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## **Change Readiness and Positive Orientation in Professional Helpers in the Polish Welfare System during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic is undoubtedly a crisis situation, which means that the lives of persons experiencing it will never be the same as before. Professional helpers are faced with numerous challenges related to the change in their work flow, the need to modify strategies, work methods and tools, or to the switch from on-site to remote work. In this context, professional helpers' resources are of considerable importance, as they constitute an important part of the welfare system. The analysis of the results of previous studies suggests that social workers' change readiness and positive orientation not only may increase their professional effectiveness, but may even foster better quality of life. The

present study investigated positive orientation and change readiness, as important predictors of professional functioning of persons in the sample group. The questionnaires were distributed among 189 professional helpers working in the Polish welfare system. The response rate was 98% (the final sample consisted of 185 persons). The results show that most subjects are characterized by the below-optimal levels of all the analyzed traits of the change readiness, but high and medium levels of positive orientation. The groups differed from one another in terms of adaptability (difference close to statistically significant). Change readiness and positive orientation may constitute important resources for professional helpers. Long service, being married, and a low level of change-readiness revealed in the presented study, may indicate that change-readiness is a general tendency in specific individuals, and is not dependent on the nature of changes themselves. The results may prompt a search for relations between personality factors and change-readiness.

### **Keywords**

COVID-19 pandemic, change readiness, positive orientation, welfare.

## **1. Introduction**

Social workers constitute a numerous and important professional group in Poland. In the course of their daily work, they deal with persons going through crises and with persons with disabilities. Welfare tasks are performed by various specialists, such as the social worker, family assistant, psychologist, child counselor, or lawyer. In total, Polish welfare institutions employ over 130,000 people at various positions.<sup>1</sup>

Social workers constitute the main pillar of the Polish welfare system. They perform social work as a skilled service, fighting against barriers, inequalities, and social injustice. They respond to emergency crisis situations and address their clients' personal and social issues. Drawing from various experiences and practices, they are holistically focused on people and their backgrounds.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, *Statystyka za rok 2019*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/statystyka-za-2019>, (25.08.2022).

<sup>2</sup> J. Szmagałski, *Współczesne procesy rozwojowe pracy socjalnej jako zawodu i dziedziny kształcenia akademickiego*, "Praca Socjalna", vol. 3 (2006) 3, pp. 5–24.

Another professional group in the Polish welfare system, which in a relatively short time (since 2012) has become important component of support for families, is that of family assistants. This new profession is currently treated as the extension of activities performed by social workers. The difference between these two professions is that family assistants have closer contact with families more frequently than social workers and do not grant benefits to them.<sup>3</sup>

Currently desirable new insights into the functioning of professional helpers, requires researchers to focus on the quality of life. Theoretical framework in this research-trend is determined by the perspective adopted by positive psychology – a research trend focused on analysis of positive aspects of life, pursuit of mental well-being and treating life events as development challenges. Numerous concepts have appeared that constituted the basis for research into more adaptive forms of psycho-social life.<sup>4</sup> Two of those concepts are dealt with in this article: change-readiness and positive orientation. Kriegel and Brandt<sup>5</sup> have developed the **change-readiness concept** and have undertaken to define the profile of the change-ready person. It is worth noting that this concept focuses more on the behavior of change-oriented individuals, rather than on behaviors that indicate resistance to change. According to the above-mentioned authors, a change-oriented individual avoids extreme behaviors that tend towards both passivity and a kind of hyperactivity. In their model, they distinguished seven indicators of change-readiness: resourcefulness, drive (passion), confidence, optimism, adventurousness, adaptability, and tolerance to ambiguity. The profile obtained reveals a change-ready person. Such a person is characterized by medium, optimal scores for the traits described. They are able to generate ideas and use them effectively, are positively disposed to the surrounding reality, tend to perceive opportunities rather than obstacles, are not afraid of challenges, newness or uncertainty, have energy resources necessary

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<sup>3</sup> I. Krasiejko, T. Świtek, *Między wsparciem a kontrolą – różne rozumienie roli asystentów rodziny*, w: *Rodzina w pracy socjalnej – aktualne wyzwania i rozwiązania*, eds. T. Biernat, J. A. Malinowski, K.M. Wasilewska-Ostrowska, Toruń 2015, Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne Akapit, pp. 275–296.

<sup>4</sup> A. Carr, *Positive Psychology. The science of happiness and human strengths*, New York 2004, Hove; M. E. P. Seligman, *Authentic happiness, using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for deep fulfillment*. Boston: Nicholas Brealey publishing 2003; M. E. P. Seligman, M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Positive psychology: An introduction*, “American Psychologist”, vol. 55 (2000) no. 1, pp. 5–14; K. M. Sheldon, *Optimal Human Being*, “Psychology Press” (2004).

<sup>5</sup> R. Kriegel, D. Brandt, *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*, New York 1996, Warner Books.

for action, are aware of their own talents and skills, and show great adaptability to the changing environment.

The perspective of subjective well-being of professionals providing support to persons with disabilities, includes change-readiness understood as the subjective perception of the demands posed by the environment, associated with certain emotional states, cognitive and behavioral processes, as a result of the interpretation of the objective reality. A person characterized by the “change-ready” profile can act effectively and instigate changes in others<sup>6</sup>, which, in the context of professional helpers, is particularly important as they work for the benefit of other persons in need, making them co-authors of change.

Positive assessment of the reality reinforces the change-readiness process, contributing to a more effective and flexible adjustment to the new. Proper fulfillment of basic needs, change-readiness, as well as optimistic and positive perception of one’s future, foster the individual’s development and their adaptation to new conditions.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, professional activity of professional helpers may be determined by the ability to be change-ready, the ability to have knowledge and skills in coping with the fast-changing social reality, and by positive orientation. **Positive orientation theory** is another concept developed within the framework of positive psychology.<sup>8</sup> This variable comprises three components: self-esteem, life satisfaction, and optimism. Positive orientation has been the name given to what life satisfaction, self-esteem and optimism share in common, likely a pervasive mode of facing reality, reflecting upon experience, framing events and processing personal and interpersonal experiences along time and across life circumstances. (...) positive orientation as an important predisposition that may exert a great influence in colouring individuals’ view of life and in seizing their potentials. Recent findings attest to the pivotal role that self-efficacy beliefs in the domain of affect regulation and interpersonal relations,

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<sup>6</sup> R. Kriegel, D. Brandt, *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*. New York 1996, Warner Books.

