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ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Interacción entre trabajadores sociales y medios de comunicación: transparencia, confianza y adaptación digital

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Resumen. La comunicación entre trabajadores sociales y representantes de los medios de comunicación desempeña un papel esencial en la configuración de la opinión pública, al fomentar la transparencia informativa y fortalecer la confianza en las instituciones sociales. En el contexto actual de digitalización y expansión de las tecnologías de la información, esta interacción está atravesando transformaciones profundas que exigen un análisis riguroso de las tendencias emergentes y de los enfoques más eficaces para diseñar estrategias comunicativas. El artículo examina los modelos de comunicación social vigentes y define estrategias óptimas para mejorar la interacción entre ambos actores. La metodología se fundamenta en el análisis teórico, el método comparativo y el análisis de contenido de fuentes científicas, permitiendo identificar los desafíos actuales y evaluar los enfoques predominantes en los procesos comunicativos. Los hallazgos revelan que la eficacia de la comunicación social depende de la alfabetización mediática de los trabajadores sociales, de su capacidad para adaptar métodos tradicionales a entornos digitales, y de la implementación de estrategias sostenibles a largo plazo. Factores como el uso estratégico de redes sociales, la creación de plataformas informativas integradas y la formación especializada son clave para optimizar la calidad del vínculo con los medios. No obstante, persisten barreras como la baja confianza en los servicios sociales, las restricciones burocráticas y la tendencia a la sensacionalización mediática. La relevancia práctica del estudio radica en la formulación de recomendaciones que permitan a las instituciones sociales fortalecer sus estrategias comunicativas, promoviendo su eficiencia, transparencia y una imagen positiva del sector.

Palabras clave: comunicación social, medios de comunicación, trabajadores sociales, interacción informativa, tecnologías digitales, alfabetización mediática, confianza, estrategias de comunicación.

Social communication between social workers and media: transparency, trust, and digital adaptation

Abstract. Communication between social workers and media representatives plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion by promoting informational transparency and strengthening trust in social institutions. In the current context of digitalization and the expansion of information technologies, this interaction is undergoing profound transformations that require a thorough analysis of emerging trends and the most effective approaches for designing communication strategies. This article examines prevailing models of social communication and defines optimal strategies to enhance interaction between these two actors. The methodology is based on theoretical analysis, comparative methods, and content analysis of scientific sources, allowing for the identification of current challenges and the evaluation of dominant approaches in communication processes. Findings reveal that the effectiveness of social communication depends on the media literacy of social workers, their ability to adapt traditional methods to digital environments, and the implementation of long-term sustainable strategies. Key factors for improving the quality of engagement with the media include the strategic use of social networks, the creation of integrated information platforms, and specialized training programs. However, several barriers persist, such as low public trust in social services, bureaucratic constraints, and the media's tendency toward sensationalism. The practical relevance of the study lies in the development of recommendations for social institutions to strengthen their communication strategies, thereby enhancing their efficiency, ensuring transparency, and fostering a positive image of the social sector.

Keywords: social communication, mass media, social workers, information interaction, digital technologies, media literacy, trust, communication strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, social communication plays a key role in shaping public opinion, disseminating socially relevant information, and ensuring effective interaction between social institutions, the public, and the media. Social workers who are faced with the issues of supporting vulnerable groups of the population, social policy and integration of citizens into public life on a daily basis are forced to actively cooperate with journalists and media organizations. At the same time, this interaction is accompanied by a number of challenges, including a lack of trust between the parties, the risk of distortion of information, bureaucratic restrictions, and difficulties in creating a stable information environment. A significant contribution to the study of social communication was made by authors who studied it as a phenomenon of mass and interpersonal interaction (Savchuk, 2024; Bilan, 2016). Particular attention was paid to the study of mechanisms of information exchange between government agencies and the media, as well as issues of trust in social services (Beletska, 2018; Kostieva, 2021). At the same time, the digitalization of the communication space has changed the traditional methods

of interaction, which have been studied in works on the use of social networks and online platforms in social communication (Ben Romdhane et al., 2024; Siricharoen, 2023). Researchers also focus on the problems of disinformation and manipulative media influence, which affects the formation of public discourse and the effectiveness of social policy (Williams & Ceci, 2023; Hutchinson et al., 2024). Despite a significant number of scientific papers, questions remain about identifying effective models of communication between social workers and journalists in the modern information space. Aspects of adapting traditional communication methods to the latest digital technologies, as well as the impact of the level of media literacy of social workers on the effectiveness of interaction with the media remain insufficiently studied.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the main communication models used in the social sphere and to determine the optimal strategies for interaction between social workers and media representatives. To achieve this goal, the following tasks have been set:

