

**INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF
THE SPHERE OF SOCIAL POLICY
IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNIZATION
IN KAZAKHSTAN**

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A B S T R A C T

The authors have selected the problems of institutionalization of the sphere of social services in Kazakhstan in the context of modernization of its social policy as the subject of their article. They have studied the issue of upgrading professional skills and supervising of specialists who provide special social services to the target population groups. The article is based on sociological studies with the aim of improving social policies in the Republic of Kazakhstan based on questionnaires, interviews of experts and social workers employed by the social service structures and people under stressful circumstances. The authors rely on the comparative analysis of the results of statistical studies and other methods utilized in political science. An institutionalized approach to upgrading the professional skills of social workers and the efficiency of social services was analyzed on the basis of public opinion polls. The empirical and sociological statistical studies al-

lowed the authors to identify the main factors that affect professional skills and labor productivity in the social sphere. It seems that the Kazakhstan system of special social services needs a new model of social policy patterned on the Cross-functional Institute of Supervision in social services. Institutionalization should be seen as a comprehensive system that unites the state, public, academic, educational and moral-axiological aspects of activities of a socially-oriented society.

The authors offer important information about the impact of different factors on the professional qualities of experts and their productivity in the social sphere. In this way, this article helps perfect the entire system of social work through the supervision mechanisms to help specialists who offer special social services to target population groups improve their results. This work relates to the previously unexplored field of Kazakhstan's social policy.

KEYWORDS: *social work, special social services, institute of supervision, professionalism, social policy.*

Introduction

Social policy holds a special place in Kazakhstan as a socially-oriented state in which social work as multi-dimensional activity is also multi-departmental. This means that social services and social workers should not only perform multiple functions, but should also demonstrate high professionalism and competence in the social sphere, as well as encourage scientific and analytical efforts and highly professional management of social processes.

Proceeding from the confirmed and approved strategic and state development priorities, Kazakhstan as a socially-oriented and law-governed state spared no effort to consolidate the social resources of its economic development.

This adds more consequence to the social services system, makes it necessary to develop the social interaction harmonization mechanisms, improve the system of social services designed to support target social groups.

It has become abundantly clear that the state should intensify its search for factors and innovation mechanisms best suited to the local specifics of the social sphere and very much needed to consolidate the social management system, modernize the social services sphere and process the

results thus obtained to arrive at practical measures designed to add efficiency to Kazakhstan's social sphere.

To improve the country's administration system, it has become much more important than before to upgrade professional skills of social workers as the key element of the branch of executive authorities responsible for special social services.

Modernization of the social services system in Kazakhstan kindled an interest in the problem of institutionalization of social services provided to certain categories of the republic's population. The analytical community and social workers have found it perfectly timed and highly topical. Indeed, improving the professionalism of social workers and supervision of their services attracted the attention of those who analyze or are involved in the sphere hands-on. It is obviously highly important to compare what and how is being done in the social sphere in post-Soviet Central Asian countries.

Object and Subject of Studies Identified

The internal social services system, the social interaction harmonization mechanisms, improvement of the social system that supports the target groups (people in stressful situations) are gaining more importance in the context of further modernization of the social sphere. The most efficient factors and innovation mechanisms that help consolidate the social services sphere management and modernization system should be studied and assessed. It has become highly important to upgrade the professional skills of social workers, especially of those who provide special social services.

Here we have posed ourselves the task to identify the main mechanisms that may help establish supervision as an institutional factor for improving the quality and efficiency of special social services. Social work as an extremely complicated system of special social services is the object of our studies. The subject of our studies is supervision as a factor of upgrading the efficiency of social politics and the quality of special social services in Kazakhstan.

Institutionalization of the Social Services Sphere

Kazakhstan as a law-governed social state is invested in consolidating all the social resources of its economic development. This has been fully confirmed by the measures adopted to deepen the changes in the social services system up to 2021 as part of the Concept of Further Modernization of the Social Services System.¹ It rests on the Programmed Article of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev² and the Concept of Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan³ that has formulated the strategic aim of joining the group of the thirty most developed states of the world by 2050.

¹ See: *Concept of Further Modernization of the Social Services System*, available at [<https://enbek.gov.kz/content/>] (all documents are in Russian unless otherwise stated).

² See: Programmed Article of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev "Vzglyad v budushchee: modernizatsiia obshchestvennogo soznaniia," available at [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/akorda_news/press_conferences/statya-glavy-gosudarstva-vzglyad-v-budushchee-modernizaciya-obshchestvennogo-soznaniya].

³ See: *Concept of Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030* (No. 396, 24 April, 2014).

The specifics of the normative legal base of special social services are discussed using the “children in a difficult situation” category as an example.

The Law on Social Protection of the Disabled in the Republic of Kazakhstan⁴ was one of the first social laws designed to protect the rights of children. It created the socioeconomic, legal and organizational conditions needed to ensure equal possibilities for all, including the disabled and children. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Compulsory Social Insurance⁵ determined the legal, organizational and economic foundations of the social protection of the republic’s citizens guaranteed by the state and realized through compulsory social insurance, including the social insurance of children.

The Law on State Social Disability Benefits in connection with the loss of breadwinner and age in the Republic of Kazakhstan⁶ was directly related to social protection of children. It was a legal confirmation that the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan have the right to state social disability benefits, benefits extended to underage children and to children who have lost family breadwinners.

