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# Human Resource Management in Social Work: The Role of the Manager in Effective Family Support

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***Abstract:***

***Purpose:*** *This article aims to examine human resource management within social services organizations, focusing specifically on the role of social workers as managers in the effective support of families. It seeks to identify the competencies and activities required for managers to support families in this context successfully.*
***Design/Methodology/Approach:*** *The study employed a diagnostic survey method utilizing a questionnaire survey tool. Data collection involved a questionnaire technique complemented by the analysis of literature sources and the observation method to provide a comprehensive understanding of human resource management in social work.*
***Findings:*** *The research highlights the critical competencies and managerial activities that social services managers must possess and perform to support families effectively. These include leadership skills, team motivation, resource allocation, and the ability to foster collaboration within social work teams.*
***Practical Implications:*** *The findings provide social services organizations with valuable insights into the necessary managerial competencies for family support, offering guidelines for professional development and human resource management practices that enhance service effectiveness.*
***Originality/Value:*** *This article contributes original insight into the intersection of human resource management and social work management, focusing uniquely on social workers as managers dedicated to supporting families. It fills a gap by clarifying managerial roles and competences required for effective family assistance in social services.*

***Keywords:*** *Human resource, social work, manager.*

***JEL codes:*** *J53, M12, M54.*

***Paper Type:*** *Research paper.*

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## 1. Introduction

Human resource management in social organisations is one of the most important aspects of working with people, affecting their well-being and quality of life. This is particularly true when it comes to effective family support by managers in the organisation of the support process.

As R. Griffin (2001) rightly points out, it is a "set of activities (including planning and decision-making, organising, leading, i.e., managing people, and controlling) directed at the organisation's resources (human, financial, material and information) and carried out with the intention of achieving the organisation's goals efficiently and effectively", aimed at achieving the intended support models.

Today, we are increasingly talking about a new understanding of management (Rzepka, 2025). Management in institutions whose purpose is to perform public tasks in the field of social assistance remains focused mainly on setting tasks, providing appropriate assistance, creating an organisational structure, employing staff with the appropriate competences, and ongoing monitoring and resolution of emerging difficulties (Kowalska, 2010).

The area of activity can be described as a signal field that is unpredictable and often requires spontaneous action, but is guided by standards and professionalism. It requires the adaptation of management concepts that are tailored to the support strategy (Marciszewska, 2014).

The fact is that social welfare institutions can be described as those that seek to solve existing social problems (Młyński, 2023). One of the most important issues, therefore, is the skilful selection of strategic, integrated measures that enable social workers to undertake methodical procedures (Zelek, 2018) for the implementation of competent assistance and the application of programmes (Przywojska,2014).

Their mission is a key element that should be taken into account by managers when developing strategies. It seems that, in a way, it defines and sets the most important goals, influencing the decisions that determine the effectiveness of the tasks performed (Drucer, 2011). For example, the mission of a social welfare institution will be to ensure the comfort and quality of life of the people it supports (Ćwikliński, 2025), while the mission of a care and educational facility will be to care for children deprived of parental care.

## 2. Methodology

The results presented in this article refer to research conducted in early 2025 among employees of municipal and city social welfare centres and social service centres in the Małopolska Province. The main objective of the research was to characterise human resource management in social work and to define the role of the social

services manager in effectively supporting families. The study covered all persons working as social services managers in the Małopolska Province – approximately 1,600 people, and the result of the activities carried out is 312 completed questionnaires, which means a maximum error of 5% at a 95% confidence level.

The research was quantitative in nature, using the CAWI technique, i.e., computer-assisted web interviewing. The research tool used was a questionnaire. When characterising the people who took part in the study, it should be emphasised that they were mostly women (91.3%), aged 41-45 (26.9%), with higher education (90.7%), with over 20 years of experience as social workers (29.8%), married (73.1%), generally satisfied with their work as social workers (45.8%) and not likely to recommend work as a social worker to their family/friends (30.1%). Detailed summaries are presented in Table 1.