- to characterize the main approaches to social communication in the context of modern information processes;
- to analyze the barriers and challenges that arise in the process of communication between social services and journalists;
- to study the impact of digital technologies on the formation of communication strategies in the social sphere;
- to identify prospects for the development of effective interaction between social institutions and the media.

These research findings can be used to develop communication strategies for social services that will increase public trust in the social sector, promote transparency of social processes, and increase the level of information exchange between the main actors of social interaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Currently, research in the field of social communication emphasizes the importance of its role in shaping public opinion, increasing the interaction of social institutions with the media (Savchuk, 2024; Bilan, 2016; Beletska, 2018) or creating favorable conditions for shaping public opinion and assessing the significance of various events in the information and communication policy of Ukraine and the European Union (Dobrokhotova, 2021). The introduction of digital technologies, used as a leading means of modern communication, as a basis for the rapid dissemination of socially important information, is particularly expedient (Ben Romdhane et al., 2024, Siricharoen, 2023). Effective interaction of social workers with media representatives helps to increase the transparency of social services and trust (Hohenstein et al., 2023; Kostiiieva, 2021). At the same time, it pays considerable attention to the harm caused by the spread of misinformation, sensationalized and false news, and the commercialization of content in the media (Williams & Ceci, 2023; Hutchinson et al., 2024). The quality and accuracy of social communication depend on these factors and are influenced by the high media literacy of social workers (Beletska, 2018; Moiseeva, 2015).

Within the framework of publication analysis, we see value in implementing hybrid communication strategies, using conventional and digital forums together (Livingston, 2015; Nguyen Phuc et al., 2024). Social media offer enormous opportunities for reaching the public and accelerating information (Gross & Lunardo, 2024; Gualtieri, 2021), but also significant risks of manipulating public opinion. To this end, the effectiveness of communication is determined by the consistency of messages and the transparency of the information policy of social services (Merolla et al., 2024, Yahodzinskyi, 2023). In addition to digital technologies, other authors highlight traditional forms of communication, such as press conferences and briefings, and suggest that such forms of communication allow maintaining official information discourse and controlling the accuracy of messages (Moiseeva, 2015; Zaika et al., 2021). However, these methods are less effective because the level of flexibility and speed of dissemination of their information lags behind digital platforms (Akhter & Dash, 2023; Jaster et al., 2022).

In addition to the above factors, studies have examined the function of social communication to strengthen democratic processes and support civic engagement (Ross, 2024; Priopae-Șerbănescu & Mațoi, 2023). It aims to adapt social communication to global information trends and political changes that control the work of social services (Norkus & Morkevičius, 2024; Chebanova, 2020). Analysis of international practice also shows that the success of social communication depends on the level of information literacy of the population and the availability of communication technologies (Ercegovac, 2017; Karsgaard, 2023). Considerable attention is paid to the psychological aspect of communication and its impact on the level of trust and social interaction is studied (Nguyen Phuc et al., 2024; Merolla et al., 2024). It has been established that social communication is effective in increasing social capital and supporting vulnerable groups (Zaika et al., 2021; Yahodzinskyi, 2023). Meanwhile, other researchers also argue that despite the enormous potential of communication strategies and the latest technological advances, the lack of digital infrastructure and social workers' proficiency in the latest technologies can seriously limit the potential of communication strategies (Akhter & Dash, 2023; Hohenstein, et al., 2023).