<sup>7</sup> A. Oleszkiewicz, K. Gwiżdż, *Formowanie się tożsamości osobistej w okresie stającej się dorosłości w kontekście poczucia bezpieczeństwa i gotowości do zmian*, “Polskie Forum Psychologiczne”, vol. 24 (2019) no. 2, pp. 184–204.

<sup>8</sup> G. V. Caprara, *Positive orientation: Turning potentials into optimal functioning*, “The Bulletin of the European Health Psychologist”, vol. 11 (2009) no. 3, p. 46–48; G. V. Caprara, P. Steca, *Affective and Social Self-Regulatory Efficacy Beliefs as Determinants of Positive Thinking and Happiness*, “Eur Psychol”, vol. 10 (2005) no. 4, pp. 275–286; G. V. Caprara, P. Steca, G. Alessandri, J. R. Abela, C. M. McWhinnie, *Positive orientation: explorations on what is common to life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism*, “Epidemiol Psychiatr Soc.”, vol. 19 (2010) no. 1, pp. 63–71.

may play towards promoting individuals' positive orientation."<sup>9</sup> The adopted approach becomes especially significant as it classifies this category a significant factor affecting individual human development and effectiveness of human actions. The positive orientation presented by Caprara et al.<sup>10</sup> is based upon a basic assumption that there are appropriate predispositions to see oneself, life, and the future in a positive light, which makes people cope successfully with difficult or new situations against the odds, despite defeats and losses, despite growing old or the prospect of death. This also makes it possible to acknowledge one's own limitations. If people did not have a predisposition to believe that the future is promising, they would not be able to evolve.<sup>11</sup> Positive orientation significantly determines the adaptive functioning of professional helpers, as it constitutes a tendency to have favorable self-esteem, to derive high satisfaction from life, to positively assess chances of achieving life goals, which also boosts the quality of professional work. Finding positives in activities performed by professionals supporting persons with disabilities in crisis, may translate into more in-depth analyzes of the effectiveness of the forms of assistance provided.

In the presented study, it is assumed that individual groups of professional helpers (social workers, family assistants and other professionals) may differ in terms of change-readiness and positive orientation, due to diverse scopes of their activities and the level of the individualization of their work. Undoubtedly, the difference in the intensity of responsibilities, the number of families assisted by the individual professional helper, and the level of involvement in relationships with them, play a significant role in differentiating the intensity of the tendency to experience difficulties that are in conflict with the analyzed positive orientation and change-readiness.<sup>12</sup> In the Polish legislation, one family assistant can provide support for no more than 15 families, whereas one social worker can provide services to no more than 50 families or single-person

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<sup>9</sup> G. V. Caprara, *Positive orientation: Turning potentials into optimal functioning*, "The Bulletin of the European Health Psychologist", vol. 11 (2009) no. 3, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> G. V. Caprara, *Positive orientation: Turning potentials into optimal functioning*, "The Bulletin of the European Health Psychologist", vol. 11 (2009) no. 3, pp. 46–48.

<sup>11</sup> G. V. Caprara, G. Alessandri, N. Eisenberg, *Prosociality: The Contribution of Traits, Values and Self Efficacy Beliefs*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology", 102(6) (2012), pp. 1289–1303.

<sup>12</sup> M. Czechowska-Bieluga, *Poczucie zadowolenia z życia pracowników socjalnych – w socjopedagogicznej perspektywie uwarunkowań pełnionej roli zawodowej*, Lublin 2013, UMCS.

households.<sup>13</sup> In turn, the characteristics of work performed by professional helpers (physiotherapist, psychologist, therapist, lawyer etc.) depend upon the issues occurring, while the scope of the activities they perform is very individual in nature, precisely defined and time-limited. Despite the fact that in the space of cooperation between social workers and family assistants the accompaniment method is used<sup>14</sup>, it is worth accentuating the difference in the way in which their work is organized, which indicates that family assistants perform their duties outside working hours of the other professional groups. This means, inter alia, that in an emergency situation, many assistants rely on their own skills and have to face challenges on their own.<sup>15</sup>

The explorations have been undertaken as a result of the research gap stemming from the hitherto accentuated difficulties arising in the work of professional helpers in the Polish (anachronistic) welfare system and treating them as a rather homogeneous group.<sup>16</sup> Researchers, including foreign ones, focus mainly on the issues related to lack of work satisfaction, work overload, stress, lack of motivation, and lack of support offered to professional helpers.<sup>17</sup> Such empirical-theoretical models have often prevented the development of the potential of the analyzed group of employees and the differentiation of presented profession-dependent supervision activities. The results of our own research must be regarded as a preliminary report highlighting the importance of change-readiness and positive orientation in professional helpers.

<sup>13</sup> Polish Journal of Laws of 2016, item 930, art. 110, para. 11', 2016.

<sup>14</sup> A. Żukiewicz, *Asystent rodzinny: nowy zawód i nowa usługa w systemie wspierania rodzin: od opieki i pomocy do wsparcia*, Kraków 2011, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> J. Szczerbiński, *NIK o asystentach rodziny*, 2015; file:///C:/Users/U%C5%BCytownik/Downloads/2022\_10\_04\_10\_21\_25.pdf (04.08.2022).

<sup>16</sup> M. Świdarska, *Ryzyko rozwoju wypalenia zawodowego wśród pracowników socjalnych*, "Pedagogika Rodziny", vol. 3 (2013) no. 3, pp. 37–52; T. Zbyrad, *The Risk of the Professional Burnout of Workers of Social Service*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio J, Paedagogia-Psychologia", vol. 30 (2018) no. 4, p. 87; A. Kanios, *The Risk of Occupational Burnout Among Social Workers: A Community-Wide Comparison*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio J, Paedagogia-Psychologia", vol. 30 (2018) no. 4, p. 107; K. M. Stanek, *Kompetencje pracowników socjalnych w aspekcie stresu i radzenia sobie ze stresem*, "Zeszyty Pracy Socjalnej", vol. 24 (2019) no. 3, pp. 209–220.