The Law on Social and Medical and Pedagogical Correctional Support of Disabled Children⁷ is another and equally important document that speaks of support extended to children in complicated life situations. It specifies the forms and methods of social, medical and pedagogical correctional support of disabled children and is designed to create an efficient system of social support for children with developmental disorders and to resolve the problems of their education, work and professional training, as well as to prevent childhood disability.

There is another, equally important Law on Special Social Services⁸ that regulates social relationships in the sphere of special social services delivered to certain categories of people (families) in difficult situations. It defined, for the first time at the republican level, the concept of a “difficult situation in a family”.

All in all, during the years of independence the country has adopted over 20 legal acts related to state social policies. When pursuing its social policy, Kazakhstan takes into account the new globalization challenges, social requirements and the country’s economic interests.

Institutionalization of Social Policy: Prerequisites

The ongoing modernization of the social services system of Kazakhstan has already changed it significantly. Below the reader will find the figures related to the social services sector in the recent years. The main measures taken in the last few years have been generalized in Table 1.

⁴ See: Law on Social Protection of the Disabled in the Republic of Kazakhstan (No. 692-XII, 21 June, 1991) (amendments and additions in accordance with the Decree of the President of RK, having the force of law, of 12.04.94, No. 1652, the Laws of the RK of 14.07.94, No. 137-XIII; of 22.09.94, No. 168-XIII; the Decree of the President of RK, having the force of law, of 05.10.95, No. 2488; the Laws of the RK of 02.04.97, No. 88-1; of 19.06.97, No. 134-1; of 16.07.97, No. 166-1; of 17.12.98, No. 323-1; of 07.04.99, No. 374-1; of 15.01.2001, No. 138-II; of 11.06.2001, No. 207-II; of 21.03.2002, No. 308-II).

⁵ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Compulsory Social Insurance (No. 405, 25 April, 2003) (amendments and additions of 02.07.2018, No. 165-VI ZRK).

⁶ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on State Social Disability Benefits in connection with loss of breadwinner and age in the Republic of Kazakhstan (No.126-I, 16 June, 1997) (amendments and additions of 02.07.2018, No. 165-VI ZRK).

⁷ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Social and Medical and Pedagogical Correctional Support of Disabled Children (No. 343-II, 11 July, 2002) (amendments and additions of 02.07.2018, No. 165-VI ZRK).

⁸ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Special Social Services (No. 114-IV, 29 December, 2008) (amendments and additions of 28.12.2018).

Table 1

Radical Changes in the Social Services System of the Republic of Kazakhstan

CRUCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE SYSTEM OF SOCIAL POLICY IN KAZAKHSTAN				
Systematization and Specification of the List of Special Social Services	Elaboration of Standards of Extending Special Social Services	Introduction of Institutional Changes and New Forms of Services	Changes in the Funding Scheme	Changes in and Enlargement of the Staff of Social Institutions
Social medical	The standard of providing special social services to disabled children with neuropsychological disorders (2009)	Over 50 day hospitals opened	Up to 2009, specialized institutions were funded according to their estimates	Previously, nursing and teaching staff dominated
Social pedagogical	The standard of special social services for people with these types of disorders, 18 and older (2010)	The number of departments of home social services increased 1.5-fold		
Social psychological	The standard of special social services for children with musculoskeletal disorders and the elderly (2011)	Special services were extended to over 5,000 children and people over 18	A system of social service co-funding by clients and the state was introduced	
Social legal	The standard of special social services to the homeless (2012)	Services were extended to about 43,700 elderly people and disabled and over 13,000 disabled children		
Social related to everyday life	The standard of special services for victims of slave trade (2016)	About 3,000 disabled children receive services at day hospitals and at home		
Social economic services	The standard of special social services to victims of domestic violence (2017)	Private sector and volunteers are engaged		

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (see: Statistical Report *Services in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2012-2017)* of the Committee for Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Social Protection of Population of the RK, Astana, 2017, p. 96).

Special social services may include general services in the form of information, consultations and intermediary services. There are two types of special social services in Kazakhstan: the guaranteed volume of special social services paid by the state budget and special social services paid by the clients (see Table 2).

Table 2

List of Guaranteed Volume of Special Social Services

No.	List of Special Social Services
1	Social everyday services
2	Social labor services
2	Social medical services
3	Social psychological services
4	Social pedagogical services
5	Social legal services
6	Social economic services
7	Social cultural services

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

According to the above-mentioned Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, twelve categories of the republic's population enumerated in Table 3 receive special social services.

Table 3

The Categories of People Receiving Special Social Services

Categories	
Orphans	Children Deprived of Parental Care
Minors in educational establishments with special medical treatment	Abandoned minors, including children with deviant behavior
Children with limited capabilities of early psychophysical development	People with physical or psychiatric impairments
People with limited life activities because of socially significant ailments and ailments dangerous for other people	People who cannot serve themselves because of illness and/or disabilities
People who were victims of cruelty that caused social maladaptation and social deprivation	Homeless people with no permanent addresses
People released from prisons	People registered with probation service

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In Kazakhstan, targeted social assistance, state benefits for children under 18 and house construction assistance are funded from the budget. Table 4 based on information supplied by regional structures⁹ shows how much money was spent on state social assistance between 1 January, 2015 and 1 January, 2017.

