

# Factors of Social Work Students' Professional Identity Significance during Professional Training

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**Abstract:** The paper reveals the results of empirically study of factors of social work students' professional identity significance during professional training. The respondents group consisted of 311 social work students of 1-4 years of Ukrainian higher education institutions. The low-level predominance of professional identity significance in the majority of students is defined. The development of students' professional identity significance is due to various factors. In the 1st year – the position of students regarding to the status of a social worker in society and respect for the social worker in society; positive attitude of students to the social worker profession. In the 2nd year – a positive attitude of students to the social worker profession; personal significance of the social worker profession. In the 3rd year – a positive attitude of students to the social worker profession; students' position about the positive impact of the future professional activity of a social worker on their life. In the 4th year – the personal significance of the social worker profession. The factor “students' position regarding the status of a social worker in society” has a direct impact on the importance of professional identity for 3rd year students and opposite – 4th year students. The position of all students about the prestige of the social worker profession in the country does not affect their professional identity significance.

**Keywords:** *professional identity, significance, factors, social work students, higher education institutions.*

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## 1. Introduction

In the modern world of pandemics, unstable epidemic situation, intensive transformation of socio-political and economic spheres cause a significant impact on the lives of citizens, this can complicate their social functioning. With the spread of life-threatening infectious diseases (SARS, influenza, Covid-19), an increase in the number of domestic violence cases during prolonged quarantine, life crises, etc., the need to provide qualified emergency rehabilitation, psychological and other types of social assistance to those categories of citizens who need them is becoming more urgent. The government assigns the main role to the social workers in solving the outlined urgent tasks (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2020a). A social worker must be a bearer of universal values, high culture, morals and deep professional knowledge, and identify themselves with the professional community of workers in the professional work field. The development of professional identity begins in higher education institutions, at the initial stage of future professionals' professionalization (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2020b). In modern conditions, the study of the main factors of professional identity of social work students through their professional training in higher educational institutions is an important task of modern psychological and pedagogical science and practice.

## 2. Literature Review

Factors of social work students' professional identity through their theoretical and practical training in higher education institutions of different countries vary.

It is determined that social work students with a bachelor's degree in higher education institutions of Canada most often identify their future professional activities with such areas of social work as: policy and research; private practice with voluntary clients; therapy, clinical and classical social work (Bogo et al., 1993). It is stated that the development of social work students' professional identity in higher education institutions in Romania depends significantly on their developing practice teaching (Maisch et. al., 1997). It is proved that the development of social work students' professional identity in higher education institutions of United States and Canada is influenced significantly by their sexual and gender identity (Craig et al., 2017). The peculiarities of the professional motivation influence on the development of social work students' professional identity in higher education institutions of Great Britain, Germany, Slovenia and Finland in

the framework of a joint project concerning the strengthen of the European dimension in their social work curricula are studied (Hackett et al., 2003). It is stated that the development of social work students' professional identity in higher education institutions in China is influenced significantly by such factors as initial unwillingness of students to risk personal health and life in the process of training (field) practice during the SARS epidemic, subsequent reflection on their own participation in such complex events and awareness of personal professionalism (Leung et al., 2007); joint interaction of social work teachers' with advanced social workers (Mo & Chan, 2020). It is proved that the important influence on the development of social work students' professional identity in higher education institutions in China determines the inclusion of "reflective learning" in the educational process, which is to enhance students' reflection on the importance of their knowledge and competencies in the process of social work during training (field) practice (Lam et al., 2007). It has been found that the development of social work students' professional identity in higher education institutions of Israel depends significantly on their satisfaction with supervision and personal values, as well as on the direct and strong connection of social values, self-differentiation and empathy with supervision (Levy et al., 2014; Shlomo et al., 2012). The influence of a short-term international study program in India on the development of social work students' professional identity in higher education institutions of Australia has been studied (Moorheada et al., 2014). It is defined that the development of undergraduate social work students' professional identity in the higher education institutions of Northern Ireland depends significantly on the supervision and support they receive in the long-term training (field) practice in social work (Cleak et al., 2016).

However, scientists have not studied the factors of social work students' professional identity significance during professional training higher education institutions of Ukraine.