<sup>17</sup> X. Tang and X. Li, *Role Stress, Burnout, and Workplace Support Among Newly Recruited Social Workers*, "Res Soc Work Pract", vol. 31 (2021) no. 5, pp. 529–540; C. Marc and C. Oşvat, *Stress and Burnout among Social Workers*, "Revista de Asistentă Socială", vol. XII (2013) no. 3, pp. 121–130; C. Marc, D. Makai Dimény, C. Bacter, *The social worker-client relationship: difficulties and solutiois*, "Series VII – Social Sciences and law", vol. 61(12) (2019), no. 2, pp. 377–386.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The present study investigates positive orientation and change readiness as important predictors of professional functioning of persons in the analyzed group of professional helpers. Positively-oriented persons, with the ready-to-change profile, are able to generate ideas and implement them effectively, respond positively to reality, are active and open to new challenges, aware of their competence, and can adapt to changing environmental conditions.<sup>18</sup> They are largely responsible for adaptive functioning, strive for high satisfaction from life and rate the chances of achieving goals highly, which translates into commitment to the pursuit of life aims.<sup>19</sup> Those traits may foster effective assistance work.<sup>20</sup> Close interpersonal contact, involving commitment and exchange of emotions, plays an important role in the work of professional helpers. The professional role requires social workers, family assistants and other professionals accompanying individuals and families in difficult life situations, to be in constant emotional contact with people and not only to use their specialized knowledge, but to involve their whole personality in professional contacts. The explorations concerned the analyses of a dyad of factors involving the variables that determine change readiness and positive orientation.

Openness to change is a multi-faceted phenomenon, conditioned by an extensive set of inter- and intra-personal mechanisms and processes. Therefore, it is difficult to create a research project that would take them all into consideration.<sup>21</sup> This awareness is a stimulating factor and a motive for further explorations into this area of research. Regarding the proposed model that combines the premises of theoretical analysis of the change-readiness of professional helpers and a profession as a differentiating factor, the following hypothesis was formulated: The profession practiced conditions the change-readiness level and positive orientation.

The aim of the study is to learn about the change readiness and positive orientation in persons employed in welfare organizational units and to learn

<sup>18</sup> R. Kriegel, D. Brandt, *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*. New York 1996, Warner Books.

<sup>19</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: Polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 49 (2011) no. 4, pp. 47–54.

<sup>20</sup> M. Czechowska-Bieluga, *Social workers' achievement motivation and their readiness to change*, "Praca Socjalna", vol. 36 (2021) no. 3, pp. 69–83.

<sup>21</sup> A. Lubrańska, *Gotowość do zmiany na przykładzie badań przedstawicieli kadry kierowniczej*, "Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Psychologica", vol. 15 (2011), pp. 3–16.

about the differences in this regard among social workers, family assistants and other specialists. The study was conducted using the diagnostic survey method. Diagnostic survey was used, being one of the most commonly-used methods in education science research. It makes it possible not only to study a selected fragment of reality, but, more importantly, to make a true assessment of the mass phenomena and significant processes taking place in human collectivities constituting the subject of research, and to propose and design modifications.<sup>22</sup>

The following research tools were used: The Change Readiness Questionnaire by R. Kriegel and D. Brand; The Positivity Scale (P Scale). Changes have become a natural driving factor for the development of an organization, determining its position and competitiveness. At the same time, this fact makes organization participants face new tasks which, in many cases, are beyond their capabilities: available competence, and adaptation resources.<sup>23</sup> Change-readiness is one of the most desirable resources on the job market, the verification of which is made possible by the use of the Change Readiness Questionnaire. It is an increasingly frequently-used tool for studying change-readiness in various professional groups.<sup>24</sup>

The Change Readiness Questionnaire by R. Kriegel and D. Brand<sup>25</sup>, translated by A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, which is designed to check the respondents' strengths and weaknesses and to identify the seven traits: resourcefulness, optimism, adventurousness, drive, adaptability, confidence, and tolerance for ambiguity. The questionnaire contains 35 questions, which the respondents answer using a six-point scale, making it possible to identify the following seven traits: resourcefulness, optimism, adventurousness, drive, adaptability, confidence, and tolerance for ambiguity.

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<sup>22</sup> W. Dutkiewicz, *Praca magisterska: przewodnik metodyczny dla studentów pedagogiki*, Kielce 2001, Dom Wydawniczy Strzelec.

<sup>23</sup> A. Lubrańska, *Gotowość do zmiany na przykładzie badań przedstawicieli kadry kierowniczej*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Psychologica", vol. 15 (2011), pp. 3–16.

<sup>24</sup> A. Lubrańska, *Gotowość do zmiany na przykładzie badań przedstawicieli kadry kierowniczej*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Psychologica", vol. 15 (2011), pp. 3–16; A. Stefański, D. Godlewska-Werner, *Gotowość menedżerów do zmiany i podejmowania działań rozwojowych*, "Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi (HRM)", vol. 3–4 (2016) no. 110–111, pp. 95–107.

<sup>25</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, pp. 209–215.



The New P Scale (Positivity Scale) significantly simplifies and expedites the research.<sup>26</sup> The Positivity Scale (P Scale) can be used for research aimed at verifying the aspects of human functioning positive orientation which are associated with and what is its adaptive significance.<sup>27</sup>

In recent years, in the field of human sciences, there has been an emphasis on human development potential, satisfaction from life, happiness, and health. The development of sciences, made possible by analyses conducted in the positive dimension, including both education science and psychology, has resulted in the emergence of concepts that form the foundations of research into the most adaptive modes of psychosocial functioning and its pedagogical determinants.<sup>28</sup> One of the concepts based on this trend is the positive orientation theory, on the basis of which the Positivity Scale (P Scale) was developed. Positive orientation is the basic tendency of noticing and attaching importance to positive aspects of life, experiences, and oneself. Positive orientation is largely responsible for adaptive functioning, as it signifies a natural inclination toward favorable self-appraisal, high satisfaction with life, and positive assessment of chances of achieving goals, which translates into commitment to pursue life aims and highly positive assessment of the quality of life.<sup>29</sup>

The P Scale can be used for research aimed at verifying which aspects of human functioning positive orientation are associated with, and what is its adaptive significance.<sup>30</sup> The following levels were adopted: low – mean from 0 to 1.25, medium – from 1.26 to 3.5, and high – from 3.6 to 5.0. The Positivity Scale has a single-factor structure, exhibits sufficient internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.77-0.84$ ), consistency ( $r_{tt}=0.84$ ) proven convergent validity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: Polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 49 (2011) no. 4, pp. 47–54.

<sup>27</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: Polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 49 (2011) no. 4, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: Polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 49 (2011) no. 4, p. 47; M. Czechowska-Bieluga, *Poczucie zadowolenia z życia pracowników socjalnych – w socjopedagogicznej perspektywie uwarunkowań pełnionej roli zawodowej*, Lublin 2013, UMCS.