Table 4

**State Social Assistance
in Kazakhstan (2015-2017)**

Period	Targeted Social Assistance		State Benefits for Children under 18		Housing Assistance		Material Assistance to Disabled Children Raised and Educated at Home	
	Recipients, thous persons	Average Size, tenge	Recipients, thous persons	Average Size, tenge	Recipients, thous families	Average Size, tenge	Recipients, thous persons	Average Size, tenge
03.2017	28.8	2,438.5	576.2	1,633.8	97.1	2,083.1	12.8	3,833.8
01.03.2016	38.2	2,179.0	551.2	1,539.3	93.9	2,179.0	11.9	3,630.9
01.03.2015	56.1	1,970.7	562.6	1,402.3	110	2,036.6	14.9	3,151.1
Total	123.1	6,588.2	1,690	4,575.4	301	6,298.7	39.6	10,615.8

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on statistical data supplied by regional structures of coordination of employment and social programs of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In the last three years (2015-2017), targeted social assistance was extended to 123,100, with an average size of 6,888.2 tenge. State benefits for children under 18 were extended to 1,690,000 people, with an average size of 4,575.4 tenge. Between 2015 and 2017, 301,000 families received housing aid, its average size being 6,298.7 tenge. In the last three years (2015-2017), 39,600 disabled children raised and educated at home received on average 10,615.8 tenge every month.

According to the statistical information of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population,¹⁰ it employed 25,041 people; relevant figures are shown in Table 5.

Today, regional managing organizations are entrusted with the task of coordinating social programs working both at the regional and local (districts and towns) levels (hereinafter, local executive structures). They are expected to strictly observe social laws and normative acts, create and fund regional social programs.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Health Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan are responsible for social programs and their funding at the state level.

⁹ See: Statistical data supplied by regional structures engaged in coordination of employment of population and social programs of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

¹⁰ See: Statistical data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Table 5

Number of People (Experts) Employed in the Social Sphere in Kazakhstan

Number of Employees	Number of Organizations Providing Special Social Services, Total	Number of Organizations with Several Conditions of Providing Special Social Services, Total	Number of Organizations Providing Special Social Services in Hospitals, Total	Organizations of Temporal Hospitalization	Number of Organizations Providing Special Social Services in Semi-Permanent Hospitals, Total
The de facto numerical strength of the staff of administrative and secondary structures	17,627	75	13,626	844	3,082
Staff of social and medical services	3,985	1	3,315	171	498
Staff that provides social educational and psychological services	3,429	11	2,433	163	822
Total	25,041	87	19,374	1,178	4,402

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Main Results of Sociological and Statistical Analysis of Professional Qualities of People Employed in the Social Sphere of Kazakhstan

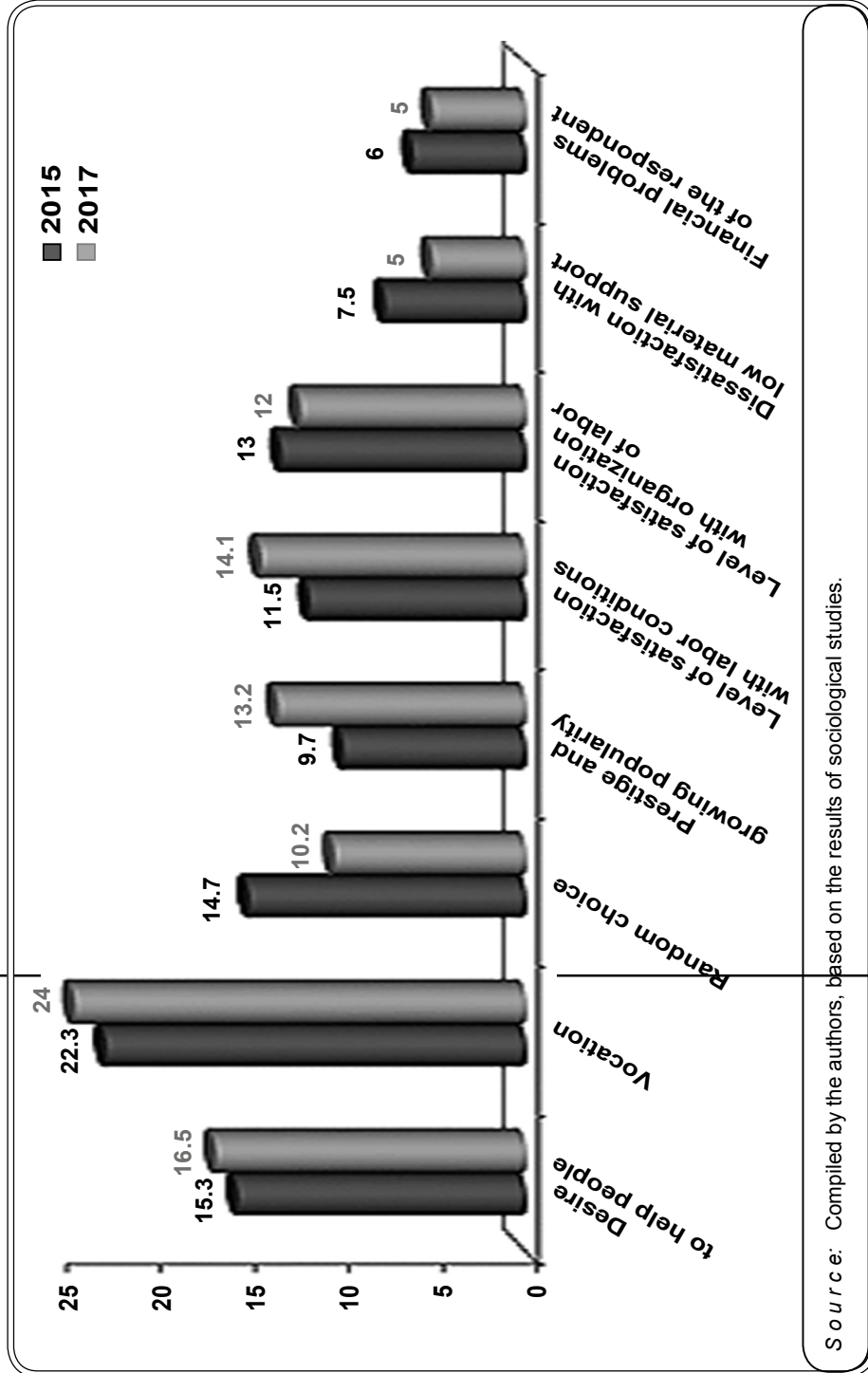
Motivation was identified as one of the key parameters of our sociological studies that produced the following results: 15.5% were driven by the “desire to help people and empathize with people”; 22.3% were driven by their “vocation”.

