

# Influence of the Professional Values on Providing Social Work Support

**Antoniya Sivreva**

Trakia University, Bulgaria  
E-mail: [antoniya.sivreva@trakia-uni.bg](mailto:antoniya.sivreva@trakia-uni.bg)  
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3361-877X>  
<https://ror.org/04p2cym91>

**Krasimira Benkova**

Trakia University, Bulgaria  
E-mail: [krasimira.benkova@trakia-uni.bg](mailto:krasimira.benkova@trakia-uni.bg)  
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2456-4698>  
<https://ror.org/04p2cym91>

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**Abstract.** This article aims at examining the degree of influence of the professional values with regards to activities related to providing support among social work professionals in Bulgaria.

In the survey which was conducted on a voluntary and anonymous basis, 204 social work professionals from the Stara Zagora Region took part. The WIS/SVP method – Scale for assessing professional values was applied. Examined were the influencing factors referring to professional values and provision of social support. Found out were influencing factors between most of the professional values and the desire to provide assistance and readiness for participation in activities related to providing support. The obtained results place professional values as one of the factors determining the trend for providing assistance and participation in support activities in the field of social work in Bulgaria.

**Keywords:** professional values; social support; social work

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## Introduction

The advancing technology, the economic and social changes on a global level make the world to face a number of challenges which results in a deepening moral crisis. This is a precondition not only for shifts in the traditional structures and established beliefs, but it also affects the foundation of social cooperation and social interactions.

In Bulgaria, the moral crisis presents itself by disruption of social bonds, loss of trust in the institutions and uncertainty with regards to prospects for the future. In this sense, social work professionals do have a key role in maintaining the social stability and in providing the needed social support.

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According to the Fourth Report of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) of 2020, social work is an activity of a key importance for the social and economic development, health protection, strive for achieving social well-being and improving the quality of life (IASSW, ICSW & IFSW, 2020).

Against the background of COVID-19, in the modern specifics of social interactions, the professional values of the social work professionals are at the basis of the quality and effectiveness of the supporting process. The professionals' care is addressed to the most vulnerable groups in the society (Miller, Lee, 2020; Garcia, Spolander, Barbosa, 2023).

However, in his interview for the Bulgarian National Radio, the social anthropologist Haralan Aleksandrov (Kostova, 2021) defines social work as an activity aimed at supporting every single member of the society.

The author brings up the concept that with time an increasingly large part of the society will need the support of the social work professionals. The social worker's professional image is being developed and transformed from a specialist working with poor and marginalized members of the society, into an officer providing professional care to the whole society. This care becomes needed by everybody who faces difficulties and feels the need of support in various stages of their life.

Being a part of the multidisciplinary teams for support and treatment of a number of diseases and temporary difficulties (emotional, health, financial), social work professionals are supposed to meet particular requirements in terms of knowledge and skills depending on the scope and their role in providing professional care (Itzhaky, Gerber, Dekel, 2004; Salovaara, Ylonen, 2022; Kreitzer, Shurer, Book, Zerden, Guan, 2024).

**The possession of particular professional values by each social work professional is directly related to social support presenting itself by providing activities aimed at problem solving, prevention of social exclusion, manifestation of respect for the individual and respect for human rights.**

**The analysis in the present article tackles the issue related to the importance of professional values in social work seen through the social support processes.** Regardless of the general recognition of the importance of values in the contemporary professions, the issue related to the professional values in the social work profession is not an object of comprehensive research studies in the specialized Bulgarian and foreign literature.

We are familiar with the research studies on professional values in other professional communities.

Of interest for the present research is a survey of the dominant types of value orientation among medical specialists (Tsvetkova et al., 2018), where the WIS/SVP method – Scale for assessing professional values, developed by a team of Italian scientists, was applied.

Value orientation is “a conscious and sustainable personal attitude towards the choice of particular behavioral models according to the value system and hierarchy adopted by the individual” (Nikolova, 2000), and professional values are one of the determining components of the “Importance of Work” model (Trentini, 2007). The WIS/SVP met-

hod – Scale for assessing professional values was also applied by Bayrakova (2015) in the study of work values among Bulgarian students to outline their professional profile.