<sup>29</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: Polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 49 (2011) no. 4, p. 48.

<sup>30</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: Polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 49 (2011) no. 4, p. 52.

<sup>31</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: Polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 49 (2011) no. 4, pp. 47–54.

In total 185 persons were subjected to the study: 95 social workers, 70 family assistants, and 20 other specialists. The sample size adopted resulted from more difficult access to social workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistical analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics, percentage tables, Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis, and the Kruskal-Wallis, as the analyzed traits were rarely characterized by normality.

### 3. Results

The study included 185 subjects, with females (97.3%) significantly outnumbering males (2.7%). It is a country-independent gender imbalance characteristic of social work and welfare, with females significantly outnumbering males.<sup>32</sup> The respondents came from diverse backgrounds, mostly (33.5%) from rural areas. Currently, more than half of the respondents (52.4%) live in a city with a population of more than 100,000, while the fewest respondents live in cities with a population ranging from 10,000 to 100,000.

Most persons in the study group were married (91%). Few persons were single (4.3%) or divorced (2.7%).

Most of the participants declared at least 15 years of work experience (84.9%), with almost three-fourths (70.8%) of the respondents employed in their current workplace for at least 15 years. Details of the number of working years are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The total number of years worked by the subjects and years employed in current workplace.

Years	Total years worked		Years worked in current workplace	
	N	%	N	%
Up to 1 year	5	2.7	9	4.9
1 to 5 years	0	0	8	4.3
5 to 15 years	23	12.4	37	20.0
More than 15	157	84.9	131	70.8

Source: own research results.

<sup>32</sup> M. Sheppard and M. Charles, *Personality in those entering social work training in England: comparing women and men*, "European Journal of Social Work" 20 (2017) no. 2, pp. 1–9.

Almost all subjects (97.3%) possessed an academic degree, only 2.2% had a post-secondary education certificate, and one person (0.5%) had a secondary vocational degree.

Almost half of the subjects majored in education science (47.6%), although there were also graduates of the Faculties of Law Education of people with intellectual disabilities, psychology, or social rehabilitation.

The respondents' age ranged from 20 to 60 years. The median age was 45 years (inter-quartile range: 20–60 years). Socio-demographic traits of the respondents reflect patterns occurring among the general population of social workers in Poland.

**Change readiness** was the first issue explored. Its seven dimensions were analyzed. Those are: resourcefulness, optimism, adventurousness, passion (drive), adaptability, confidence, and tolerance for ambiguity.

Based on the conducted analyses, it was discovered that, in the study group of professional helpers, the highest average scores were obtained in optimism ( $M=20.89$ ) and resourcefulness ( $M=20.4$ ). Lower scores were obtained in adventurousness ( $M=18.5$ ), confidence ( $M=18.4$ ), and adaptability ( $M=18.3$ ), while the lowest scores were obtained in drive (passion) ( $M=16.8$ ) and tolerance for ambiguity ( $M=13.1$ ).

Data presented in Table 6 demonstrate how family assistants and social workers tend to score lower compared to other specialists, as in five of the seven scales, it was other specialists who scored higher. It turns out that other specialists are characterized by the highest level of optimism ( $M=21.40$ ) among the subjects, family assistants exhibit a lower level of optimism ( $M=20.91$ ), and social workers have the lowest level of optimism ( $M=20.77$ ). Similar results were obtained on the adventurousness scale: ( $M=19.9$ ), followed by family assistants ( $M=18.5$ ), and social workers ( $M=18.3$ ). Also in the case of adaptability, the highest scores were obtained by other specialists ( $M=19.9$ ), followed by family assistants ( $M=18.2$ ), and social workers ( $M=17.9$ ). The order is the same on the passion scale: other specialists had highest scores ( $M=17.6$ ), followed by family assistants ( $M=16.8$ ), and social workers ( $M=16.4$ ).

The results on the resourcefulness scale were slightly different, although the highest scores were still obtained by other specialists ( $M=20.9$ ), with social workers having scored higher ( $M=20.5$ ) than family assistants ( $M=20.2$ ).

The only levels on which other specialists did not obtain the best scores were confidence and tolerance for ambiguity scales.

On the confidence scale, the highest scores were obtained by social workers ( $M=18.8$ ), followed by family assistants, who obtained slightly lower scores ( $M=18.2$ ), and other specialists ( $M=17.7$ ). On the other hand, on the tolerance for ambiguity scale, family assistants ( $M=13.2$ ) and social workers ( $M=13.2$ ) had identical scores, higher than other specialists ( $M=12.8$ ). No statistically-significant differences were found for the severity of these traits across those professional groups (Table. 2). However, it is worth mentioning that the scores on the adaptability scale approach statistical significance ( $p=0.077$ ).

**Table 2.** Severity of traits making up change-readiness according to the professional group.

TRAITS	Total		Family assistants		Social workers		Other specialists		p-value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>Resourcefulness</b>	20.4	3.3	20.2	3.3	20.5	3.3	20.9	3.7	0.7
<b>Passion (drive)</b>	16.8	3.8	16.8	3.7	16.4	4.1	17.6	2.2	0.5
<b>Confidence</b>	18.4	3.0	18.2	3.1	18.8	3.0	17.7	2.4	0.3
<b>Optimism</b>	20.89	2.92	20.91	2.97	20.77	2.96	21.40	2.66	0.7
<b>Adventurousness</b>	18.5	4.1	18.5	4.2	18.3	4.2	19.9	3.1	0.3
<b>Adaptability</b>	18.3	3.1	18.2	3.1	17.9	2.9	19.9	3.9	0.077
<b>Tolerance for ambiguity</b>	13.1	3.2	13.2	3.2	13.2	3.3	12.8	2.8	0.8
<b>Change readiness – total</b>	18.07	1.43	18.00	1.40	18.01	1.41	18.61	1.62	0.083

Source: own research results; M – Mean; SD – standard deviation p-value – Kruskal-Wallis test

The distribution of the levels of the individual traits making up the change-readiness of all the subjects, broken down into individual groups and compared to the optimal results as defined by the authors of the questionnaire<sup>33</sup>, is shown in Table 3. According to the recommendations regarding the interpretation of the results of the questionnaire used in the study, a score above the optimal range may indicate that a respondent may overlook simple and obvious solutions and create more work than is necessary. A score below the optimal range may

<sup>33</sup> R. Kriegel, D. Brandt, *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*, New York 1996, Warner Books.

indicate that individuals are overly attached to typical situations and to familiar patterns of behavior.