It should be said that in recent years the social sphere became “prestigious and increasingly popular” (9.7%); in 2017, 13.2% considered social services highly popular. The level of satisfaction of social workers with the organization and conditions of their labor and the quality of services are an important motivational factor. In 2015, within the scope of deep interviews experts pointed to an obvious dissatisfaction with the organization of labor (13%), labor conditions (11.5%) and inadequate material assistance to those in need (7.5%).

Fig. 1 shows the results of comparative motivation analysis in 2015 and 2017.

Figure 1

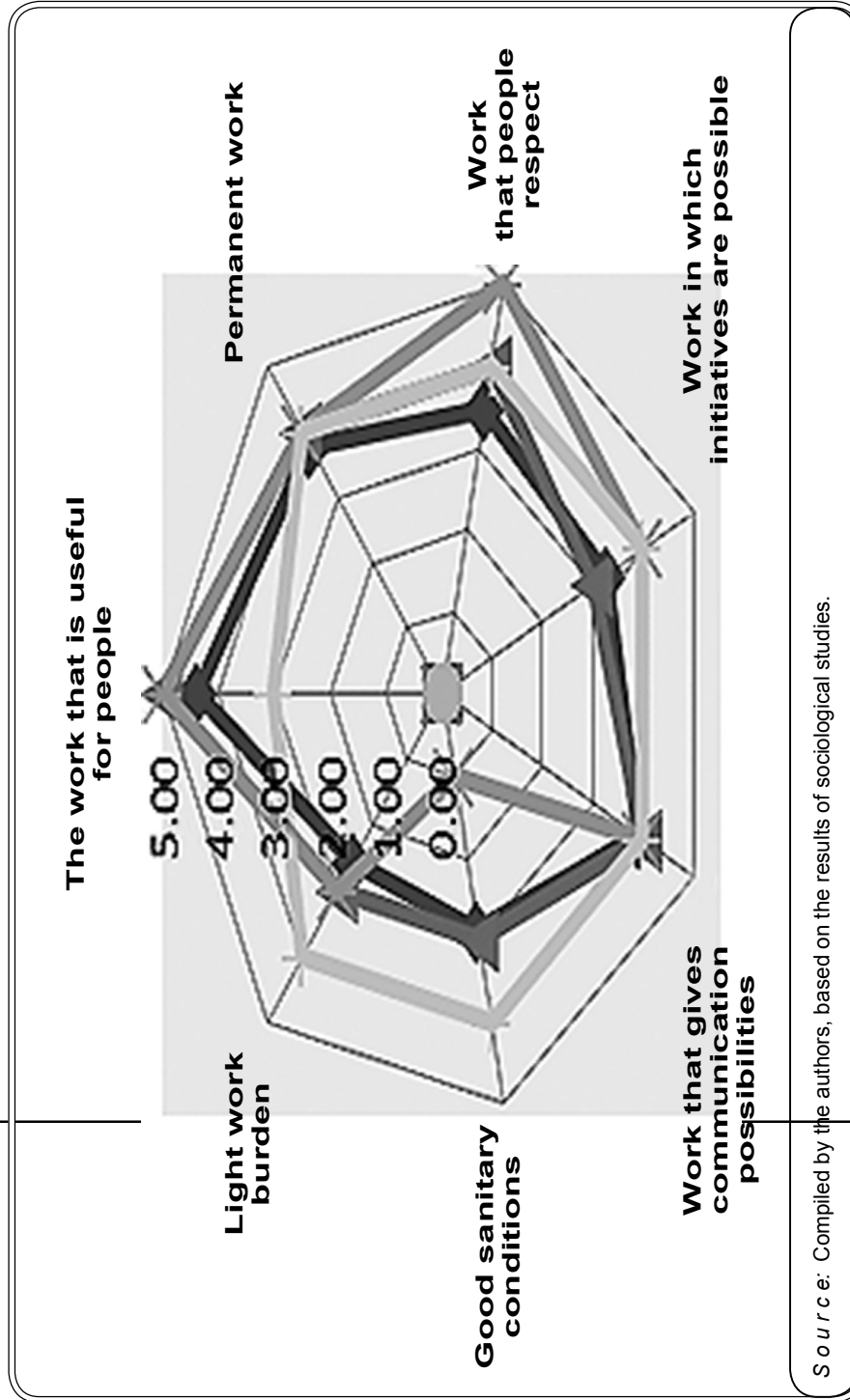
Motivations of Choice of Profession and Employment in the Social Sphere among the Respondents (2015-2017)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Figure 2