### **3. Research Methodology**

**3.1. The purpose of the research** was to determine the factors of social work students' professional identity significance during professional training in higher education institutions of Ukraine. Objectives of the research: 1) theoretically determine of nature of the social work students' professional identity; 2) empirically determine of professional identity significance of 1-4 years social work students; 3) to determine the factors of

professional identity significance of 1-4 years social work students of Ukrainian higher education institutions.

### **3.2. Participants**

To study this issue, an empirical study was organized and conducted, in which 311 bachelor social work students from Ukrainian higher education institutions of cities Kyiv, Rivne, Kamyanets-Podilsky and Berdyansk. Respondents: students of 1-4 years of professional training aged 17 to 23. Of these, 76 were first-year students, 88 second-year students, 75 third-year students, and 72 fourth-year students.

### **3.3. Methods**

**Theoretical methods:** analysis scientific works to determine the essence of the concept “social work students’ professional identity”.

**Empirical methods:** questionnaires.

The professional identity of social work students and its significance were studied with the help of a slightly modified questionnaire “Who am I?” by M. Kuhn and T. McPartland. Students were asked to give one to twenty different answers to the question “Who am I?” which was addressed to them, within 12 minutes. The answers had to be arranged in order of importance. Namely to write the most important answer on the 1st place, less important on the 2nd and the least important, the 20th on the last. The answers “I am a future social worker”, which took 1-6 places, testified the high level of significance of students’ professional identity, 7-13 places – medium, 14-20 places – low.

The study of the development factors of social work students’ professional identity was facilitated by the use of the A.S. Borysiuk’s questionnaire (Borysiuk, 2010) in our modification. The questionnaire contained six questions with suggested answer options, which concerned the prestige and status of a social worker in society (1-3 questions) and the attitude of students to their own professional choice (4-6 questions). Students had to choose only one answer to each question. To the first question “How prestigious do you think the profession of a social worker is in Ukraine?” the following answer options were offered: a) very prestigious (high level of prestige); b) on the same level with other professions that require higher education (medium); c) unprestigious (low). To the second question “What, in your opinion, is the status of social worker in Ukraine?” the following answers were suggested: a) high; b) medium; c) low. Such responses reflected students’ positions on the appropriate level of social worker status in the country. Answers to the third question “What level of

respect do social workers have in society?” were as follows: a) high, they are all respected (high level of public respect); b) medium, they are treated in the same way as other skilled workers (medium); c) low, they are despised (low).

To the fourth question “How do you feel about your chosen profession?” the following answer options were offered: a) I am proud of it (positive attitude); b) I don’t care, because it’s just a job (neutral attitude); c) I am ashamed of my profession (negative attitude). Suggested answers to the fifth question “How does your chosen profession affect your life in general?” were as follows: a) my life plans are related to the profession, and the organization of life is subordinate to it (positive influence); b) does not affect (neutral influence); c) prevents living as it would be desirable (negative impact). The following answers were offered to the sixth question “How important is the chosen profession for you”: a) very important, it is the meaning of my life (high level); b) important, but it is only a way to earn a living (medium); c) not important at all, you can do anything that brings income (low).

**Statistical methods:** the Pearson’s  $r$  correlation coefficient and the Fisher’s  $\varphi^*$  criterion angular transformation are used in the study. The criterion  $\varphi^*$  at  $p \leq 0.01$  is denoted by \*, at  $p \leq 0.05$  –\*\*. If the meaning of the criterion  $\varphi^*$  is within the limits of insignificance, then the notation \* is not used. The computer software packages of statistical software SPSS 17.0 are used for mathematical and statistical data processing.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### *4.1. The essence of the concept “Social Work Students’ Professional Identity”*

Professional identification of a person is a process of experiencing unity with a certain professional activity, professional community, its individual representatives, which contributes to the assimilation of professional qualities, status, roles and norms (Argyle, 1972; Povarenkov, 2002; Shnejder, 2001; Zeer, 2005).