**Table 3.** Severity of traits making up change readiness in each group compared to the optimal results.

TRAITS	TOTAL			Family assistants			Social workers			Other specialists		
	Below optimal	Optimal	Above optimal	Below optimal	Optimal	Above optimal	Below optimal	Optimal	Above optimal	Below optimal	Optimal	Above optimal
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Resourcefulness</b>	62.7	33.5	3.8	67.1	30.0	2.9	60.0	34.7	5.3	60.0	40.0	0.0
<b>Passion (drive)</b>	88.1	11.9	0.0	88.6	11.4	0.0	87.4	12.6	0.0	90.0	10.0	0.0
<b>Confidence</b>	88.6	9.2	2.2	88.8	8.6	2.9	86.3	11.6	2.1	100.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Optimism</b>	67.6	30.3	2.2	65.7	32.9	1.4	68.4	28.4	3.2	70.0	30.0	0.0
<b>Adventurousness</b>	76.2	19.5	4.3	75.7	20.0	4.3	80.0	15.8	4.2	60.0	35.0	5.0
<b>Adaptability</b>	88.6	9.7	1.6	90.0	8.6	1.4	91.6	7.4	1.1	70.0	25.0	5.0
<b>Tolerance for ambiguity</b>	98.4	1.6	0.0	98.6	1.4	0.0	97.9	2.1	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

Source: own research results.

The results obtained (Table. 3) reveal that as many as 62.7% of all respondents scored below the optimal range on the **resourcefulness** scale. On the other hand, one-third (33.2%) of the respondents obtained an optimal score, and 3.8% obtained an above-optimal score.

Out of all three professional groups subjected to the study, other specialists (40%) offered the highest percentage of responses within the optimal range, followed by social workers (34.7%), and family assistants (30%). This means that “resourceful people are effective at making the most of any situation and utilizing whatever resources are available to develop plans and contingencies. They see more than one way to achieve a goal, and they’re able to look in less obvious

places to find help. They have a real talent for creating new ways to solve old problems.”<sup>34</sup> Just over two-thirds (67.1%) of the family assistants scored below the optimal level, which means that people in this professional group are more likely to “get stuck and dig in their heels” when compared to the other groups.<sup>35</sup> What is interesting is that 5.3% of social workers, 2.9% of family assistants and 6.58% of students scored above the optimal range, which means that they “might overlook obvious solutions and create more work than is necessary.”<sup>36</sup>

**Passion** is a change-readiness boosting trait, being “the fuel that maximizes all the other traits.”<sup>37</sup> Based on the results obtained, it was determined that one in ten respondents (11.9%) fell within the optimal range. Other subjects (88.1%) scored below the optimal range. None of the subjects scored above the optimal range on this scale.

Comparison of the results between the different groups shows that the highest percentage of responses below the optimal range was obtained by other specialists (90%), followed by family assistants, who achieved a slightly lower score (88.6%), and social workers (87.4%). People who scored within the optimal range are passionate about their work and are less likely to experience fatigue and tiredness; when faced with difficult tasks, they do not feel anxious but, rather, are full of energy and enthusiasm.<sup>38</sup> The scores within the optimal range were obtained by 12.6% of social workers, 11.4% of family assistants, and 10% of other specialists.

**Confidence** is a characteristic of people with high self-esteem. Optimal scores on this scale were obtained by 9.2% of the subjects. The vast majority of the subjects (88.6%) scored below the optimal range, while only 2.2% of the subjects scored above the optimal range.

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<sup>34</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

<sup>35</sup> R. Kriegel, D. Brandt, *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*. New York 1996, Warner Books; A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej.

<sup>36</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

<sup>37</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej.

<sup>38</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

The highest number of scores within the optimal range was obtained by social workers (11.6%), slightly fewer (8.6%) by family assistants. Those persons are in control of their lives, and a single failure does not undermine their self-belief.<sup>39</sup> What is interesting is that the responses of other specialists (100%), were below the optimal range, which suggests a lack of self-confidence and self-belief. On the other hand, 2.9% of family assistants and 2.1 social workers obtained scores below the optimal range, which indicates that those persons may be conceited, overly self-important and tend to reject other people's opinions about themselves.<sup>40</sup>

Optimism is another trait of change-readiness. This trait indicates positive or sometimes even enthusiastic attitude to all types of new things. Therefore, it is highly correlated with change readiness.<sup>41</sup> Almost one in three subjects (30.3%) has such traits, having obtained scores that fell within the optimal range. The vast majority of the subjects (67.6%) scored below the optimal range, while the remaining 2.2% of the subjects scored above it.

It turns out that almost one third of family assistants (32.9%) obtained scores within the optimal range for this trait, as did other specialists (30%). Only slightly fewer social workers (28.4%) obtained scores within the optimal range. A score below the optimal range for this trait may indicate a high tendency to focus on problems. 70% of other specialists, 68% of social workers and 65.7% of family assistants obtained such a score. On the other hand, 3.2% of social workers and 1.4% of family assistants obtained scores above the optimal range, which may indicate that they "lack critical thinking."<sup>42</sup>

**Adventurousness** is another trait of change readiness. The scores obtained indicate that the vast majority of the subjects (76.2%) exhibit a low level of adventurousness. Only one in five subject (19.5%) obtained a score within the optimal range, while 4.3% obtained a higher-than-optimal score.

Upon analyzing the results obtained by the individual groups, one can conclude that over one-third (35%) of other specialists can be described as bold

<sup>39</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, pp. 214–215.

<sup>40</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 215.

<sup>41</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 213.

<sup>42</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

and being constantly on the move, as well as unwilling to perform routine tasks. They are usually change-drivers and take up innovative tasks.<sup>43</sup> These traits can be attributed to 20% of family assistants and 15.8% of social workers. Persons who are not sufficiently adventurous need the sense of security or even stagnation. The scores below the optimal range were obtained by 80% of social workers, 75.7% of family assistants and 60% of other specialists. There were also scores above the optimal range, which may indicate “a tendency toward recklessness.”<sup>44</sup> 5% of other specialists, 4.3% of family assistants, and 4.2% of social workers are characterized by those traits.