***Table 1.*** *Respondent profile*

| Respondent profile | | n | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | women | 285 | 91,3 |
| | men | 27 | 8,7 |
| Age | Under 30 lat | 33 | 10,6 |
| | 31-35 y | 29 | 9,3 |
| | 36-40 y | 49 | 15,7 |
| | 41-45 y | 84 | 26,9 |
| | 46-50 y | 52 | 16,7 |
| | 51-55 y | 43 | 13,8 |
| | over 55 y | 22 | 7,1 |
| Education | secondary | 29 | 9,3 |
| | Higher | 283 | 90,7 |
| years of work experience | Up to 1 y | 29 | 9,3 |
| | 2-5 y | 62 | 19,9 |
| | 6-10 y | 34 | 10,9 |
| | 11-15 y | 41 | 13,1 |
| | 16-20 y | 53 | 17,0 |
| | than 20 y | 93 | 29,8 |

***Source:*** *Own research.*

Statistical calculations were performed using SPSS Statistic software, while the use of Pearson's chi-square independence test, Pearson's r correlation, Student's t-test and ANOVA analysis allowed us to demonstrate statistically significant relationships between individual groups of variables. Relationships with a significance level lower than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

## 2. Findings

The article presents only selected areas of research. In the first step, the participants were asked to determine the extent to which social workers should play a leading role in the management of social assistance programmes. The frequency analysis

showed that the largest percentage of respondents believed that social workers can play a leadership role, but not in every situation, as other competencies are also necessary, 31.4%. An equally high percentage of respondents believed that they should rather play this role, as they have valuable experience in working with clients, but need additional support in management, 28.8% of responses.

The most positive response to this question came from 23.7% of respondents, who believed that social workers should definitely act as leaders in the management of social assistance programmes, as they have the best understanding of the needs of the community and are able to manage resources effectively.

On the other hand, 13.1% of respondents stated that the main task of social workers is direct assistance, not management, and therefore they should not play such roles. In turn, 2.9% of respondents indicated that social workers should definitely not play a leadership role, as management should be reserved for people with appropriate education and experience in this field.

When making intergroup comparisons, it can be observed that the more often respondents would recommend working as a social worker to their family/friends, the more often they took the position that social workers should play a leading role in the management of social assistance programmes (Pearson's $r = 0.126$, $p = 0.026$).

Furthermore, the more often respondents declared that social workers should play a leading role in the management of social assistance programmes, the more positively they assessed the impact that social workers could have on the development of social policy in their region by playing a leading role (Pearson's $r = 0.346$, $p < 0.001$).

When referring to the skills that are crucial for social workers acting as leaders in social assistance, respondents most often pointed to interpersonal and communication skills in order to effectively cooperate with clients and the team – on a scale of 1-5, the average was 4.74.

Respondents were equally likely to mention teamwork skills, in order to effectively coordinate activities with other employees and institutions, as well as knowledge of social welfare legislation, in order to ensure compliance with regulations – with averages of 4.69 and 4.63, respectively.

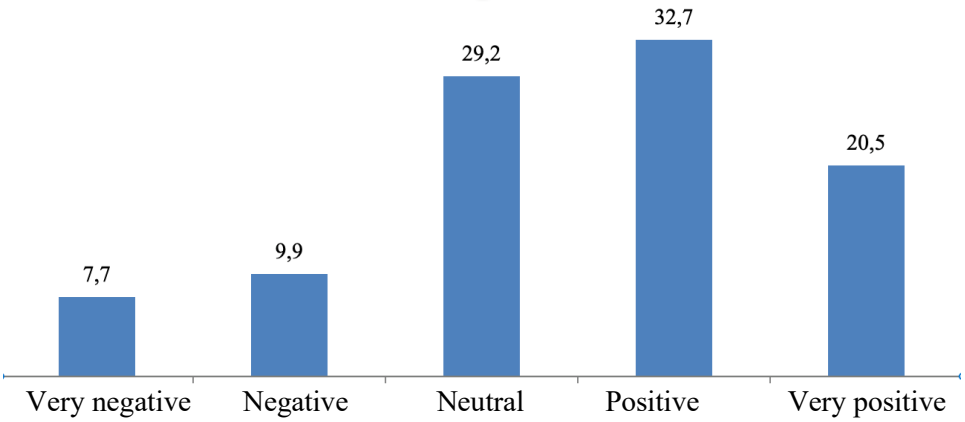
Against this background, respondents were much less likely to say that key skills included project management to effectively implement assistance programmes (average 4.17) and data analysis to assess the effectiveness of programmes and adapt them to the needs of the community (average 4.12).