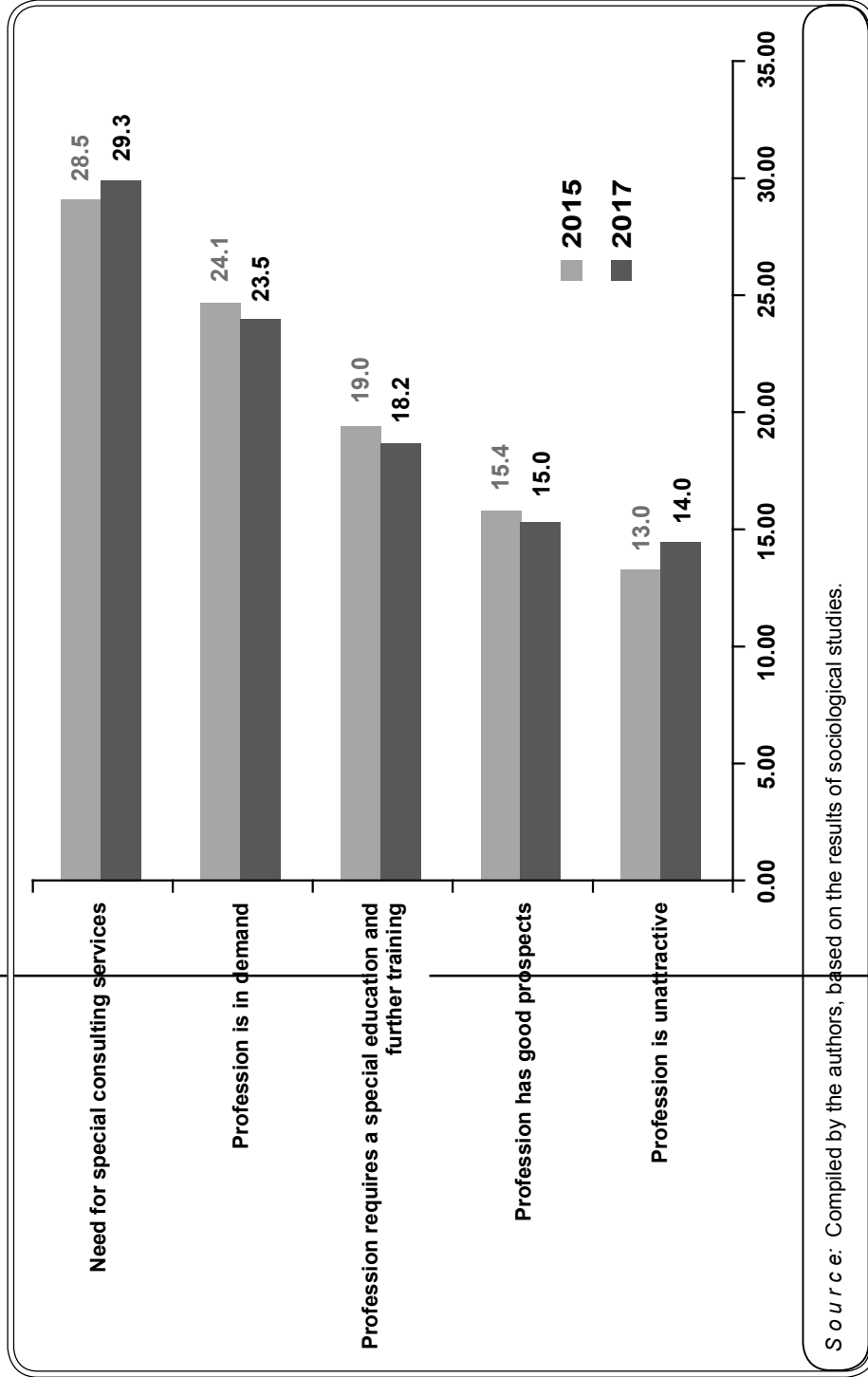
Assessment of Labor Values of Social Work based on the Results of an Analysis
(normality of distribution of the sampling)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Figure 3

Diagram of Comparative Analysis of the Relevance of Social Services on the Labor Market of Kazakhstan



Professional activities of social workers can be assessed by their professional values and their attitude to what they are doing. The biggest share (27.3%) believes that “this work brings a lot of good to people” followed by other considerations: “continuous communication with people” (10%), “work that people respect” (9%), “interesting work” (8%).