The analysis of the results leads to the conclusion that the vast majority of the subjects (88.6%) exhibit a low level of adaptability. Only one in ten subject (9.7%) obtained an optimal score, while 1.6% obtained scores above the optimal range. Adaptability contains two components: flexibility and resilience. Flexibility means easy adaptation to changes. Thanks to resilience people have “the capacity to rebound from adversity quickly with a minimum of trauma” and are able to learn from their own mistakes.<sup>45</sup> From all the professional groups under review, other specialists turned out to be the group whose most frequently fell within the optimal range for this trait (25%). Much fewer optimal scores were obtained by family assistants (8.6%) and social workers (7.4%). The group of social workers was the one in which most subjects obtained low scores.

Low scores for this trait were most frequently obtained by social workers (91.6%) and family assistants (90%), followed by slightly fewer (70%) other specialists. Therefore, it is social workers who may experience frustration or disappointment as a result of difficulty to adapting to changeable environmental conditions.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, persons with a high adaptability score may exhibit “a lack of commitment or stick-to-it-ness.”<sup>47</sup> 5% of other specialists, 1.4% of family assistants, and 1.1% of social workers are characterized by those traits.

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<sup>43</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

<sup>44</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

<sup>45</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

<sup>46</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.

<sup>47</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 214.



The last component of the change readiness analyzed was **tolerance for ambiguity**. Regardless of the occupational group, almost all of subjects (98,4%), obtained scores below the optimal range, with the remaining 1.6% falling within the optimal range. Comparison of the results across the groups demonstrates that all specialists (100%) obtained scores below the optimal range. The vast majority of family assistants (98.6%) and social workers (97.9%) also obtained scores below the optimal range. This means that those persons may exhibit problems with accepting new, unknown things or phenomena.<sup>48</sup>

Only 2.1% of social workers and 1.4% of family assistants are characterized by a high level of patience and acceptance that *nothing is certain in today's world*.<sup>49</sup>

Another variable analyzed besides change readiness, was positive orientation, which, according to G. V. Caprara<sup>50</sup> expounds human personality not through behavioral patterns but, rather, refers to patterns of experience. Although the components of positive orientation, i.e., life satisfaction or self-esteem are a relatively constant factors, in the researcher's view, they can be affected by strengthening the belief of one's own effectiveness. Schwarzer<sup>51</sup> takes a similar view, stressing that this belief is a general human disposition that can be acquired and modified over a lifetime.

**Table 4.** Level of positive orientation as measured by the P Scale – comparison of groups.

	Family assistants		Social workers		Other specialists		Kruskal-Wallis test	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	chi2	p
<b>Positive orientation</b>	3.69	0.39	3.74	0.48	3.79	0.45	0.92	0.63

Source: own research results; M – mean, SD – standard deviation, chi2 – Kruskal-Wallis test value, p – statistical significance level

<sup>48</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 215.

<sup>49</sup> A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, M. Tarkowska, *Metody pracy z grupą w poradnictwie zawodowym*, Warszawa 2004, Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej, p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> G. V. Caprara, *W kierunku integracji teorii cech i społeczno-poznawczej*, in: S. Nowosad, B. Żurek (eds.), *Barwy nauki. Nowoczesne technologie ICT w upowszechnianiu osiągnięć nauki*, Lublin 2010, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL.

<sup>51</sup> R. Schwarzer, *Poczucie własnej skuteczności w podejmowaniu i kontynuacji zachowań zdrowotnych. Dotychczasowe podejście teoretyczne i nowy model*, in: I. Heszen-Niejodek, H. Sęk (eds.), *Psychologia zdrowia*, Warszawa 1997, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

The analysis of the data obtained (Table. 4) indicates that the highest score for positive orientation ( $M=3.79$ ), falling within the range adopted for the high level, was obtained by other specialists. A similar result ( $M=3.74$ ), but within the range adopted for the medium level, was obtained by social workers. The lowest score ( $M=3.69$ ), but still within the medium range, was obtained by family assistants. Therefore, based on the above data, it can be concluded that the results obtained by all the studied groups are borderline between medium and high levels. It must be noted that these results are not statistically significant.

#### 4. Discussion

The aim of the study was to discover the level of change-readiness and positive orientation, and how this differs among social workers, family assistants, and other specialists employed in welfare organizational units. Undoubtedly, social work plays a leading role in society in terms of not only keeping up with changes, but also in designing them. This way, on the one hand, it creates the premises for solving social problems, and on the other, the premises for social development. Today, we see a multitude of socio-economical changes that professional social intervention must deal with. Social services and related human resources must be able to provide intervention to those who are unable to cope on their own with difficulties they experience in their lives. Simultaneously, new challenges are emerging, necessitating the development of the ability to identify resources and capabilities which professional helpers can use for interventions.<sup>52</sup>

The welfare system emphasizes concepts of client/service user and the social worker as conscious subjects of “self-use.” It is surprising that so few attempts are made to look at the personalities of those taking up social work, in the context of the resources they possess.<sup>53</sup>

The results of previous studies suggest that social work presupposes instability, mobility, fluidity, risk, and, consequently, conflict and multiple and varying

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<sup>52</sup> V. Rujoiu, *Editorial Social Work, Vector for Change and Social Development*, “Revista de Asistență Socială” 4 (2014), pp. 3–5.

<sup>53</sup> M. Sheppard, M. Charles, *Personality in those entering social work training in England: comparing women and men*, “European Journal of Social Work” 20 (2017) no. 2, pp. 1–9.

emotional reactions of the persons involved. Complexity of social work, which entails various occupational risks and conflicts, is a predictor of social workers' emotional reactions such as anger and avoidance. Professional conflict and change may become a source of positive emotional reactions or a stimulus for development. Professional relationships that are based on equality, openness, and involvement, even in situations of change or conflict, can boost energy, creativity, and enthusiasm.<sup>54</sup> Such relationships are worth building. This seems to be possible through the formation of group work skills and the creation of a space for professional helpers working in the welfare system to learn about oneself and one's own workshop.

