

IFSW
European
Conference
Prague
2023

Against all odds

A Social Europe is Possible
Where No One is Left Behind!



UNIVERSITY of
DEBRECEN

Professional and ethical issues of the online relationship between social workers and their clients

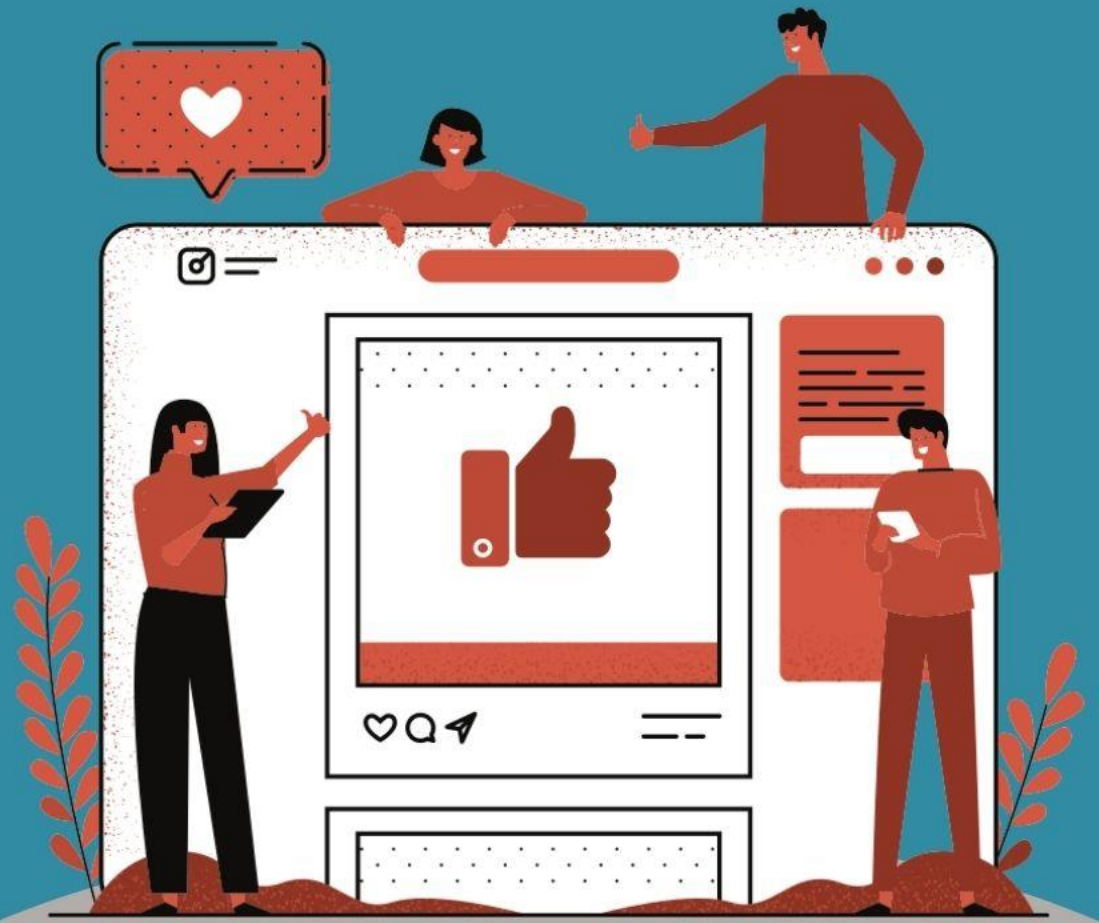
Dr. Anikó Panna Tóth, PhD

Hungarian Association of Social Workers (HASW/SZMME)

University of Debrecen Faculty of Health Sciences, Institute of Social and Sociological Sciences,
Department of Social Sciences and Social Work

Hungarian social professionals' use of digital technology and social media - the most important results of the 2020 research

- Nearly 70% of the respondents used ICT to manage clients' cases
- The use of social media is widespread, both for private and professional purposes (use of Facebook and Facebook Messenger for professional purposes is almost 40%, YouTube 18%, Viber 10%)
- 41.8% of social workers kept in touch with their clients online (45.2% via e-mail, 41.8% via Messenger, Viber)
- 8.8% provided online consultation
- 10% operated an online group
- 9 out of 10 respondents used the World Wide Web for learning, self-training, and contact with colleagues



Characteristics of social media use

- Online contact with clients is common (41.8%)
- 34.8% of respondents (N=296) reported the benefits of communicating with clients on social media.