This methodology is used as a tool to measure the professional values in students, allowing their early professional orientation and a stable future professional identity (Murdaca et al., 2018). Research studies on professional values conducted in Italy have shown differences in the value orientation of generations in the family business sector (Cubico et al., 2010) and the dominant professional values in managers at small and medium-sized enterprises (Tognia et al., 2010). The mentioned methodology is a tool also in the present research study on professional values.

Expressing engagement with the concept that professional values are a foundation of the “Social Work” profession, with the present research we would like to outline and reflect on the relationship between professional values and the readiness of social work professionals to render support (this being the main component of social work).

The theoretical reflection on the issues regarding support and professional values, is presented in the section “Theoretical Analysis.”

**The objective** of the present research is to demonstrate the dynamics of the relationship between professional values and the provision of social support by social work professionals.

For achieving the objective formulated above, the following tasks have been defined:

1. Defining the overall methodological framework by analysis of the terms “social work,” “social support” and “professional values”;
2. Researching the degree of importance of professional values for the social work professionals;
3. Researching the professional values’ degree of influence on the social support processes.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Social Work. Social Support***

Social work is a profession associated with activities for providing support to the people in need which combines love and the tradition of being human with its legislative nature (Benkova et al., 2021).

Social work as a practice becomes sustainable in nature through the current legislative regulations, moral norms and ethical standards.

The general binding rules of conduct are defined by the provisions of the current legislation, i.e.: The Social Support Act (2023), The Social Services Act (2023), The Persons with Disabilities Act (2024), The Child Protection Act (2024), observing the international and European legislation.

The moral norms which are fundamental for social work, are contained in the IFSW Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles (2021) used as a model for the Code of Ethics and designed for the professionals involved in the provision of social services

(The Social Services Act, 2021). The Code of Ethics focuses on the moral of the social work professionals as crucial for the quality of their work and all the sequences from it.

The legislative and moral regulation of social work has been an object of our previous studies (Benkova, 2013; Benkova, Vlaeva, Georgieva, 2015; Benkova, Georgiev, Stoykov, Georgieva, Valkanov, 2017; Benkova, Georgiev, Raleva, Vlaeva, Taneva 2021). As we did before, once again we are expressing our engagement with the concept that the activities of the social work professionals are determined on one hand by the legislative provisions, expressed in a written form, and on the other hand, by the shared principles and norms regulating the conduct of the social work professionals team and determining the positive and negative evaluations of their thoughts and actions (Benkova, 2013).

For the purposes of the present article, an object of a future analysis is the term “social support.”

In the purposive Social Services Act of 2020, stipulated is a legal definition of the term “social work,” namely “an activity based on human rights and social justice, and aimed at supporting each individual, family, groups or communities in order to improve their quality of life.” Highlighted as a priority are the efforts of the specialists in support of the individuals encouraging “development of skills to utilize their own abilities and those of the community in meeting their needs.”

Social work is defined as an activity aimed at supporting vulnerable individuals and/or groups in the society. The variety of social support types puts an accent on the work with people to encourage their strengths to independently cope with the life difficulties.

This requires that social work professionals possess a number of qualities, knowledge and skills guaranteeing the effectiveness of their professional activity. Apart from any advanced training, gained practical experience and basic skills, professional values are a component demonstrating work behavior, the set professional goals and the means for their achievement. Studying the social workers’ professional values will outline their behavior in a work-related context and the degree of their readiness to provide social support.

In the scientific literature, social support is defined as a resource of a different nature provided to one person by another (Mehandzhiyska, 2012).

In most of her studies, the person in need is placed in a passive situation, however, apart from that, social support is also seen as a two-way process between the giver and the taker (Conn, Peterson, 1989).

Social support is presented as information which gives the individuals the sense that they have been taken care of, are loved and respected, and that they are a part of a mutual network of obligations (Cobb, 1976). Studies show that interrelations between people do have a protective effect against health problems resulting from stress-related situations.