A sense of unpreparedness, disorganized or even "chaotic" perceptions of the workplace and uncertainty about the future are the issues particularly frequently occurring among practitioners newly-employed in social services. Previous analyses show the vulnerability of new practitioners and the importance of introducing and providing adequate support in their new professional roles.<sup>55</sup>

Research M. Czechowska – Bieluga indicates that change-readiness is related to social workers' family resources. In this regard, activities aimed at supporting the way professional helpers function in their own families, can be helpful in improving their workshop.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, the results obtained for positive orientation indicate that all the groups that were examined present a similar level in terms of this variable, borderline between the adopted high and medium levels. Research on positive orientation is mainly aimed at discovering the aspects that human functioning positive orientation is associated with, and what is its adaptive significance. A review of research on positive orientation indicates that the higher the level of positive orientation, the more frequent the experience of positive emotions, the better the perceived quality of interpersonal relationships, the higher level of resilience, self-esteem, and the stronger sense of support from the family and

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<sup>54</sup> J. Ruškus, A. Kiaunytė, *Facing conflict: patterns of relationships amongst Lithuanian social workers in the workplace and the role of supervision*, "European Journal of Social Work" 16 (2012) no. 5, pp. 671–688.

<sup>55</sup> P. Tham, D. Lynch, "Lost in transition?" – *Newly educated social workers' reflections on their first months in practice*, "European Journal of Social Work" 22 (2019) no. 3, pp. 400–411.

<sup>56</sup> M. Czechowska-Bieluga, *Zasoby rodzinne pracowników socjalnych a ich gotowość do zmian życiowych*, "Wychowanie w Rodzinie" 22 (2020) no. 1, pp. 227–240.

friends.<sup>57</sup> Alessandri et al.<sup>58</sup> conducted research on the importance of positive orientation for one's professional functioning. It resulted that positive orientation was significantly correlated with selected behaviors in the organization: behaviors directly benefiting the organization as a whole and altruistic behaviors aimed at benefiting specific individuals. In the similar vein, studies by Koeske and Kelly<sup>59</sup>, and Hayes and Weathington<sup>60</sup> proved that positive orientation negatively correlates with professional burnout – the higher the level of positive orientation, the lower the risk of professional burnout. Research by Grala<sup>61</sup> proved that positive orientation plays a mediating role in the relationship between commitment to one's job and professional burnout.<sup>62</sup> It is the identification of mediators between positive orientation and other determinants of the quality of functioning that is now emerging as a study focus for researchers.<sup>63</sup> Taking into consideration

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<sup>57</sup> G. V. Caprara, *W kierunku integracji teorii cech i społeczno-poznawczej*, w: S. Nowosad, B. Żurek (red.) *Barwy nauki. Nowoczesne technologie ICT w upowszechnianiu osiągnięć nauki*, Lublin 2010, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL; G. Alessandri, L. Borgogni, W. B. Schaufeli, G. V. Caprara, C. Consiglio, *From Positive Orientation to Job performance: The Role of Work Engagement and Self-efficacy Beliefs*, "J Happiness Stud", vol. 16 (2015) no. 3, pp. 767–788.

<sup>58</sup> G. Alessandri, L. Borgogni, W. B. Schaufeli, G. V. Caprara, C. Consiglio, *From Positive Orientation to Job performance: The Role of Work Engagement and Self-efficacy Beliefs*, "J Happiness Stud", vol. 16 (2015) no. 3, pp. 767–788.

<sup>59</sup> G. F. Koeske, T. Kelly, *The impact of overinvolvement on burnout and job satisfaction*, "American Journal of Orthopsychiatry", vol. 65 (1995) no. 2, pp. 282–292.

<sup>60</sup> C. T. Hayes, B. L. Weathington, *Optimism, stress, life satisfaction, and job burnout in restaurant managers*, "Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied", vol. 141 (2007) no. 6, pp. 565–579.

<sup>61</sup> K. Grala, *Zaangażowanie w pracę a wypalenie zawodowe nauczycieli. Mediująca rola orientacji pozytywnej*, "Educ Psychol (Lond)", vol. 59 (2020) no. 17, pp. 96–110.

<sup>62</sup> G. Alessandri, L. Borgogni, W. B. Schaufeli, G. V. Caprara, C. Consiglio, *From Positive Orientation to Job performance: The Role of Work Engagement and Self-efficacy Beliefs*, "J Happiness Stud", vol. 16 (2015) no. 3, pp. 767–788; K. Grala, *Zaangażowanie w pracę a wypalenie zawodowe nauczycieli. Mediująca rola orientacji pozytywnej*, "Educ Psychol (Lond)", vol. 59 (2020) no. 17, pp. 96–110.

<sup>63</sup> K. Grala, *Zaangażowanie w pracę a wypalenie zawodowe nauczycieli. Mediująca rola orientacji pozytywnej*, "Educ Psychol (Lond)", vol. 59 (2020) no. 17, p. 96–110; H. Noga, N. Voytsel, *Orientacja pozytywna, przekonanie o własnej skuteczności a treningi neurofeedback*, "Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka", vol. 16 (2016) no. 2, pp. 47–55; Ł. R. Miciuk, T. Jankowski, P. Oleś, *Incremental validity of positive orientation: predictive efficiency beyond the five-factor model*, "Health Psychol Rep", vol. 4 (2016) no. 4, pp. 294–302; S. Byra, *Posttraumatic growth in people with traumatic long-term spinal cord injury: predictive role of basic hope and coping*, "Spinal Cord", vol. 54 (2016), pp. 478–482.

that, in the present study, family assistants obtained the lowest scores for positive orientation, one can assume that, out of the groups of specialists and social workers subjected to the study, it is family assistants that are most vulnerable to professional burnout and likely to be less and less committed to their jobs over time.

Comprehensive activities performed by family assistants are based on the pursuit of empowerment of the client/family, provision of support, education, integration into the local environment, and, primarily, actions to prevent the degradation of individuals and families, to enable their continuous improvement and create networks of cooperation with various specialists.<sup>64</sup> The multitude and multifaceted nature of problems experienced by families that family assistants have to deal with (renders them vulnerable to experiencing tiredness) them likely to experience tiredness which, over the years, can develop into emotional exhaustion. A person on the verge of emotional exhaustion is unable to achieve satisfaction from interacting with their clients and from dealing with difficult issues.<sup>65</sup> It can also be assumed that family assistants may exhibit slightly less hope for positive solutions to their clients' complicated problems, because, according to the research, people with a positive attitude to life are more likely to declare hope for achieving success.<sup>66</sup>

There is also an interesting question regarding the mean results obtained by the subjects: what level of positive orientation will be optimal in an adaptive sense? Is it possible to draw parallels in this regard with Crocker and Park's<sup>67</sup> research on the dysfunctionality of overly high optimism or inadequately high self-esteem.<sup>68</sup> Can the results within the mean range could be considered optimal for adaptive functioning of the subjects? Obviously, the above questions require further research in the group of professional helpers.