When comparing individual skills, it turns out that the strongest positive correlations were recorded in the case of significantly more frequent indications of:

• interpersonal and communication skills to effectively cooperate with clients and the team, and knowledge of social welfare regulations to ensure compliance with regulations: Pearson's r=0.696, p<0.001,
• interpersonal and communication skills to effectively cooperate with clients and the team, and the ability to work in a team to effectively coordinate activities with other employees and institutions: Pearson's r=0.688, p<0.001,
• project management to effectively implement assistance programmes and data analysis to assess the effectiveness of programmes and adapt them to the needs of the community: Pearson's r=0.673, p<0.001.

In the next question, the social service managers surveyed were asked to indicate the impact they believed social workers could have on the development of social policy in their region by acting as leaders (Figure 1).

***Figure 1.*** *How do you assess the impact that social workers can have on the development of social policy in your region by acting as leaders? N=312 (data in %)*




***Source:*** *Own research.*

The responses obtained in the course of the research showed that almost one-third of respondents described this impact as positive, as social workers can influence decisions but need support and recognition of their knowledge – 32.7%. One-fifth of respondents considered the impact to be very positive, arguing that their direct experience allows them to formulate effective and realistic solutions – 20.5% of responses.

A neutral opinion in this area was expressed by 29.2% of respondents, who believe that the voice of social workers is important but often ignored in the decision-making process. In addition, 9.9% of respondents indicated a negative impact in this area, claiming that the capabilities of social workers are limited by bureaucracy and hierarchy in institutions. An even more critical tone was expressed by 7.7% of respondents, who believed that social workers have no real influence on social policy and are excluded from the decision-making process.

Comparing the above question with the profile of respondents, it can be observed that the older the respondent (r-Pearson= -0.134, p=0.018) and length of service as a social worker (Pearson's r=-0.119, p=0.036), the worse the assessment of the influence that social workers can have on the development of social policy in their region in their role as leaders.

## 3. Conclusions

To summarise the results of the survey, it should be noted that over half of the social service managers surveyed believed that social workers should rather or definitely play a leading role in the management of social assistance programmes – 52.5% of responses. A different position was taken by 16% of respondents, while 31.4% of respondents did not take either side and gave a neutral answer.

When asked about the skills that are essential for social workers acting as leaders in social assistance, the respondents most often pointed to interpersonal and communication skills in order to work effectively with clients and the team – with an average score of 4.74 on a scale of 1-5. Frequently cited responses also included teamwork skills to effectively coordinate activities with other employees and institutions (average 4.69), as well as knowledge of social assistance legislation to ensure compliance with regulations (average 4.63).

As part of the recommendations and proposals for further research and social science, several issues are worth mentioning: it is important for managers to invest in training social workers to improve their competences, develop their skills and methods of working with families in difficult life situations. In addition, attention should be paid to creating support resources that will provide comprehensive assistance to families awaiting effective support.

Undoubtedly, the individual approach of social workers, which is part of developing individual support plans, will contribute to taking into account the needs and resources of families that determine effective interventions. In this context, it is proposed to strengthen emotional support and supervision for managers as well, which will ultimately contribute to minimising burnout.

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