social work is to be able to show compassion. He should not only perform professionally, but be able to open to the client in an experienced way while respecting his values. This means that part of his work is not just giving, but also exploring how the client perceives his own social reality without being judged for it. The social worker must be able to communicate and listen professionally. As a person, he should have the power to prevent clients' problems from affecting his or her life. The social worker at work should have excellent negotiating skills. He should be able to work in a team through teamwork. It is important to work with other experts. He should have knowledge of local resources and institutions available to help people in poor social situations (Botek, Žáková & Bánovičová, 2017).

A social worker is exposed to stressful situations, emotional stress and professional burnout. Burnout is a phenomenon of slipping into a state of disinterest in an individual and his problem. This happens when problems related to work accumulate or when clients' fear is taken as their own and they lose contact with reality (Tomášková, 2013).

The authors Deer (2009), and Wallin Weihe and Smith Solbakken (2016) agree that a person who performs social work should possess the qualities of a mature personality, such as a person, work discipline, emotional stability, fairness, stamina, stamina, empathy, honesty, initiative, dynamism, responsibility etc. Empathy means having people's ability not to judge for their hard times they are experiencing. The social worker must be patient and give the client time to recognize him as an expert to help in his unfavorable life situation.

The social worker must have the necessary knowledge of social policy. Within the framework of social work, he should possess skills specifically oriented to social issues. He must be willing to communicate, the ability and willingness to listen to others, consistency, responsibility, perspective and distance, representativeness, moral qualities and a capable coordinator in various situations (Pitnerová, 2009).

There are a number of personality traits from experts who identify them and make them a potential good social worker. In our opinion, social workers must have a positive attitude towards people, emotional stability. Furthermore, to bear the difficulties of others, the ability to cooperate with colleagues or other institutions. Have a developed desire to discover the search for solutions in various life situations. It is important to have a sense of reality and the ability to adapt quickly to changing and new situations.

### *3.2 Qualification requirements*

The social work profession has already strengthened and fought against discriminatory structures at national and global levels.

The International Federation of Social Workers (2014) has set the conditions for the social work profession. It stipulated that a social worker must have completed at least three years' post-secondary education in the field of social work. In Slovakia, this means that you must have completed a Bachelor of Arts degree as an assistant and a Master of Arts degree as a social worker. The Federation also determines certain personality requirements for a person who wants to

become a social worker, such as empathy, integrity, secrecy, moral ambition and the like. As a professional he should be interested in lifelong learning in the field.

In Slovakia, according to the Act on Social Work<sup>3</sup>: “Qualification prerequisite for the performance of professional activity by social workers is obtained a second degree higher education in the field of social work, the assistant of social work is obtained a first degree higher education in the field of social work.” On social services<sup>4</sup>, ‘social worker’ is a natural person who has obtained a university degree in the field of social work in the first degree, second degree or has a recognized certificate of such university degree issued by a foreign higher education institution.”

Furthermore, according to the Social Work Act<sup>5</sup>: “continuous education in social work is provided for the social worker and social work assistant performing social work in an employment relationship or similar employment relationship by the employer according to a special regulation. The evaluation of continuous education in the social work of a social worker performing independent practice shall be carried out by the Chamber.”

In our view, the main object of social work through a socio-educational program is to make sure that future social workers have the knowledge, skills and capacity for critical self-reflection to help them continue their professional activities.

The aim of teaching through the social work program is to develop integral education and qualification prerequisites with a socio-humanistic approach among students. The study of social work enables the student to develop and formulate his own proposals for interventions in public policies, community, family, group processes and the individual’s unfavorable situation (Kurillová, 2017).

“Graduate of Social Work obtains essential facts and information from the basics of theory and practice of social work, learn the concepts of theory and methodology of social work and its interdisciplinary context, will be able to analyze the issue of goals, content, methods and forms of assistance to an individual, community, understand the diversity and complexity of causes of social problems, professionally interpret their socio-political-economic and cultural context. They will be able to apply basic knowledge in psychological, sociological, philosophical, pedagogical, economic, political and legal sciences in solving social problems, they will also be able to critically analyze and demonstrate effective decision-making in choosing and using methods, techniques and means.” (Tvrdón & Haburajová-Ilavská, 2007: 127-128)

Many different events call for the need for further education. This need for education is also recognized by social workers themselves. In Slovakia, education is provided through specialized accredited forms with social workers. At the same time, the content of individual educational activities must be developed and declared by practitioners and experienced educators in the field.

The work includes knowledge and application of legislation, especially in the field of social protection and family relations. The basic laws that social workers in Slovakia apply in their work are:

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<sup>3</sup> Act No. 219/2014 Z.z. on social work and on the conditions for carrying out certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and the family and on amendments to certain acts § 5 paragraph 1 letter a, b.

<sup>4</sup> Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services as amended § 84 paragraph 7.

<sup>5</sup> Act No. 219/2014 Z.z. on social work and on the conditions for the performance of certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and the family and on amendments and supplements to certain acts § 6 paragraph 1, 2.

- Act No. 219/2014 Z.z. on social work and on the conditions for carrying out certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and the family.
- Act No. 302/2003 Z.z. on self-government of higher territorial units.
- Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the social and legal protection of children and the social guardianship.
- Act No. 311/2001 Coll. Labor Code.
- Act No. 36/2005 Z.z. about the family.
- Act No. 417/2013 Z.z. on assistance in material need.
- Act No. 447/2008 Coll. on cash contributions to compensate for severe disabilities.
- Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services.
- Act No. 461/2003 Z.z. on social insurance.