In repeated interviews carried out to check the results of the first interviews, the respondents were asked to assess social services on the 5-point scale. The qualitative descriptions of “work values” related to the scalar values were checked in view of their normal or Gaussian distribution with the use of statistical processing mechanisms. Statistical analysis identified the average value, the median and dispersion of indicators. It was pointed out that the values were mostly arranged around a certain median value, on both sides of which the frequency of observations was gradually and evenly diminishing (see Fig. 2).

The respondents were most satisfied with the “social usefulness of social work” value (4.5 points); other values fit in the corridor between 3.9 points (“communication possibilities”) and 2.5 (light work burden) points. We have analyzed the dynamics between the average value and the mode to social service by assessing the labor values typical of professional activities in the social sphere.

The results showed that social workers were absolutely convinced that their services were needed. Both in 2015 and 2017, a large part (about 40%) of those employed in the social sphere were convinced that their work was very much necessary (24.1% in 2015, 23.5% in 2017) and offered good prospects (15.4% in 2015, 15.0% in 2017). Ten percent, on average, of those whose education was incompatible with their profession believed that the latter was unattractive (13.0% in 2015, 14.0% in 2017). About 20% of respondents would like to upgrade their education, attend retraining courses or work, for some time, side by side with more experienced colleagues (19.0% in 2015, 18.2% in 2017) (see Fig. 3).

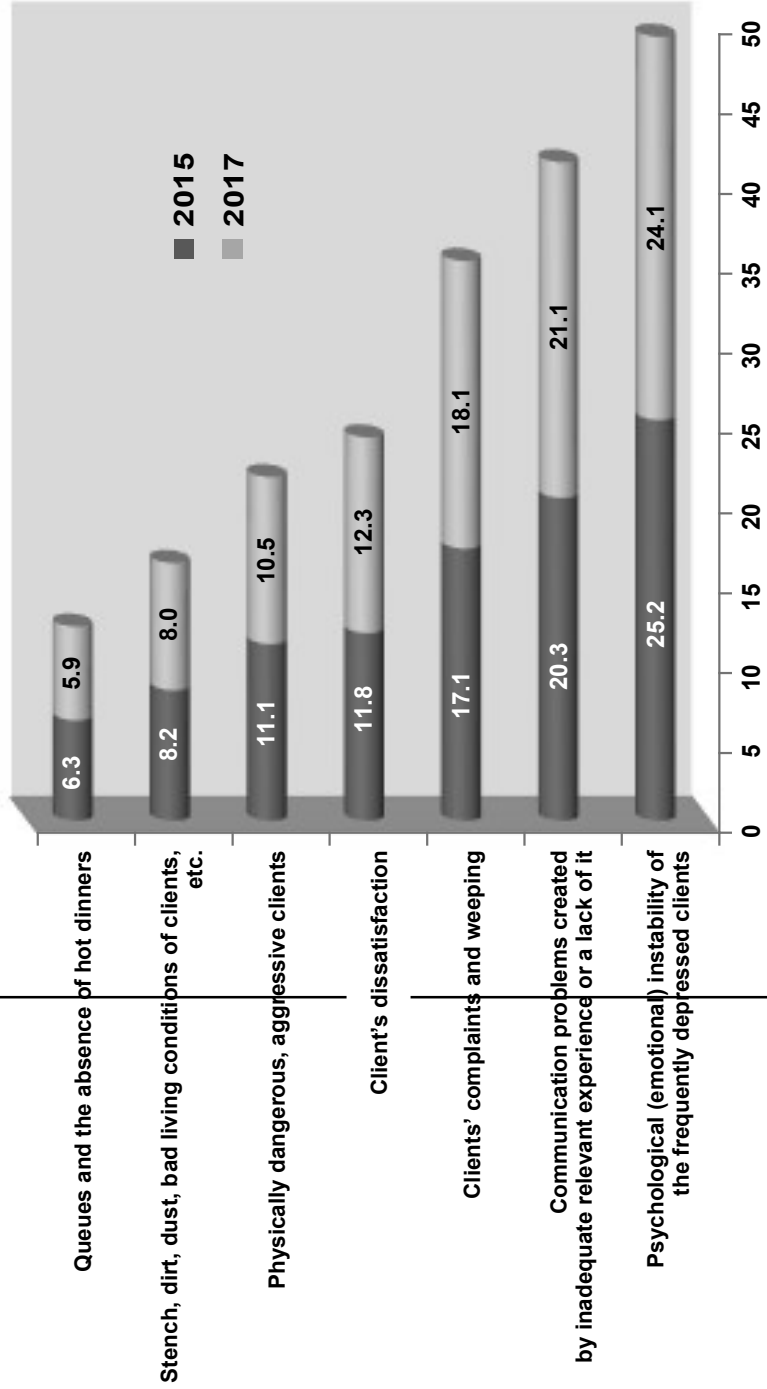
Main Conclusions Suggested by the Sociological Poll and Assessment of the Risk Factors of Labor Productivity of Social Workers and Social Services

Assessment of the impact of labor conditions on psychological state and labor productivity of social workers revealed that people employed by the social services and special social services centers are more responsive to negative “psychological” rather than “physical” or material factors for over 50% of their work hours. Comparative analysis of the data collected during two years (2015 and 2017) of studies has demonstrated that the emotional instability of clients was the factor noted by a quarter of respondents (25.2% in 2015, 24.1% in 2017); every fifth respondent had communication problems due to lack of pedagogical and psychological skills or the inadequate experience (20.3% in 2015 and 21.1% in 2017) (see Fig. 4).