Social support may serve as a protective factor for the people in a time of crisis as it increases not only the inventories and social stock but also personal capabilities (Mehandzhiyska, 2018).

The term “social support” is used to denote these personal components of the social relationships which are seen as favorable for the physical and mental health (Brugha, 1988, 1989). This is an activity which refers to particular personal circumstances in the

social interactions with an accent on their more subjective aspects such as trustworthiness, intensity and reciprocity of the interaction.

Social support is differentiated into two types, namely structural and functional. The first type refers to the social bonds and social relationships while the second type characterizes the significance of the functions of these bonds and interactions such as providing for closeness and affection, a sense of belonging, rendering of practical assistance (Cohen, 1988).

Structural social support is focused on social bonds and relationships themselves which include various communities, groups and institutions, and reveal how these may influence the sense of social support. Functional social support reveals the influence of the social bonds in every person's life as a real benefit.

Identifying social support as one of the most humane expressions of the social relationships, R. Weiss (as in: Caron, Guay, 2005) formulates five functions which are a guarantee for the balance in human relationships, i.e. emotional support, social integration, the individual's sense of being significant and useful, providing financial assistance.

The scope of the functions emphasizes the variety and the complexity of the social support which in addition to the emotional aspects, plays an important role in the social integration, the individual's sense of self-worth and even the individual's financial stability. An empirical study among expatriates living in Belgium shows the level of effectiveness of the social support system for expatriates and the areas where social workers need to focus their efforts in order to provide high-quality support (Snoubar, Zengin, 2022).

A number of studies and surveys show the need of social support by the social work professional themselves in order to cope with the stress related to the specifics of the activity they perform (Stanley, Sebastine, 2023). The need of support for overcoming stress situations applies also to doctors, nurses and all the professionals in the healthcare sector (Hurst, Hill, DuVal, Danis, 2005; Carminati, Héliot, 2021).

According to the Act, social support is differentiated depending on the settings it is provided in, its duration and addressees.

In terms of the settings it is rendered in, the Act makes a difference between two types of social support:

- “Home care support” is a personal care provided at the home of children, persons with permanent disabilities and persons above working age experiencing difficulties with their self-care, providing assistance in meeting their daily needs of self-service, movement, communication, household chores, organization of their daily life and participation in public events;
- “Support in the community” – providing emotional, social or financial support to children, individuals or groups of people for coping with difficulties, in their home or working environment.

Social support in the form of advocacy is focused on individuals in order to provide protection and standing up for the individual's rights and needs, in compliance with the existing legal and administrative procedures.

Depending on the duration it is provided for, the support is defined as short-term and long-term; in the context of social services “day care” is focused on providing for a specialized environment for support, and more generally speaking, it is an activity aimed at receiving information, support in the process of acquiring job skills, as well as support provided to the relatives of the persons in need. In the Social Services Act, supervision is defined as an activity providing support addressed to the social work professionals themselves.

The definitions contained in the Act, put an accent on the importance of the activities designed to support individuals experiencing difficulties with the view to encouraging their strengths needed for dealing with the problems they are facing on their own. **This is a priority in social work which is a guarantee for achieving a high-quality and an effective process of support.**

From the presented theoretical studies in the specialized literature and the social support legal regulations, it becomes clear that this is an activity based on human rights, the principle of justice, social interactions and obligations for its provision. These components are strongly related to the professional values possessed by the social work professionals, which play an important role in the work behavior, exercising the profession and the set professional goals in the work environment.

In a broader context, the importance of the professional values for the social work profession is an object of a future analysis.

### ***Professional Values***

The importance of the values in contemporary professions is widely recognized. Its topicality is understood in the context of the value crisis (Fotev, 2012, 2019; Daynov, 2019).

In this context, social work as a profession faces moral challenges and ethical conflicts in its practice (Shdaimah, Strier, 2020). The crisis in social work is seen as a crisis of the professional identity which suggests a profound clarification of the issue related to the identity of the profession but also the issue related to its professional values (Webb, 2015).

Social work core values are contained in the Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (IFSW, 2021), approved by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work and are at the basis of the Code of Ethics designed for the professionals involved in the provision of social services (The Social Services Act, 2021), and serve as a foundation of the profession and guiding principles in the practice of the social work professionals.