Social workers work, e.g., in government agencies, private, public and third sectors, police departments, schools, courts, hospitals and many other types of workplaces. In some institutions, in addition to basic working hours, the social worker is also required to perform on-call time. Social workers must be familiar with the fundamentals of psychology, education, sociology and law and be familiar with the regulation of education, health, justice, employment and the economy. Given the nature of their work, they should have a desire for continuous professional development and training (Tvrdón & Haburajová-Ilavská, 2007).

### 3.3 *Code of ethics for social workers*

The social worker in Slovakia is bound by the adherence to the Code of Ethics of the social worker and the assistant of social work in his daily work. This important document sets out the place and competence of a social worker in society.

The term Ethics as a word derives from the word “ethos,” which in Greek means moral, custom, habit, habit, character, tradition, manner, mores, rule, convention, reason, or way of thinking. It can be stated that this is a stable and correct way of conduct for the community, resulting from regular repetition of certain human activity (Gluchman et al., 2011).

According to Laca (2012: 364), “Ethics is interested in the relationship of man to other people, to his future, to life values. All this is given by the philosophical view of man’s place in the world, by the philosophical view of the meaning of his life. Ethics therefore accepts the philosophical view of man and understands him as his subject. We also encounter a similar theory in the field of social work, which perceives human being as its subject. Ethical theories form and clarify a system of basic and derived moral rules. With these standards, we evaluate and classify deeds, human behavior as ethically right or ethically wrong.”

Through the humanitarian professions, emphasis is always put on ethical work. The code of ethics must set high standards of conduct for the occupations in social work. Ethics is not only focused on public performance, but also towards colleagues, clients.

The social worker’s code<sup>6</sup> of ethics is a manual for the social worker to follow and accompany in the performance of his work. The social worker's code of ethics includes:

- Values of social work,
- Ethical responsibility,
- Ethical issues and dilemmas,
- Binding of the Code of Ethics,

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<sup>6</sup> Code of Ethics for Social Workers.

- Conclusion.

The Code of Social Workers has been adapted and adapted to the evolution of society and the professions within social work. The Code of Ethics of SP<sup>7</sup>:

“Supports the formation of the profession of social worker and social work assistant and its observance is one of the basic prerequisites for the professional performance of social work as well as the respect of society for this profession. Compliance with the Code of Ethics is therefore in the interests of all social workers and social work assistants, regardless of the status of a member of the Chamber.”

The main goal of the Code of Ethics is to maintain a uniform line of conduct among all members of society. The Code of Ethics implies binding internal regulations for the social worker. We can state that the Code of Ethics lays down rules of conduct of people in various institutions, organizations working with clients (Stachoň, 2016).

The Code of Ethics is a framework and a specific guide for professionals to support everyday decisions regarding professional behavior. The Code of Ethics for Social Workers and Social Work Assistants in Slovakia was approved by the General Assembly of the Slovak Chamber of Social Workers and Labor Assistants on 18 September 2015. The Code entered into force on 1 October 2015 (Medlen, 2016).

The aim of the Code of Social Work is to provide an ethical framework that guides the members of the profession, people, but does not provide concrete solutions to various adverse problems. The Code of Ethics in Social Work educates the general public, students, discipline experts, as well as other experts in the field of ethical principles and standards that guide the professional's professional behavior (Brozmanová Gregorová, 2016).

The Code of Ethics is intended to reflect all that we value as professionals and to lay down the conditions for our working and scientific practices to be based on the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity, duty, responsibility, justice and empathy. Individuals and professionals are expected to adhere to these Code of Conduct (Jeleň, 2009).

We can state that the Code of Ethics of Social Workers defines the basic behaviors, principles, duties of professional social workers that they have to observe when communicating and working with clients. The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to communicate to all stakeholders the ethical standards that society considers most important (Mátel et al., 2012). Furthermore, according to the authors (*Ibid.*: 21):

“Knowledge of the ethical principles and standards formed in the code of ethics does not in itself guarantee that the worker in question behaves morally, but can certainly lead him to think about these particulars or with these principles he has identified, internalized them and consequently acted in accordance with them as well as with his conscience,” and we agree with this statement.

The internal regulations of the Code of Ethics for Social Workers set out the basic principles of ethical conduct in order to promote the ethical awareness, culture of work and behavior of social workers. According to Balvín and Prokai (2013), the Code aims to strengthen the professional performance of social work, increase public confidence in social workers, the rights and obligations of employees. Code of Ethics for Social Workers and Social Work Assistants Measures to Prevent Conflicts of Interest.

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<sup>7</sup> Code of Conduct for Social Workers Preamble I. Paragraph 5.



#### 4. Conclusion

To conclude, to be a social worker means not only to meet the qualifications, but also the right characteristics to be successful in his work. Increasing globalization and rapidly changing local conditions place new demands on research, education and practice in social work and on how we understand and deal with social problems in increasingly globalized societies.

Although there are many characteristics of a good social worker, there are a few that are extremely important. Without them, a social worker would not be very effective in his work or would be extremely unhappy in his work. A person who would become a good social worker should have compassion, listening skills and organizational skills.

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