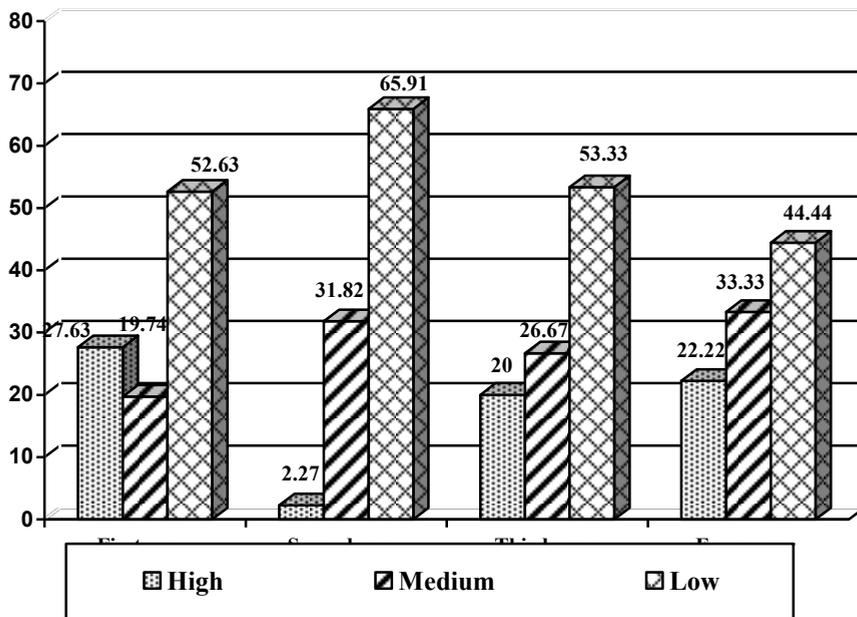
The professional identity of social workers is the result of their identification with social work and its norms, with the professional community of social workers, with its authoritative representatives, with the status of a social worker in society. The significance of a social worker’s professional identity is determined by its importance among other types of professional and social identity (Webb, 2017), recognition of social work in the country (Ciocănel et al., 2018).

It should be noted that this definition also applies to the social work students' professional identity and its significance for them. The social work students' professional identity is the result of their identification with the professional activity of social workers and its norms, with the status and role of a social worker in society, with the professional community of social workers and its individual representatives. The importance of social work students' professional identity is determined by its priority among many other types of social identity.

#### 4.2. Social Work Students' Professional Identity Significance

At the empirically stage of the study, the professional identity significance of 1-4 years social work students during professional training in higher education institutions was researched.

The results of the questionnaire "Who am I?" which reveal the levels of the 1-4 years students' professional identity significance are presented in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Levels of professional identity significance of 1-4 years social work students (%)

Source: Authors' own conception

As can be seen from figure 1, among the majority of students in all years of professional training a low level of professional identity significance

was found, compared to high and medium. Compared to the high, the quantitative data regarding the medium level of professional identity significance predominate in the 2-4 years of professional training in higher education institution. The difference in quantitative data regarding the levels of significance of the social work students' professional identity in each year deserves special attention and therefore is characterized in more detail.

In general, during the professional training from the 1st to the 4th year, the number of students with high level of professional identity significance decreases whereas medium and low levels increases. Changing the levels of significance of the social work students' professional identity in each subsequent year of professional training, compared to the previous one, also turned out to be different. Compared to the 1st year, in the 2nd year of professional training the number of students with high level of professional identity significance (by 25.36%;  $\varphi^*=5.122^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) statistically significantly decreases; and with medium level (by 12.08%;  $\varphi^*=1.775^{**}$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ) and low level (by 13.28%;  $\varphi^*=1.731^{**}$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ) increases. Compared to the 2nd year, in the 3rd year of professional training the number of students with high level of professional identity significance (by 17.73%;  $\varphi^*=3.964^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) statistically significantly increases; and with medium level (by 5.19%;  $\varphi^*=0.713$ ) and low level (by 12.58%;  $\varphi^*=1.635$ ) decreases insignificantly. Compared to the 3rd year, in the 4th year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 2.22%;  $\varphi^*=0.327$ ) and medium level of professional identity significance (by 6.66%;  $\varphi^*=0.873$ ) increases statistically insignificantly and decreases with low level (by 8.89%;  $\varphi^*=1.079$ ).