Positive attitude to life and optimism are two of the main features that strongly affect the labor productivity of social workers (26.5% in 2015, 25.8% in 2017 and 18.5% in 2015, 17.9% in 2017, respectively). An analysis has revealed that, on the whole, social workers are not positive or optimistic; this is partly explained by the specifics of those who receive social services and their negative influence on those who look after them. The dissatisfaction of people with their labor places them into a risk group with grave problems, depression, etc. (see Table 6).

Figure 4

Diagram of Comparative Analysis of Impact of Psychological Indicators on Labor Conditions of Social Workers



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Table 6

Social Workers' Attitude to Life (Diagram)

No.	Indicators of Assessments	Relative Data, %	
		2015	2017
1	Positive attitude to life	26.5	25.8
2	Optimism	18.5	17.9
3	Absolute satisfaction with life	29.5	30.1
4	Total dissatisfaction with life	6.5	7.2
5	Problems in everyday life	10.7	11.2
6	Depression	8.3	7.8

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Information related to the types of activities and risk factors obtained by social statistical analysis has been confirmed and determined by information based on questionnaires. By the end of the workday the majority (over 50%) of social workers was very tired (50.9% in 2015, 61.7% in 2017); about 25% of respondents were exposed to significant psycho-emotional stress all day long (23.3% in 2015, 24.2% in 2017); 20% of respondents were experiencing a state of severe depression during their work (20.1% in 2015, 19.2% in 2017) (see Table 7).

Table 7

Comparative Analysis of How Labor Conditions Affect the Health of Social Workers

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strong Fatigue	Excessive Physical Strain	Psycho-Emotional Stress	Depression	Not Tired by the End of the Day	Unfavorable Work Conditions	Working Conditions Do Not Affect Health
2015	41.2	9.7	23.3	20.1	0.2	5.1	0.5
2017	42.5	9.9	24.2	19.2	0.1	4.2	0.2

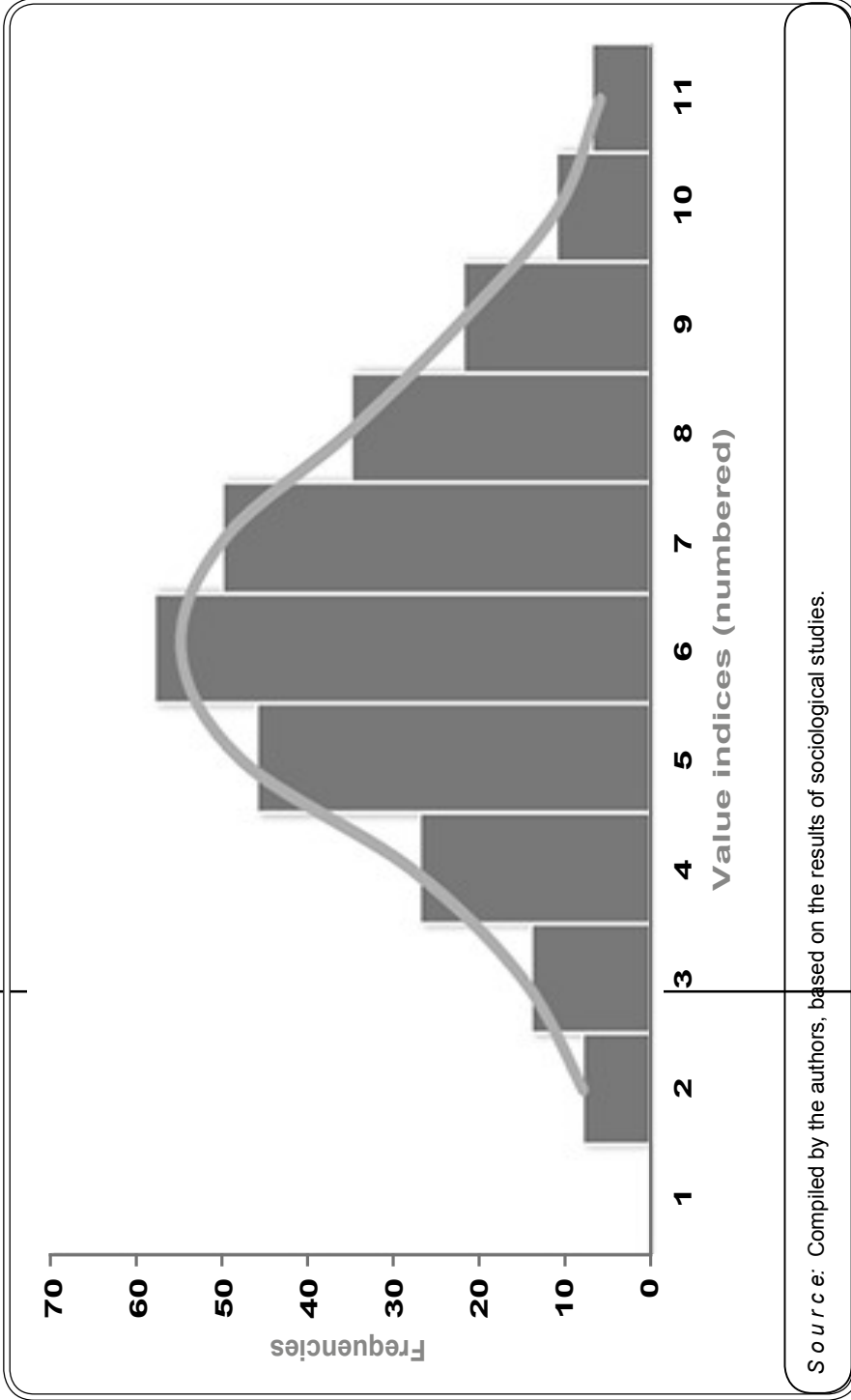
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Practically none of the polled individuals stated that they were not tired after a day of work (0.2% in 2015, 0.1% in 2017); less than 1% of the respondents (0.5% in 2015 and 0.2% in 2017) pointed out that the labor conditions do not affect their health. They were unanimous practically on all points and they slightly disagreed when answering the questions about the “feeling of great tiredness” (an increase from 41.2% to 42.5%) and the “feeling of psycho-emotional stress” (an increase from 23.3% to 24.2%).