Regardless of the numerous research studies on values, there are professional fields which suffer a deficit in the research on professional values (Hristova, 2019). One of them is the social work profession.

Various concepts exist in the literature referring to the categorization of human values. In this article we express an adherence to their provisional classification as “general,” i.e. these are values which are important for the individual, and “professional,”

i.e. these are values which are at the basis of the professional goals (Tsvetkova, Yulieva, Tsvetanova, 2018).

Professional values are considered in two aspects:

- As the individual's interest towards the profession, the values needed for performing the particular activity and its comparison with other activities;
- Values attributable to the particular profession (Todorova, Mihaylova-Alakidi, 2010).

These authors study professional values among medical specialists using the method introduced by M. Rokeach (1973). Rokeach classifies values into two groups: terminal and instrumental, where the terminal values are goals towards the individual strives for, while the instrumental values are the actions used to achieve these goals. Based on his theories, other authors interpret terminal values with professional realization, and see the instrumental values as desirable qualities and self-affirmation principles (Todorova, Mihaylova-Alakidi, 2010). Studying the values of the social work profession provides grounds for reforms in the social workers' education (Germez, Öngen, Hatiboglu, 2019) and identifies values as a fundamental and irrevocable component needed to ensure high quality in the social affairs education.

Of interest is the thesis referring to the opposition between knowledge and values, studied by Bisman (2004), who supports the statement that the accumulation of information and skills in the profession is at the expense of the leading values. The author emphasizes on the moral basis of social work as a profession and studies the care for the people in need, service to humankind and social justice as its structural core. On his side, Levy (2013) defines values as a leading motive in implementation of the overall process related to the organization of the supporting process and brings them up as a significant factor in the formulation and implementation of strategies for its organization.

Some authors perceive values as a part of a triangle encompassing the client's values, the specialist's values and professional values. In this triangle, the key figure is the social worker who ensures the balance and assists in using the proper methods of action (Giurgiu, Marica, 2013).

The above gives arguments and meaning of the research presented in the next part of this article.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

***1. Stages of the Research.*** The research was conducted in two main stages. The first stage refers to the theoretical overview of the research problem and the second stage refers to the empirical study which includes: a selection of respondents, preparation and elaboration of the research toolkit, conducting the research and analysis of the results. The research was conducted in compliance with the requirements for a *voluntary and anonymous* participation.



**2. Participants.** The present research study (2024) presents the influence degree of professional values on the activities related to the provision of support by the social work professionals. It is a part of a large-scale research conducted with 204 professionals from the social services and social support sector in Stara Zagora Region, Bulgaria.

In 2023, a survey was published dealing with the influence of professional values on the orientation towards high quality and achieving work effectiveness consistent with the social work quality standards in Bulgaria (Sivreva, Noykova, 2023).

Quality criteria in social work are legally regulated by specific quality standards as stipulated in the Ordinance on the Quality of Social Services (2022).

The WIS/SVP method – Scale for assessing professional values was applied to study the professional values, and the analysis of the obtained results shows that according to the WIS/SVP, more than half of the value categories do influence the individual's focus on quality and guidance on the basis of the job results, and the majority of social work professionals invest efforts in providing high-quality social work and are guided by the results obtained from the activity.

**3. Data Collection Methods.** The methodological toolkit for data collection is discussed in three modules. The WIS/SVP method – Scale for assessing professional values, developed by an international team of scientists and adapted for Bulgaria (OS Bulgaria, 2007), was used. For the purpose of the study, the above methodology was provided by Giunti Psychometrics S.r.l. – Firenze with a permission for its use and granting the required credits. The model focuses on examining professional values, value orientation and typology among the professionals, and its application among students focuses on their timely work orientation and desire for a future stable professional position.