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<sup>64</sup> Z. Szarota, *Asystent rodziny. Między interwencjonizmem państwa a społecznym opiekunstwem – konteksty edukacyjne*, "Edukacja" 116 (2011) no. 4, pp. 49–65.

<sup>65</sup> K. Mickiewicz, A. Babska, A. Günther-Jabłońska, K. Głogowska, *Wypalenie zawodowe asystentów rodziny a kompetencje społeczne i strategie radzenia sobie ze stresem*, "Praca Socjalna" 31 (2016) no. 2, pp. 165–188.

<sup>66</sup> I. M. Łukasik, A. Witek, *Attitude for Success in the Context of Positive Orientation and Self-efficacy*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio J, Paedagogia-Psychologia" 31 (2018) no. 2, pp. 301–312.

<sup>67</sup> J. Crocker, L. E. Park, *The costly pursuit of self-esteem*, "Psychological Bulletin" 130 (2004) no. 3, pp. 392–414.

<sup>68</sup> M. Sobol-Kwapińska, *Orientacja Pozytywna – koncepcje teoretyczne i przegląd badań*, "Studia Psychologiczne", vol. 52 (2014) no. 1, p. 86.

## 5. Conclusions

The results of the analysis indicate that the lack of change-readiness among professional helpers is a growing problem in an era of rapid changes taking place in the world, such as those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic or armed conflicts, while at the same time, the demands imposed on the welfare system are not only growing, but also changing. Therefore, further research is necessary to gain a better understanding of the orientation-to-change processes in professional helpers.

These findings are worth using in the process of educating future professional helpers, who, so far, have not been sufficiently prepared to cope with changes. It is important to develop a simple, job-specific counselling, the purpose of which would be to help professional helpers be more open to change, in particular to boost their tolerance for ambiguity. That package could be distributed by social work supervisors, but also by those providing training and education in the area of social services. It also seems important to examine the factors conditioning a low level of change readiness.

In the current socio-economic situation, where changeability is, paradoxically, the most constant part of the environment, and the policies of most organizations are focused upon continuous transformations, individuals open to new experiences are frequently sought-after professionals. In particular, such a resource is expected from persons whose profession involves accompanying their clients in going through changes. Unfortunately, the analyses revealed a relatively low level of change-readiness in the respondents. The presented research results revealed a relatively low level of change-readiness in professional helpers in all groups. They also showed a slight differentiation of traits making up change-readiness. Tolerance to ambiguity was the weakest, and resourcefulness was the strongest, of the respondent's traits regarding the openness to change. Considering all the traits analyzed, the vast majority of the respondents in the group scored below the optimal. The analyses showed that the level of positive orientation and, therefore<sup>69</sup>, their self-esteem, optimism, and life satisfaction are comparably average throughout the group, as well as in representatives of individual professions, which is consistent with the assumption of the concept adopted.

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<sup>69</sup> M. Łaguna, P. Oleś, D. Filipiuk, *Orientacja pozytywna i jej pomiar: polska adaptacja skali orientacji pozytywnej*, "Studia Psychologiczne" 49 (2011) no. 4, pp. 47–54.

Summing up, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Of all the change-readiness traits analyzed, the respondents featured the lowest level of tolerance to ambiguity and comparatively low level of passion, adaptability and confidence (this pattern was also revealed in individual groups, with other professionals having obtained the lowest scores, although the differences were not statistically significant). This means that the respondents do not take into account that they may find themselves surprised during the implementation of any plan, are not patient, and make snap judgments, because they expect quick and easy solutions. They often get tired, experience a lack energy and anxiety (more often than enthusiasm) when performing difficult tasks. They lack confidence in their own abilities and capabilities, they do not learn from their mistakes and, when they are not able to change the surrounding reality, they do not try to take advantage of the reality as it is.
- The studied groups differed in terms of adaptability (the difference was close to statistically significant), although the level of this trait in the entire group was also low. This means that the respondents have difficulty adapting to the changing demands of the environment and are not resilient, in the sense that they are discouraged by setbacks, find it difficult to avoid disappointment and frustration, and to change plans if necessary. They do not set themselves realistic goals and ruminate upon the past, instead of living the present and the looking to the future. The highest mean value for this trait was obtained by other professionals and the lowest, by social workers. Therefore, representatives of the former group experienced the above-mentioned difficulties to the least extent, compared to social workers, who experienced them most strongly.
- Positive orientation of the respondents was at 5.6 sten. Thus, its level can be defied as average.

A low level of change-readiness adversely affects the adaptability to a less-than-stable environment<sup>70</sup> as the one we live in nowadays. It can be assumed that the respondents treat the change situation as a stress – and anxiety-inducing – circumstance. As a result, they can bear significant psycho-social costs. The results of the presented study make it possible to create solutions that can

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<sup>70</sup> R. Kriegel, D. Brandt, *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers*, New York 1996, Warner Books.

be applied to the professional helpers' development. Training sessions, educational or support activities, including mainly supervision, which are beneficial for the comfort and work of less-prepared employees, make it possible to formulate adequate predictions and to determine professional career paths. Knowledge of professional helpers' capabilities can also be effectively used in designing and implementing organizational changes. The outlined picture of the analyzed group of employees, makes it possible to design the functioning of individuals in the context of their efficiency and satisfaction with their professional roles.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

This study, besides offering scientifically valuable results, also has its limitations. Firstly, it is a cross-sectional study. This means that, although pathways defined in the model were tested, a wider group of professional helpers in the welfare system, for example, community nurses, was not defined. The adopted empirical assumptions prove a low (below optimal) level of change-readiness in terms of the analyzed traits, and a high or medium level of positive orientation defined in the proposed model. However, a nationwide longitudinal study on a larger representative sample is necessary to check whether our results are replicable. Secondly, the study included mainly persons with many years of service, which significantly narrows the professional development stage and its effect on other psychological variables. Future studies should also include workers with fewer years of service. Thirdly, all psychological tools used in this study were of self-report type, thus the results may be affected by the social approval variable. Therefore, the presented measurement would yield different results if it were to be performed using other instruments. Fourthly, the sample was not representative. The data were gathered using non-random, snow-ball sampling. When planning future research, special attention should be paid to ensuring the representativeness of the sample. This will make it possible to generalize the conclusions for the entire Polish population.



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