Despite the great advances in the development of social communications, the problems of maintaining the reliability of information in the digital sphere pose challenges to mitigating the impact of political fraud in social interaction. The role of artificial intelligence in shaping and regulating communication processes in the social sphere also requires in-depth study.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study uses a set of methods that provide a comprehensive analysis of social communication between social workers and media representatives. Theoretical analysis and generalization allowed to systematize approaches to defining the essence of social communication, its role and functions in modern society. A comparative analysis of different models of interaction between social workers and journalists helped to identify the features of each approach, their advantages and disadvantages. The content analysis of scientific sources helped to assess current trends in the field of social communication, in particular the impact of digital technologies and changes in the communication strategies of social services. The paper also takes into account the analysis of practical experience in implementing communication strategies in the social sphere, which allowed us to identify key challenges and prospects for the development of information interaction between social institutions and the media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social communication is an integral element of interaction between social actors, especially in the social sphere, where information exchange determines the effectiveness of social services, shaping public opinion and building partnerships. In today's context, communication between social workers and media plays a key role in disseminating information about social issues, supporting social dialogue and ensuring transparency of social institutions.

The term "social communication" covers a wide range of information processes that take place between individuals, groups and institutions in society. It includes both interpersonal and mass communication, ensuring the exchange of knowledge, values and social norms (Savchuk, 2024). In the social sphere, effective communication determines the level of trust in social services and helps to improve the interaction between government agencies, civil society organizations and the population. Social communication in this environment includes several key elements:

- 1) Communicator (sender of information) - social workers, civil servants, representatives of public organizations.
- 2) Channel of information transmission - personal meetings, social networks, mass media.
- 3) Recipient of information - the public, media representatives, stakeholders.
- 4) The content of the message is socially significant information that influences the formation of public opinion (Bilan, 2016).

An important feature of social communication is its multichannel nature. With the development of digital technologies, traditional methods of interaction (press conferences, official statements) are gradually being supplemented by new formats, including social networks and online platforms, which allows for a more rapid response to public demands (Ben Romdhane et al., 2024).

Social communication has a number of important functions:

- The information function is to convey relevant social information to the target audience.
- Regulatory function - formation of social norms and rules of behavior.
- Adaptation function - assistance in the integration of vulnerable groups into public life (Moiseeva, 2015).
- Persuasive function - influencing public opinion on social issues (Hohenstein et al., 2023).

The media is an important intermediary between the social sector and the public, promoting social responsibility and increasing trust in social services. They perform a control function by highlighting the problems and achievements of social institutions. At the same time, the peculiarities of the modern media space, such as the spread of misinformation or commercialization of content, require greater caution in the interaction of social workers with journalists (Williams & Ceci, 2023).

PR and social communication with media representatives allows social workers to advocate for social change and influence the public agenda and policy decisions that have a direct impact on the well-being of their clients and communities. Social workers need to identify and articulate the problems, challenges, and opportunities they face in their practice and offer solutions, recommendations, or actions. For example, social workers can use campaigns, events, or petitions to mobilize and engage their audiences around a specific cause or goal, and use media relations, press releases, or articles to attract publicity and get the attention of the media or policy makers. By advocating for

social change, social workers can also strengthen their voice and influence, as well as social justice and human rights in clients and the community at large.

Social communication in the field of social work is a multidimensional process that ensures effective interaction between social workers, the media and people. It plays an important function in disseminating socially valuable information that helps to maintain trust in social institutions and shape public opinion. The development of digital technologies creates an opportunity for new channels of social communication, but it also creates new problems of managing the communication process that need to be solved.

In today’s society, effective interaction between social workers and media representatives is an important factor in shaping public opinion on social issues and policies. Cooperation between these two groups helps to raise public awareness of social services and ensures transparency of social institutions. However, such interaction is accompanied by a number of challenges, including the possibility of distortion of information, lack of competence in social communications, and difficulties in forming long-term partnerships (Savchuk, 2024). With the development of digital technologies, approaches to communication are changing, and social workers are using new strategies to establish an effective dialogue with journalists and the public. The analysis of modern approaches to interaction will help to outline key practices that promote a constructive partnership between the social sector and the media.

Based on the analysis of scientific sources and practical experience, we can identify several main approaches to interaction between social workers and media representatives:

Before considering these approaches in more detail, it is worth paying attention to the generalized characteristics of modern models of communication between social workers and journalists, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Modern approaches to interaction between the social sphere and the media.