Summarizing the obtained quantitative data, we should note the insufficiently positive dynamics growth of social work students' professional identity importance through their professional training in higher education institutions. During the 1st and 2nd years of professional training, students gain more knowledge in general humanities and professional disciplines, and less practical professional competencies. During the 3rd and 4th years, students acquire practical professional competencies being involved in different practical tasks for practical classes in professional disciplines and internships in social work.

#### ***4.3. The Factors of Social Work Students' Professional Identity Significance***

In this stage of the study, the factors of social work students' professional identity significance were studied of during their professional training in higher education institutions.

Firstly, it was found how prestigious the profession of social worker is in the country, according to the position of students (table 1).

**Table 1.** The position of 1-4 years students on the prestige of social worker profession in the country (%)

Levels/ Students	1st years	2nd years	3rd years	4th years
High	21	40.9	26.7	5.6
Medium	71	47.7	46.6	61.1
Low	8	11.4	26.7	33.3

Source: Authors' own conception

As can be seen from table 1, according to most students of all years, the prestige of social worker profession in society is low. However, students' position about the level of social worker profession prestige in Ukrainian society differs in each year. Compared to the 1st year, in the 2nd year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 19.9%;  $\varphi^*=2.765^*$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) statistically significantly increases; the number of students with medium level (by 23.3%;  $\varphi^*=3.072^*$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) decreases significantly; and with low level (by 3.4%;  $\varphi^*=0.76$ ) slightly increases. Compared to the 2nd year, in the 3rd year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 14.2%;  $\varphi^*=1.922^{**}$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) statistically significantly decreases; the number of students with medium level (by 1.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.127$ ) decreases insignificantly; and students with low level (by 15.3%;  $\varphi^*=2.526^*$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) increases significantly. Compared to the 3rd year, in the 4th year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 21.1%;  $\varphi^*=3.685^*$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) statistically significantly decreases; and increases with the medium level (by 14.5%;  $\varphi^*=1.758^{**}$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and slightly increases with low level (by 6.6%;  $\varphi^*=0.873$ ).

Thus, during the professional training in higher education institutions, from the 1st to the 4th year the number of students with the position about the low level of the social worker profession prestige in the Ukrainian society significantly increases. The position of social work students regarding to the high and medium levels of their chosen profession prestige in society varies differently from the previous to the next year through their professional training.

The study results of students' position on the social status of Ukrainian social workers are presented in table 2.

**Table 2.** 1-4 years students' position on the status of social worker in society (%)

Levels/ Students	1st years	2nd years	3rd years	4th years
High	21	13.6	6.7	5.6
Medium	63.2	72.8	60	33.3
Low	15.8	13.6	33.3	61.1

Source: Authors' own conception

Table 2 shows that most students of all year believe that the status of social worker in society is medium and low. However, students' positions on this issue vary differently in each year. Compared to the 1st year, in the 2nd year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 7.4%;  $\varphi^*=1.277$ ) statistically insignificantly decreases; with medium level (by 9.6%;  $\varphi^*=1.303$ ) increases; and with low level (by 2.2%;  $\varphi^*=0.402$ ) decreases. Compared to the 2nd year, in the 3rd year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 6.9%;  $\varphi^*=1.47$ ) statistically insignificantly decreases; with the medium level (by 12.8%;  $\varphi=1.718^{**}$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ) statistically significantly decreases; and with low level (by 19.7%;  $\varphi^*=3.023^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) increases. Compared to the 3rd year, in the 4th year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 1.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.279$ ) decreases statistically insignificantly; with medium level (by 26.7%;  $\varphi^*=3.285^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) decreases statistically significantly; and increases with low level (by 27.8%;  $\varphi^*=3.424^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ).

Thus, from the 1st to the 4th year of professional training, the number of students who believe that the status of social worker in society is high or medium decreases significantly. At the same time, the number of students with the idea that the status of social worker in society is low significantly increases.

The study results of students' position on the respect of the social workers professional activities in Ukrainian society are presented in table 3.