To identify the general sum-total based on the returns of random sampling of the labor value parameters, we created a frequency distribution chart based on direct observation. Normal and Poisson distributions were used. The graphic thus obtained suggested that the differences between the empirical and theoretical frequencies were purely random (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5

Frequency Distribution of Answers about Values and Approximating Curve of Normal Distribution



We have thus arrived at the key conclusions based on sociological and statistical analysis; we also relied on the conclusions derived from the polls of social workers dealing with certain categories of clients and their assessments. At the first stage, we relied on questionnaire polls to analyze professional qualities and assess the level of professionalism and competence of social workers in Kazakhstan and identify the factors that interfere with efficient work.

Respondents complained that they had no instruments (mechanisms) to upgrade their educational level and no experienced consultants (supervisors), the main factor of professional social work to train them for professional social services.

At the second stage, we analyzed and assessed the risk factors influencing labor productivity, in particular, dissatisfaction with the work they were doing caused by inadequate experience and lack of knowledge in the related spheres which did nothing good to the psyche and caused stress.

Experiments confirmed that the state should promptly supply instruments of rehabilitation and correction of physical and psycho-emotional status of professional social workers.

Conclusions

Our sociological studies and statistical processing of empirical information (on the basis of qualitative methods of data analysis) produced the following results.

The nature and conditions of labor can be described as damaging for the physical and psychological health of social workers.

Measures should be taken to prevent risk factors and introduce correcting instruments to upgrade labor productivity. The country needs a new Social Institute as a Cross-functional Institute of Supervision in the social sphere. This institutionalized approach will make it possible to create programs of uninterrupted professional development such as communication training as well as work and self-reflection skills.

We studied the institutionalized approach to upgrading professionalism and competence of social workers, as well as efficiency of social work based on our public opinion studies as part of our sociological program. The key factors that strongly affect the professional qualities and labor productivity of social workers were identified with the help of our assessment of empirical and sociological statistical data. The results confirmed what we had thought about the risk factors which can and should be eliminated by consultative support provided by experienced social workers, the upgraded role and prestige of the profession of social worker and higher quality of specialized social services provided through social structures, etc. These measures and mechanisms should accelerate, to a great extent, the positive dynamics of the work of special services and social workers and upgrade the competence of this professional group.

This is but the first step towards comprehensive studies of the innovational institute of social work. Our experience and the experience of other countries testify that the problem of supervision in Kazakhstan has been raised to a new level of scholarly studies.

In the long-term perspective, these studies will concentrate on the problems of monitoring and forecasting the requirements of the regions in professional social services, professional training, higher prestige of social work and a Cross-functional Institute of Supervision as an innovative institution in the social sphere.

In Kazakhstan, researchers are mainly interested in reforming social policy, state regulation of social services and are discussing increased funding, better training of social workers and overall modernization of the social sphere. So far, the specifics of institutionalization of the special social services system, as well as upgrading the professionalism of social workers have not yet been adequately studied in Kazakhstan. Everything that has been written so far is limited to supervision in

medicine and in the health protection system. This means that the subject of social services is new and we should pay more attention to the problem of modernization of the social sphere.

The time has come to study the problem of supervision as a new institutionalized entity designed to add efficiency of state management to the sphere of social services.

Seen from this point of view, supervision is understood as a potentially efficient institutionalized structure that coordinates the work of state and social services and institutions and upgrades the efficiency of state policy in this sphere based on state standards.

Elaboration and realization of this task should include an introduction of a new institute into the system and practice of state administration at (a) the national level; (b) the interdepartmental level and (c) the level of object-subject (department/organization/department-social worker). Supervision should become part of the following segments of state administration: the normative-legal, institutional, informational, social and economic, structural and branch. To upgrade the professionalism and competence of social workers (teaching centers, consultations, etc.) supervision can be organized on the basis of interaction of the public and private partnerships.