Approach	Main characteristics	Advantages.	Disadvantages
Partnership approach	Long-term cooperation between social services and the media	Increased trust, stable information flow	Requires significant resources and time
Crisis approach	Intensification of communication in times of social crises or emergencies	Prompt response, increased public attention	Can lead to a loss of control over the narrative
Press service approach	Use of official press services to communicate with journalists	Control over the accuracy of information, official status	Limited flexibility, formality of interaction
Digital approach	Use of social media and online platforms	Rapid dissemination of information, public involvement	High probability of disinformation and manipulation
Advocacy approach	Promotion of socially important topics through the media	Raising the level of public awareness	May cause resistance from political structures

Source: created by the author based on Ben Romdhane et al. (2024), Bilan (2016), Moiseeva (2015), Savchuk (2024).

The development of effective interaction between social workers and media representatives depends on the approach and communication strategy chosen. The partnership approach is the most effective in the long run, but it requires significant resources. The crisis approach, while providing a quick response, often does not allow for control over the information space. Digital technologies open up new opportunities for communication, but at the same time increase the risk of disinformation. To optimize the interaction between the media and the social sphere, it is necessary to apply a comprehensive approach combined with traditional methods of communication and the most advanced digital technologies.

Promoting social services, social initiatives, shaping opinions and increasing social services in society is an important issue of good interaction between social workers and media journalists. However, this process is accompanied by various barriers and problems that can complicate communication. This may be due to the structural characteristics of social services and the way information is transmitted, or differences in the way information is presented. Being aware of these barriers helps to identify the right strategies to overcome obstacles and pave the way for more favorable cooperation between the two parties. Table 2 provides a general description of the main barriers and challenges.

TABLE 2. Main barriers and challenges in communication between social workers and journalists

Barrier category	Description.	Possible consequences
Lack of media literacy among social workers	Insufficient understanding of the principles of media work and the specifics of journalistic activity	Incorrect presentation of information, distortion of facts
Sensationalism and commercialization of the media	Journalists' focus on attracting attention rather than accurate coverage of events	Distortion of social issues, creation of a negative image
Bureaucratic restrictions	Long time to approve information, the need to follow protocols	Delays in the transmission of important information
Data confidentiality	Restrictions on disclosure of personal data of social services clients	Inability to present a complete picture of social problems
Low level of trust	Stereotypes and prejudices against both sides, lack of openness	Lack of productive cooperation between social workers and the media
Uneven information flow	Periodic activity in cooperation (only during crisis situations)	Lack of stable information for the society
Lack of resources	Limited funding for communication activities in the social sphere	Poor quality of media products, insufficient presence in the media

Source: created by the author based on Beletska (2018), Hohenstein et al. (2023), Kostieva (2021), Savchuk (2024).

Socially relevant information can be disseminated through the articulation of information among social workers and journalists, and should not create too many obstacles to communication. The first two main problems are the low media literacy of social workers and the media’s tendency to sensationalize, bureaucratic obstacles and data privacy restrictions. Therefore, it is necessary to develop programs to improve the communication skills of social workers, build long-term partnerships between social services and the media, and create transparency and openness in social projects.

Effective interaction with the media, and at the same time with the social sphere, is the key to social initiatives to inform about society, support vulnerable groups of the population, and strengthen trust in social services. At the same time, this communication needs to be improved due to existing barriers related to the lack of media literacy, uneven information flow, and sensationalism of the media (Savchuk, 2024).

To improve cooperation between social workers and journalists, it is necessary to use comprehensive communication methods aimed at increasing trust, transparency and mutual understanding. Below are the main methods that contribute to the effectiveness of this interaction (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Methods of improving communication between the social sphere and the media.