**Table 3.** 1-4 years students' position on the respect of the social workers professional activities in society (%)

Levels/ Students	1st years	2nd years	3rd years	4th years
High	13.2	2.3	6.7	5.6
Medium	71	90.9	66.6	77.8
Low	15.8	6.8	26.7	16.6

Source: Authors' own conception

As can be seen from table 3, most students of all years believe that the respect of the social worker profession in society is low. More detailed position of the 1-4 years students on this issue is described below. Compared to the 1st year, in the 2nd year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 10.9%;  $\varphi^*=2.81^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) statistically significantly decreases; with the medium level (by 19.9%;  $\varphi^*=3.34^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) increases; and with low level (9%;  $\varphi^*=1.852^{**}$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ) decreases. Compared to the 2nd year, in the 3rd year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 4.4%;  $\varphi^*=1.4$ ) statistically insignificantly increases; with the medium level (by 24.3%;  $\varphi^*=3.932^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) statistically significantly decreases; and with low level (by 19.9%;  $\varphi^*=3.551^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) increases. Compared to the 3rd year, in the 4th year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 1.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.279$ ) decreases statistically insignificantly, with medium level (by 11.2%;  $\varphi^*=1.509$ ) increases and with low level (by 10.1%;  $\varphi^*=1.479$ ) decreases.

Thus, during the professional training, from the 1st to the 4th year the number of students with the high level position about the social worker respect in the Ukrainian society significantly decreases. The position of social workers regarding the medium and low levels of the social worker respect in society varies differently from the previous to the next year of their professional training.

The study results of students' attitude to the social worker profession are presented in table 4.

**Table 4.** 1-4 years students' attitude to the social worker profession (%)

Attitude/ Students	1st years	2nd years	3rd years	4th years
Positive	81.6	77.3	60	50
Neutral	13.2	18.2	33.3	44.4
Negative	5.2	4.5	6.7	5.6

Source: Authors' own conception

Table 4 shows that the largest number of students has a positive attitude to the profession of social worker; a much smaller number – neutral; and the smallest – negative. However, the number of students with a positive, neutral and negative attitude changes with each passing year through their professional training. The obtained results are given below in more detail. Compared to the 1st year, in the 2nd year of professional training the number of students with positive attitude (by 4.3%;  $\varphi^*=0.683$ )

decreases statistically insignificantly, with neutral (by 5%;  $\varphi^*=0.875$ ) increases and with negative (by 0.7%;  $\varphi^*=0.236$ ) decreases. Compared to the 2nd year, in the 3rd year of professional training the number of students with positive attitude (by 17.3%;  $\varphi^*=2.393^*$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) statistically significantly decreases; with neutral (by 15.1%;  $\varphi^*=2.221^{**}$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) increases and with negative (by 2.2%;  $\varphi^*=0.611$ ) slightly increases. Compared to the 3rd year, in the 4th year of professional training the number of students with positive attitude (by 10%;  $\varphi^*=1.218$ ) decreases statistically insignificantly, with neutral (by 11.1%;  $\varphi^*=1.388$ ) increases and with negative (by 1.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.279$ ) decreases.

Thus, from the 1st to the 4th year of professional training, the number of students with a positive attitude to the profession of social worker decreases statistically significantly and the number with a neutral attitude increases. There were no statistically significant changes in the number of students with a negative attitude to the profession of social worker.

The obtained results of a significant reduction in the number of students with a positive attitude to the social worker profession through their professional training in higher education institutions are confirmed by the empirical results of our previous research (Melnik & Spivak, 2019).

The study results of social work students' position about the impact of the chosen profession on their lives are presented in table 5.