**Module 1** presents the demographic characteristics of the sample, and includes gender, age, professional field.

According to the data, the social work professionals from Stara Zagora Region comprise the regional structures of the “Social Assistance Agency” (38.73%) and some of the organizations engaged in providing social services (61.27%), where 89.22% of the respondents are female, 10.78% are male, distributed in the following age groups: age of up to 25 years – 0.98%, age group from 25 to 35 years – 16.67%, age group from 35 to 45 years – 32.35%, age group from 45 to 60 years – 39.71% and age group of above 60 years – 10.29 %.

**Module 2** deals with studying professional values.

The WIS/SVP method – Scale for assessing professional values was used. It is structured as a questionnaire consisting of 63 questions where each value is characterized by three questions. The scale includes the below 21 value categories:

Ability Utilization (ABIL), Achievement (ACHV), Advancement (ADVA), Aesthetics (AEST), Altruism (ALTR), Authority (AUTH), Autonomy (independence) (AUTO), Creativity (CREA), Economic Rewards (security) (ECON), Life-Style (LIFE), Personal Development (PERS), Physical Activity (PHYA), Prestige (PRES), Risk (RISK), Soci-



al Interaction (SOCI), Social Relations (SOCR), Variety (VARI), Working Conditions (WORK), Cultural Identity (CULT), Physical Abilities (PHYP), and Economic Security (SECU).

The values measured define the indicated value orientation: materialistic (MATER), self-orientation (SELFO), orientation towards others (OTHER), orientation towards independence (INDEP), orientation towards challenges (CHALL), as well as the following value types: (T1: creative, T2: calm, T3: ambitious, T4: firm, T5: autonomous, T6: social).

The responses are distributed using the 4-point Likert scale, where 1 = not important; 2 = sufficiently important; 3 = important; 4 = very important (OS Bulgaria, 2007). The questionnaire was translated into Bulgarian and the value of the Cronbach Alpha for this study is  $\alpha = 0.914$ , which guarantees the high validity level of the questionnaire.

**Module 3** is oriented towards providing support in social work. For this purpose, two statements are used (readiness to provide assistance to people with problems and participation in activities aimed at providing support). The responses are distributed using the Likert scale, with four choices: 1 – not important; 2 – sufficiently important; 3 – important; 4 – very important.

**4. Data Analysis Methods.** Microsoft Excel and the statistical package Statistica 12 were used for the statistical processing of the data.

## Results and Discussion

As highly important are considered all values having the score 8 ( $X_{\text{mean}} > 7$ ). As values with mean intensity we accept values having the score 6 ( $5.5 < X_{\text{mean}} < 7$ ). As values with low intensity we define those with the score below 5.5 ( $X_{\text{mean}} < 5.5$ ), and as less important – values having the score 4 and below 4 (Fig. 1).

With the highest degree of importance for the social work professionals, the following 11 professional values re identified: “Ability Utilization,” “Achievement,” “Advancement,” “Aesthetics,” “Altruism,” “Economic Rewards,” “Life-Style,” “Personal Development,” “Social Relations,” “Working Conditions” and “Economic Security.”

With mean intensity of importance are the values “Autonomy,” “Creativity,” “Physical Activity,” “Prestige,” “Social Interaction,” “Variety” and “Cultural Identity.” Those with the lowest intensity are “Authority,” “Risk” and “Physical Abilities” (Fig. 1).

The analysis of the two dependent variables demonstrates a strong desire to provide assistance among 89.20% of the respondents, whereas in 10.80% this desire is more weakly expressed. This trend is preserved also in terms of the desire for participation in activities related to providing support, where 86.80% of the respondents demonstrate a strong desire while in 13.20% this desire is weakly expressed.

In the results presented, examined are the trends associated with the influence of professional values into the readiness of the social work professionals to provide assistance and their participation in activities related to providing support for the people in need.