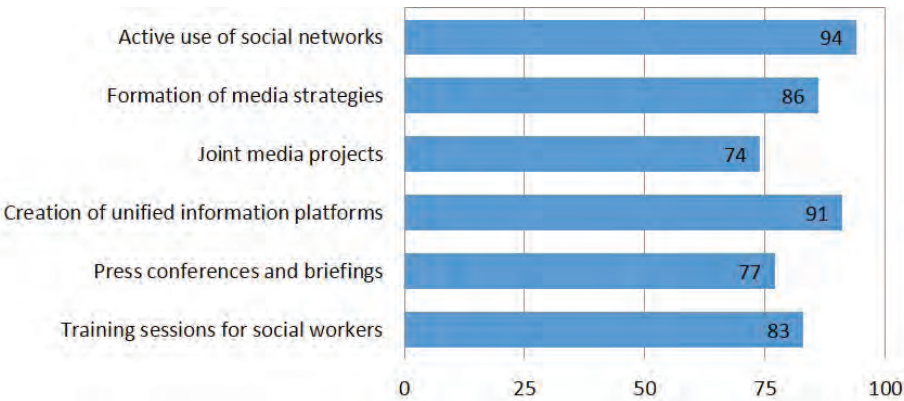
Method	Description.	Expected effect
Training sessions for social workers	Courses on the basics of media literacy and effective communication	Improved media relations skills, reduced risk of information distortion
Press conferences and briefings	Regular meetings with journalists for prompt dissemination of information	Increased openness and transparency of social services
Creation of common information platforms	Implementation of online platforms for coordination between social institutions and journalists	Faster access to verified information
Joint media projects	Collaboration with journalists on special projects and documentary materials	Increased public awareness of social issues
Formation of media strategies	Developing long-term plans for cooperation between social services and the media	Systematic coverage of social issues
Active use of social networks	Using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to disseminate official information	Wider audience coverage, faster communication

* Created by the author.

Effective communication between social workers and media representatives is an important element of informing the public about social initiatives, promoting public dialogue, and increasing trust in social institutions. However, in order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to use modern methods of interaction that take into account the challenges of the digital age, trends in the media space, and the specifics of the social sphere (Savchuk, 2024).

The analysis of scientific research and practical recommendations allows us to identify the main methods of improving communication between social services and the media. The results are summarized in Fig. 1.

Figure 1. The level of effectiveness of methods for improving communication between the social sphere and the media.



Source: created by the author based on Beletska (2018), Bilan (2016), Moiseeva (2015), Savchuk (2024).

The analysis of the numerical data presented in the table shows a significant variation in the effectiveness of different methods of improving communication between the social sphere and the media. The highest rate of expected effect (94%) was recorded for the use of social media as a communication tool. This is due to their efficiency, wide audience reach, and interactivity, which allows social services to respond quickly to public requests, adjust information messages, and engage stakeholders in discussion (Savchuk, 2024). The second most effective measure was the creation of unified information platforms, which received 91% of the votes. Such platforms provide centralized access to official information, which is especially important in crisis situations or when implementing long-term social programs. The high level of effectiveness of this method is explained by the possibility of rapid data updates and reduced risks of misinformation (Bilan, 2016).

Somewhat lower rates, in the range of 83-86%, are observed for training sessions for social workers (83%) and the development of media strategies (86%). Training activities increase the level of media literacy of social workers, allowing them to work more effectively with journalists, but their effectiveness depends on the further practical application of the knowledge gained (Beletska, 2018). In turn, the development of long-term communication strategies avoids chaotic cooperation between social services and the media, which has a positive impact on the stability of information exchange. Joint media projects (74%) and press conferences (77%) have the lowest efficiency rates. This is due to the lengthy preparation of such events, the need for significant resources, and a certain difficulty in conveying the message to the target audience. Media projects, although they can have a long-term impact, do not always guarantee a quick response to current events. Press conferences are often perceived as a formal communication tool that does not always ensure broad interest of journalists (Moiseeva, 2015).

Thus, the results of the analysis indicate that the most effective methods are those related to digital technologies and rapid dissemination of information, while traditional methods, although still important, are less effective due to their complexity in organization and limited adaptability to rapid changes in the information environment.