**Table 5.** 1-4 year students' position on the impact of the future social worker profession on their lives (%)

Impacts/ Students	1st years	2nd years	3rd years	4th years
Positive	47.4	54.5	46.6	27.8
Neutral	50	43.2	46.6	61.1
Negative	2.6	2.3	6.8	11.1

Source: Authors' own conception

As can be seen from table 5, the largest number of students in all years believes that future profession will have a neutral impact on their lives, with a slightly smaller one – positively and the smallest – negatively. However, the number of students with ideas about the positive, neutral and negative impacts of the social worker profession on their lives in the future changes with each subsequent year of professional training. Compared to the 1st year, in the 2nd year of professional training the number of students with

a positive position about an impact (by 7.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.907$ ) increases statistically insignificantly, with a neutral position (by 6.8%;  $\varphi^*=0.875$ ) and negative (by 0.3%;  $\varphi^*=0.128$ ) decreases. Compared to the 2nd year, in the 3rd year of professional training the number of students with a positive position about an impact (by 7.9%;  $\varphi^*=0.993$ ) decreases statistically insignificantly; the number with a neutral (by 3.4%;  $\varphi^*=0.452$ ) and negative position (by 4.5%;  $\varphi^*=1.4$ ) increases. Compared to the 3rd year, in the 4th year of professional training the number of students with positive position about an impact (by 18.8%;  $\varphi^*=2.388^*$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) decreases statistically significantly; with neutral position (by 14.5%;  $\varphi^*=1.758^{**}$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) increases; and with the negative (by 4.3%;  $\varphi^*=0.939$ ) slightly increases.

Thus, from the 1st to the 4th year of professional training, the number of students with different positions: positive, neutral or negative impact of future profession on their lives varies (increases or decreases). However, by the end of professional training, the number of students with a position about the positive impact of the future social worker profession on their lives decreases significantly and the number of students with a position about neutral and negative impact increases.

The study results of the future profession significance for social work students are presented in table 6.

**Table 6.** The personal significance of the chosen social worker profession for 1-4 years students (%)

Levels/ Students	1st years	2nd years	3rd years	4th years
High	31.6	40.9	26.7	27.8
Medium	57.9	56.8	46.6	44.4
Low	10.5	2.3	26.7	27.8

Source: Authors' own conception

Table 6 shows that for the largest number of students the level of personal significance of the social worker profession is medium, for a smaller one – high or low. However, these levels of significance for students change differently in each subsequent year of professional training. Compared to the 1st year, in the 2nd year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 9.3%;  $\varphi^*=1.239$ ) and medium level (by 1.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.14$ ) increases statistically insignificantly and with low (by 8.2%;  $\varphi^*=2.273^{**}$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) decreases statistically significantly. Compared to the 2nd year, in the 3rd year of professional training the number of students

with high level (by 14.2%;  $\varphi^*=1.922^{**}$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ) statistically significantly decreases, the number of students with medium level (by 10.2%;  $\varphi^*=1.285$ ) decreases insignificantly; and with low level (by 24.4%;  $\varphi^*=4.976^*$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ) significantly increases. Compared to the 3rd year, in the 4th year of professional training the number of students with high level (by 1.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.152$ ) increases statistically insignificantly; with medium (by 2.2%;  $\varphi^*=0.279$ ) decreases; and with low (by 1.1%;  $\varphi^*=0.152$ ) increases.

Thus, during the professional training in higher education institutions, from the 1st to the 4th year the number of students with high, medium and low levels of personal significance of the social worker profession changes differently. However, by the end of professional training, the number of students with high and medium levels of personal significance of the social worker profession decreases and increases with low level of personal significance.

The study results of factors of professional identity significance of 1-4 years social work students are presented in table 7.

**Table 7.** Factors of social work students' professional identity significance ( $p\leq 0.01$ )

Factors of social work students' professional identity	Students' professional identity significance			
	1st years	2nd years	3rd years	4th years
Students' position on the prestige of social worker profession in the country	-	-	-	-
Students' position on the status of social worker in society	0.26	-	0.4	-0.38
Students' position on the respect of the social workers professional activities in society	0.44	-	-	-
Students' attitude to the social worker profession	0.44	0.27	0.23	-
Students' position on the impact of the future social worker profession on their lives	-	-	0.55	-
Future profession significance for social work students	-	0.23	-	0.28

Source: Authors' own conception

Table 7 shows that statistically significant relationships between the students' position on the prestige of social worker profession in the country and their professional identity in terms of significance were not observed in

any year of professional training (in the 1st year  $r=-0.13$ ; in the 2nd year  $r=-0.18$ ; in the 3rd year  $r=-0.12$ ; in the 4th year  $r=-0.01$ ).