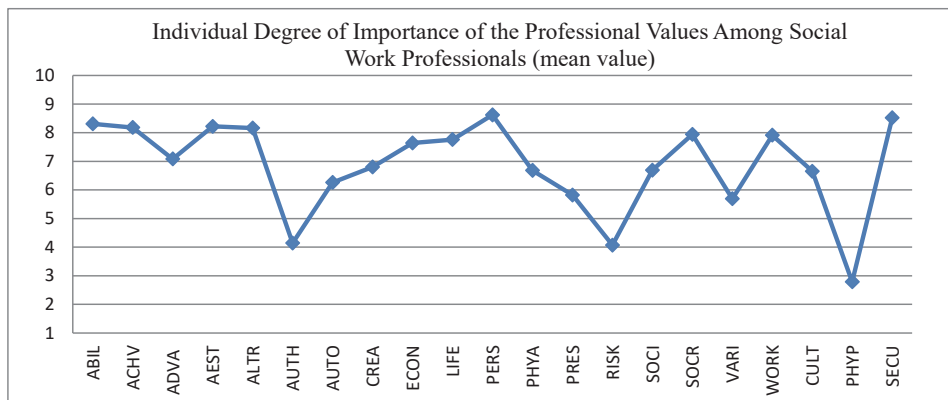


Fig. 1

In terms of the professional values “Advancement,” “Variety” and “Working Conditions” the direction of influence is the same and this shows that the social work professionals for whom the values have a high and mean degree of intensity, demonstrate a statistically significant better readiness to provide assistance, in contrast to the professionals who demonstrate a low degree of intensity with regards to these values ( $F=3.54, p<0.05$ ), ( $F=2.70, p<0.05$ ), ( $F=5.27, p<0.05$ ). The professionals for whom the value has a high intensity degree, demonstrate a statistically significant better readiness to participate in support activities in comparison with those for whom the values have a mean and low degree of importance ( $F=3.28, p<0.05$ ), ( $F=3.52, p<0.05$ ), ( $F=2.45, p<0.05$ ) (Table 1).

Table 1. Influence of the individual importance of the professional values “Advancement”, “Variety”, and “Working Conditions” on the readiness to provide assistance and participate in activities related to providing support (variance analysis).

Dependent variable/ Professional values	Independent variable	Degree of independent variable	$x_{\text{mean}}$	F, $p<0,05$	t-test, $p<0,05$
Advancement	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,25	3,54	$t_{1,2} = 3,12$
		mean	1,86		$t_{1,3} = 7,81$
		high	2		
	participation in support activities	low	1,5	3,28	$t_{1,3} = 5,40$
		mean	1,83		$t_{2,3} = 2,45$
		high	2		
Variety	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,43	2,7	$t_{1,2} = 2,35$
		mean	1,83		$t_{1,3} = 4,19$
		high	1,93		
	participation in support activities	low	1,4	3,52	$t_{1,3} = 5,46$
		mean	1,76		$t_{2,3} = 2,72$
		high	1,98		

Working conditions	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,43	5,27	$t_{1,2} = 2,51$
		mean	1,86		$t_{1,3} = 4,08$
		high	1,93		
	participation in support activities	low	1,57	2,45	$t_{1,3} = 4,14$
		mean	1,84		$t_{2,3} = 2,15$
		high	1,98		

The mean and high intensity of the values “Aesthetics” and “Personal Development” determine a statistically significant stronger desire for providing assistance ( $F=6.56$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), ( $F=12.04$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and a stronger desire for participation in activities related to providing support in comparison to the low value intensity ( $F=5.23$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) ( $F=7.64$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2. Influence of the individual importance of the professional values “Aesthetics” and “Personal Development” on the readiness to provide assistance and participate in activities related to providing support (variance analysis).**

Dependent variable/ Professional values	Independent variable	Degree of independent variable	$\bar{x}_{\text{mean}}$	F, $p<0,05$	t-test, $p<0,05$
Aesthetics	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,29	6,56	$t_{1,2} = 3,47$
		mean	1,84		$t_{1,3} = 5,41$
		high	1,93		
	participation in support activities	low	1,64	5,23	$t_{1,2} = 2,37$
		mean	1,91		$t_{1,3} = 4,22$
		high	1,98		
Personal Development	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,25	12,04	$t_{1,2} = 4,24$
		mean	1,92		$t_{1,3} = 6,56$
		high	1,96		
	participation in support activities	low	1,25	7,64	$t_{1,2} = 2,90$
		mean	1,84		$t_{1,3} = 4,72$
		high	1,92		

The stronger importance of the values “Social Interaction” and “Economic Security” demonstrates a statistically significant better readiness for providing assistance ( $F=2.49$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), ( $F=3.56$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and a stronger desire for participation in activities related to providing support ( $F=5.56$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), ( $F=2.85$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table.3).