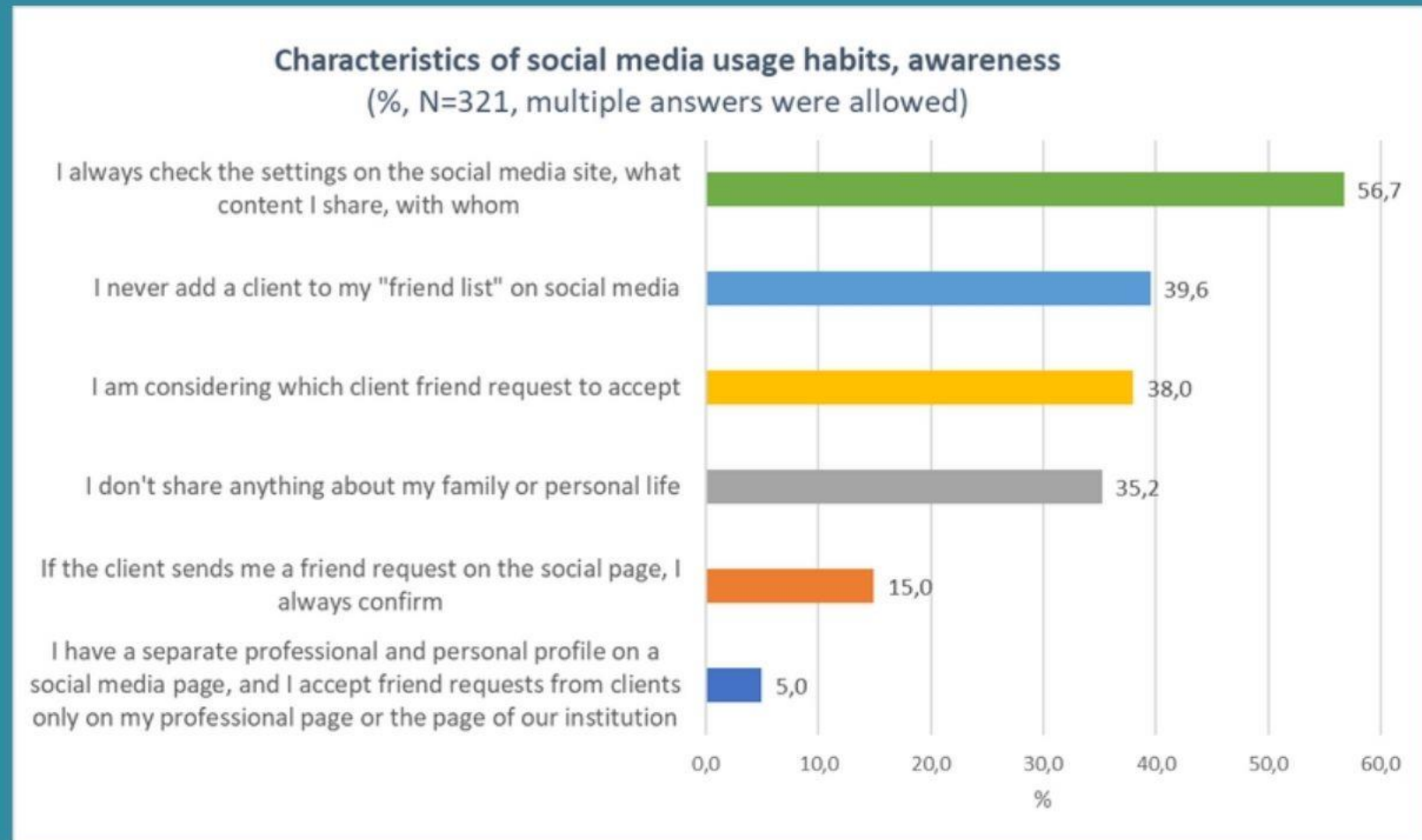




“The growing use of social media means that social workers need to reflect on the changing nature of communication and how this impacts on practice issues at the heart of social work, particularly the collection and use of information about and by individuals and how to maintain the service users right to a relationship of mutual trust, privacy and confidentiality”



- 89 percent of the respondents got a friend request from their client on a social network
- Every fourth respondent said that their client disturbed their privacy on social media and because of it they blocked or deleted the client from their friend list
- Online contact with clients is not regulated in any way in 7 out of 10 institutions





Changes in the coronavirus epidemic situation



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE WHILE USING ICT



PROTECTION OF CLIENTS

- Consciousness
- Security, data protection, confidentiality
- Adequate information
- Verifiability vs. anonymity
- Handling emergencies





QUESTIONS ABOUT REMOTE ASSISTANCE, THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCES

- Legal and ethical issues
- Possibility of misunderstandings
- Lack of information
- Difficulty handling emergencies
- Enhanced protection of vulnerable groups
- The role of professional organizations in managing the situation



**PROTECTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS,
PROFESSIONALLY APPROPRIATE
ONLINE PRESENCE AND
MAINTAIN BOUNDARIES**

- Maintaining frameworks and boundaries, protecting privacy
- Interprofessional collaborations
- Digital footprint
- Professional online presence
- Separation of professional and private communication

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DECISION-MAKERS, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Ensuring the conditions for professional and ethical work
- Information
- Accessibility
- Development of data protection guidelines
- Preparation of guidelines and recommendations
- Training, continuous education
- Research
- Knowledge center





The social worker using such technologies must consider how legal, ethical, and social principles apply, in addition to the advantages and disadvantages of online health services (see Car & Sheikh, 2004). Currently, the social work curriculum focuses almost exclusively on relationships in the absence of ICT mediated exchanges, but the growth of technology within the health care system makes these matters a priority in social work education. If such issues aren't addressed, the field of social work is at risk of not remaining competitive in the provision of health and psychosocial services. Moreover, without proper training, social workers in this arena of practice are at risk of delivering poor quality services or facing legal or ethical issues.

Perron, B. E., Taylor, H. O., Glass, J. E., & Margerum-Leys, J. (2010).
Information and Communication Technologies in Social Work. *Advances in social work*, 11(2), 67–81.



SUMMARY

- 1 The social profession is decades behind
- 2 The use of ICT is only a tool, the goal is to help and protect clients, regardless of the social work environment, it always must be ethical and professional, in accordance with the values of the profession
- 3 We must support the conscious use of social media by social workers
- 4 Recommendations, guidelines and training development are needed
- 5 Attention must be drawn to the protection of children and people with disabilities, the importance of cultural competences
- 6 We need to do more research



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



E-mail: aniko.panna.toth@gmail.com



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tothanikopanna/>