Recommendations for the development of communication strategies to increase trust and information transparency in the social sphere can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Introduce media literacy training programs for social workers. Social services should organize trainings and seminars on the basics of communication, media relations and crisis management. This will help employees to interact confidently with journalists, formulate clear and convincing messages, and avoid distorting information.
- 2) Develop a unified strategy for information interaction. Social institutions should create a long-term communication strategy that will provide for systematic informing the public about social initiatives, successes and problems. This will help to reduce distrust in the social sector and ensure transparency of the institutions' activities.
- 3) Active use of digital platforms and social networks. The use of social media and online platforms allows for the rapid dissemination of accurate information and interaction with a wide audience. Regular publications, video content, and live broadcasts will help establish a dialog with citizens and increase their trust in social services.
- 4) Strengthen cooperation between social institutions and journalists. To ensure quality coverage of social issues, it is important to establish partnerships with the media through regular press conferences, briefings, and joint projects. This will help journalists receive reliable information without intermediaries and contribute to a positive image of the social sector.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study proved that communication between the social sphere and the media is an important aspect of shaping people's opinions and the tendency to trust the reality of social services. The literature analyzed shows that there are two approaches to understanding this interaction: on the one hand, some researchers argue that digital communications are important for increasing the transparency of social services (Savchuk, 2024; Bilan, 2016), while on the other hand, the emphasis is on official communication strategies and traditional media channels (Beletska, 2018; Moiseeva, 2015).

As information is widely shared through social media, it is the most effective way to disseminate information due to the speed of message transmission, wide audience reach, and interactivity, as studied by Savchuk (2024) and Bilan (2016). This is in line with the results of using digital platforms in communication strategies, i.e., using the most efficient ones. However, some authors, such as Beletska (2018), point to the risks of information manipulation in social media and loss of control over the official discourse. With regard to this point, it is necessary to maintain a balance between efficiency and transparency of information in digital and traditional media channels.

In addition, as Moiseeva (2015) notes, press conferences and official briefings are an integral part of the official information exchange in social services and journalists. This method appears to be less effective than that carried out through digital channels, which may lead to the fact that the

ways of organizing such events, for example, should include the use of digital formats, such as online broadcasts and interactive press conferences.

The issue of media literacy of social workers also remains open. According to Beletska's (2018) study, poor communication training makes effective communication with the media a challenge, and this is what the data indicates, i.e. the need for training for social workers. At the same time, some researchers (Bilan, 2016; Savchuk, 2024) argue that even with a high level of training, the problem of distrust in social services remains significant, which requires a systematic approach to the development of long-term communication strategies.

Thus, the findings are partially consistent with existing research, but also indicate the need for further research in the area of integrating traditional and digital media into the communication strategy of the social sector. An important area for future research is to evaluate the effectiveness of hybrid communication models that combine the advantages of official and digital channels. It is also worthwhile to study in more detail the impact of the level of media literacy of social workers on the quality of communication and public trust in social institutions.

CONCLUSION

The study of social communication between social workers and the media showed the need to improve information interaction to increase the level of trust and openness of social institutions. An analysis of existing approaches has shown that digital communications, including the use of social media and information platforms, are the most effective tools for the rapid and massive dissemination of socially important information. At the same time, traditional methods, such as press conferences and briefings, remain important but need to be adapted to the modern information space by integrating with digital channels. The results confirmed that one of the key challenges is the insufficient level of media literacy of social workers, which makes it difficult to interact effectively with journalists. This requires the introduction of special educational programs and trainings that will allow social services to better adapt to the information environment. It was also found that bureaucratic barriers and data privacy issues significantly limit the speed and quality of information exchange between the social sector and the media, which requires the development of clear procedures for regulating communications. The novelty of the findings lies in identifying the importance of an integrated approach to communication strategies that combines traditional and digital methods, as well as in emphasizing the need to build long-term partnerships between social institutions and the media. The practical significance of the study is that the proposed methods can be used to improve the information strategies of social services, which will contribute to the transparency and effectiveness of social policy. However, the study also has some limitations. The most important is that it does not take into account communication systems in different socio-cultural contexts and does not explain in detail the influence of political factors on the interaction between the social sphere and the media. The study also does not provide a full detailed analysis of the effectiveness of different digital platforms over time, which is an issue that still needs to be further explored.

Areas for further research include the development of hybrid communication models that take advantage of both traditional and digital methods, as well as the analysis of artificial intelligence and automated social communication information systems. Secondly, it is necessary to study how disinformation is countered in the social sphere and how to develop recommendations on the responsibilities of social workers in crisis communication in times of imperfect information.

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