Social work professionals for whom the professional value “Ability Utilization” features high and mean intensity, demonstrate a statistically significant better readiness to provide assistance ( $F=4.93$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), compared to professionals for whom this value has a low intensity. On the other hand, the higher the value intensity, the stronger is the desire of the professionals to participate in support activities ( $F=7.86$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 3. Influence of the individual importance of the professional values “Social Interaction”, and “Economic Security” on the readiness to provide assistance and participate in activities related to providing support (variance analysis).**

Dependent variable/ Professional values	Independent variable	Degree of independent variable	$\bar{x}_{\text{mean}}$	F, $p < 0,05$	t-test, $p < 0,05$
Social interaction	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,5	2,49	$t_{1,3} = 2.07$
		mean	1,75		
		high	1,87		
	participation in support activities	low	1,5	5,56	$t_{1,3} = 2.27$
		mean	1,73		
		high	1,91		
Economic security	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,5	3,56	$t_{1,3} = 2,44$
		mean	1,83		
		high	1,94		
	participation in support activities	low	1,5	2,85	$t_{1,3} = 2,53$
		mean	1,6		
		high	2		

With regards to the professional value “Achievement,” the same trend is observed, i.e. the more important the value is, statistically significant better is the readiness of the social work professionals to provide assistance compared to the mean and low degree of importance ( $F = 6.31$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). At the same time, the high degree of this value determines a statistically significant stronger desire for participation in support activities, compared to the mean and low degree of importance ( $F = 4.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 4).

The degree of influence of the professional value “Altruism” on the desire to provide assistance is high and statistically significant; the more important this value is, the more social work professionals are ready to provide assistance ( $F = 19.92$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). On the other hand, the high and mean degree of importance determine a statistically significant stronger desire for participation in support activities ( $F = 44.46$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), compared to the low intensity of the value importance (Table 4).

The direction of influence is preserved with regards to the value “Autonomy,” where the high and mean intensity determine a statistically significant stronger effect on the readiness to provide assistance ( $F = 3.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), compared to the low degree of importance (Table 4).

Social work professionals for whom the value “Creativity” has a high level of importance demonstrate a statistically significant better readiness to provide assistance ( $F = 2.68$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and to participate in support activities ( $F = 8.85$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), compared to the professionals for whom this value has a low level of importance (Table 4).

With regards to the professional value “Life-Style,” the influence follows the same trend where the high levels of intensity determine a statistically significant stronger desire to provide assistance ( $F = 4.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), compared to the mean and low intensity of the value (Table 4).

**Table 4. Influence of the individual importance of the professional values “Ability Utilization”, “Achieving”, “Altruism”, “Authority”, “Creativity”, “Lifestyle”, “Physical activity”, “Social interaction”, “Cultural identity ” on the readiness to provide assistance and participate in activities related to providing support (variance analysis).**

Dependent variable/ Professional values	Independent variable	Degree of independent variable	$x_{\text{mean}}$	F, $p < 0,05$	t-test, $p < 0,05$
Ability Utilization	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,5	4,93	$t_{1,3} = 5,98$
		mean	1,71		$t_{2,3} = 3,46$
		high	1,98		
	participation in support activities	low	1,38	7,86	$t_{1,2} = 2,35$
		mean	1,78		$t_{1,3} = 7,70$
		high	1,98		$t_{2,3} = 3,55$
Achieving	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,25	6,31	$t_{1,2} = 3,30$
		mean	1,87		$t_{1,3} = 6,91$
		high	1,97		
	participation in support activities	low	1,5	4	$t_{1,3} = 3,13$
		mean	1,85		
		high	1,94		
Altruism	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,43	19,92	$t_{1,2} = 3,92$
		mean	1,94		$t_{1,3} = 9,25$
		high	2		$t_{2,3} = 2,08$
	participation in support activities	low	1,43	44,46	$t_{1,2} = 1,94$
		mean	1,94		$t_{1,3} = 7,05$
		high	2		
Authority	participation in support activities	low	1,59	3,62	$t_{1,2} = 2,89$
		mean	1,89		$t_{1,3} = 3,07$
		high	1,91		
Creativity	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,5	2,68	
		mean	1,85		$t_{1,3} = 4,10$
		high	1,97		
	participation in support activities	low	1,25	8,85	$t_{1,3} = 3,87$
		mean	1,5		$t_{2,3} = 2,74$
		high	1,89		
Lifestyle	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,6	4,16	$t_{1,3} = 4,09$
		mean	1,77		$t_{2,3} = 2,68$
		high	1,97		
Physical activity	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,62	3,43	
		mean	1,87		$t_{1,3} = 3,16$
		high	1,96		