A statistically significant relationships is defined between the position of students regarding the status of a social worker in society and their professional identity in terms of significance (direct and strong relationships – in the 1st year  $r=0.26$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ; in the 3rd year  $r=0.4$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ; feedback and strong relationships in the 4th year  $r=-0.38$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). In the 2nd year, on the other hand, this relationships was weak ( $r=0.17$ ).

A statistically significant relationships was found between the position of students regarding the social worker respect in society and their professional identity in terms of significance during the first year of professional training (direct and strong relationships in the 1st year  $r=0.44$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). On the other hand, for students in the next three years of professional training, this relationships was weak (in the 2nd year  $r=-0.18$ ; in the 3rd year  $r=0.13$ ; in the 4th year  $r=-0.07$ ).

The positive attitude of students to the social worker profession is statistically significantly related to their professional identity in terms of significance during the first three years of professional training (direct and strong relationships – in the 1st year  $r=0.44$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ; in the 2nd year  $r=0.27$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ; in the 3rd year  $r=0.23$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). In contrast, for students in the 4th year of professional training, this relationships was weak ( $r=-0.03$ ).

The position of students about the positive impact of the future social worker profession on their lives is statistically significantly related to their professional identity in terms of significance only in the third year of professional training (direct and strong relationships in the 3rd year  $r=0.55$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). On the other hand, during the first two years and the last year of professional training, this relationships was weak (in the 1st year  $r=0.1$ ; in the 2nd year  $r=-0.03$ ; in the 4th year  $r=-0.04$ ).

The personal significance of the social worker profession for students is statistically significantly related to their professional identity in terms of significance during the first two years and the last year of professional training (direct and strong relationships – in the 2nd year  $r=0.23$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ; in 4th year  $r=0.28$ ;  $p\leq 0.01$ ). In contrast, for students in the 1st and 3rd years of professional training, this relationships was weak (in the 1st year  $r=0.15$ ; in the 3rd year  $r=0$ ).

Thus, during four years of professional training in higher education institutions, the development of the professional identity of social work students is influenced statistically significantly by various factors. In the 1st year – the position of students on the status of a social worker in society; students' position on respect for the social worker in society; positive

attitude of students to the social worker profession. In the 2nd year – a positive attitude of students to the social worker profession; personal significance of the social worker profession. In the 3rd year – the position of students on the status of a social worker in society (direct influence); positive attitude of students to the profession of social worker; students' position about the positive impact of the future social worker profession on their life. In the 4th year – the position of students on the status of a social worker in society (reverse effect); personal significance of the social worker profession. The influence of the 1-4 year students' position as for the prestige of the social worker profession in the country on the development of their professional identity has not been revealed.

In the cross-cultural context, the question about factors of social work students' professional identity significance through their professional training in higher education institutions of Ukraine deserves attention.

## 5. Conclusions

The development of professional identity of social work students is a process of their identification with the professional activity of social workers and its norms, with the status and role of a social worker in society, with the professional community of social workers, with some authoritative social workers. Empirically, the predominance of a low-level significance of professional identity in the majority of 1-4 years social work students in higher education institutions of Ukraine was found. In general, during the professional training of social work students, a decrease in the number of students with high and an increase with medium and low levels of significance of professional identity was observed.

The professional identity significance of social work students is due to a number of factors that differ in each year of their professional training. In the 1st year, the position of students on the status of a social worker in society and respect of the social worker in society; positive attitude of students to the social worker profession. In the 2nd year, a positive attitude of students to the social worker profession; personal significance of the social worker profession. In the 3rd year, a positive attitude of students to the social worker profession; students' position about the positive impact of the future social worker profession on their life. In the 4th year, the personal significance of the social worker profession. The factor "students' position on the status of a social worker in society" has a direct impact on the importance of professional identity for 3rd year students and opposite – 4th year students. The influence of the 1-4 year students' position concerning

the prestige of social worker profession in the country on their professional identity has not been found.

**Prospects for further research.** Further research will be focused on to work out psychological support for the development of social work students' professional identity during professional training in higher education institutions of Ukraine, as well as to study cross-cultural features of the development of social work students' professional identity through their professional training in higher education institutions in Europe.

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