Social interaction	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,2	7,33	$t_{1,2} = 3,44$
		mean	1,83		$t_{1,3} = 8,26$
		high	1,98		$t_{2,3} = 2,24$
	participation in support activities	low	1,2	10,35	$t_{1,2} = 3,03$
		mean	1,82		$t_{1,3} = 8,36$
		high	1,98		$t_{2,3} = 2,19$
Cultural identity	readiness to provide assistance	low	1,67	2,4	$t_{1,3} = 2,57$
		mean	1,84		$t_{2,3} = 2,08$
		high	1,98		
	participation in support activities	low	1,57	3,51	$t_{1,3} = 4,03$
		mean	1,83		$t_{2,3} = 2,00$
		high	1,98		

The results obtained from the studied population with regards to the value “Personal Development” show that the high and mean degree of importance of this value determine a statistically significant stronger desire for providing assistance ( $F=12.04$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and participation in support activities ( $F=7.64$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), compared to the low level of importance (Table 4).

The influence of the value “Physical Activity” is focused on activities related to providing support. Its higher importance determines a statistically significant stronger desire for this ( $F=3.43$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 4).

The same trend is observed with regards to the value “Social Relations,” where the higher intensity determines a statistically significant stronger desire for providing assistance ( $F=7.33$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and participation in support activities to the people in need ( $F=10.35$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 4).

Social work professionals for whom the value “Cultural Identity” features a high degree of intensity, demonstrate a statistically significant better readiness to provide assistance ( $F=2.40$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and to participate in support activities ( $F=3.51$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), compared to those for whom this value has low and mean intensity (Table 4).

When summarizing the obtained results, it can be concluded that the professional values of the social work professionals are directly dependent on their readiness to provide assistance and participate in support activities to people facing difficulties.

Applying the WIS/SVP method – Scale for assessing professional values, it becomes clear that 13 of the values do influence the desire for providing assistance and participation in support activities.

In terms of the value “Life-Style,” the influence is focused only on the desire for providing assistance whereas the determination for participation in support activities is influenced by the values “Authority” and “Physical Activity.” Out of 21 professional values in the scale, 5 do not influence any of the statements. These are “Autonomy,” “Economic Rewards,” “Prestige” and “Physical Abilities”.

## Conclusions

The presented research study and the analysis of the results obtained from it support the thesis that the professional values are one of the factors determining the orientation towards rendering assistance and provision of support-related activities in the field of social work in Bulgaria.

The analysis shows that social work professionals in Bulgaria demonstrate a substantial desire for providing assistance and for active participation in activities related to providing social support. The demonstrated high level of engagement corresponds to the importance these professionals attribute to various professional values.

Of highest importance to the social work professionals are the professional values: "Ability Utilization," "Achievement," "Advancement," "Aesthetics," "Altruism," "Economic Rewards," "Life-Style," "Personal Development," "Social Interaction," "Working Conditions" and "Economic Security."

The positive correlation between professional values and the readiness to provide social support highlights the importance of the ethical principles and personal beliefs of the social work professionals in their attempts to contribute to social benefit and well-being.

We see the presented research study as a contribution for a more comprehensive and a more profound study on the social and professional profile of the social work professionals, an object of our future research.

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