

Research Article

Monika Anna Budnik*

Recomposition of work and attitudes of family assistants within Covid-19 in Poland: A pilot study

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ohe-2022-0034>

received May 01, 2023; accepted July 10, 2023

Abstract: This article presents reflections on the consequence of remote work in social welfare professions in the case of family assistants. Web surveys focused on changes that came with the pandemic crisis in social welfare programs, such as family assistants. The article presents conclusions from the pilot web survey study among family assistants in June 2020 using the Survey Monkey online web survey questionnaire. Family assistants of Lower Silesia (part of the region in Poland) represent a category of professions in the social welfare system in Poland. They are employed in social welfare centers and work in the local community. The assistant has different tasks and eligibility than social workers. The family assistant knows the background of family problems, and, with them, he composes a working plan for better-functioning families. Personal contact with families before the epidemiological crisis has been replaced by remote work, replaced by changed tools, indirect contact with clients, and changing attitudes among workers. All changes have led to a transformation of daily work and organization in the workplace.

Keywords: social welfare, social work, family assistant, pandemic crisis

1 Introduction

The epidemiological threat related to the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic has brought about changes in daily work in social assistance. Social work has focused on working with people in their environment. However, with pandemic crisis restrictions, the work of social workers and family assistants has meant that the landscape of work has changed. Changes in work nowadays bring causal digital technologies to help

people or replace humans at work. This relevant difference foretells the progressive use of new technologies, especially in the public sector and administration of remote work. The impact of the pandemic on work practices also highlighted the potential role of digital technologies in human service work, particularly the need to work remotely rather than face-to-face [1]. The conclusions of the McKinsey Global Institute report [2] highlighted that shifts to embrace flexible modes of service delivery, such as the use of technology, are embraced less so in public services, which includes social welfare provision. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, it was necessary to adapt and develop new practices for family support assistants in Poland to be able to provide services.

Necel and Zaręba [3] identified that the public sector, which previously provided direct face-to-face work with clients, was compelled to use digital formats (telephone, helpline) to continue to provide services. An important legal provision of the Act introduced the possibility of remote work. In Poland, public sector work is governed by legislation; the Act of 2 March 2020 on special solutions related to the prevention, counteracting, and combating of Covid-19, other infectious diseases, and crises caused by them introduced the possibility of remote work in the welfare system (defined as work outside the place where it is permanently practiced). To counteract Covid-19, the employer may instruct the employee to perform, for a fixed period, the work specified in the employment contract, outside the place of its permanent performance (remote work). These changes in the organization of work brought the mediation of contact with the client to the social welfare sector, both in the work of family assistants and social workers. With this path, the way of working, previously legally indicating direct contact, has undergone a revolution in social policy. This article presents the results of a pilot web survey (using the Survey Monkey tool) among family assistants during the pandemic in Poland. Research had been carried out in the Lower Silesian region of Poland. The conclusions refer to the newly shaped formal order and working method practices by family assistants during the pandemic in Poland. This article is based on the conclusions of the pilot research carried out among Lower Silesian family assistants. I am inclined to analyze

* **Corresponding author: Monika Anna Budnik**, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Wrocław, Poland, e-mail: monika.budnik@pwr.edu.pl

the changes and challenges posed by the limitation of direct work with a client in the profession of a family assistant resulting from the implementation of restrictions on direct work with clients in the face of the 2020 pandemic.

2 Method

This article presents a pilot study on a small regional group of Lower Silesian family assistants during the coronavirus-caused pandemic in 2020. The web survey was sent directly to family assistants using a mailing list. Survey Monkey sent a questionnaire. Using personalized lists of respondents limited the risk of completing the survey by persons other than the recipient. Personalizing correspondence has often been shown to significantly increase survey response rates in web surveys and significantly increase the credibility of the answers, according to Heerwegh et al. [4] and Siuda [5]. This type of response is defined by Siuda [5] as a self-selection survey. The total number of respondents represented 5% of the regional population. The gender structure corresponds to the social sector of the whole country. More than 82% of the respondents were women and 18% were men. This confirms the image of this feminized profession. Difficulties had been encountered in the estimation of the sample of all the family assistants in Poland. Data on the number of family assistants in Poland and a regional breakdown are not available in the statistics of the public Central Statistical Office in Poland. This is more difficult compared to the case of social workers for whom data are available. A digital questionnaire was made with 30 questions, including four metric questions. A total of 30 questionnaires were returned, of which 16 were filled. The results were analyzed by addressing the key question of the changes in the work of family assistants that the pandemic has brought. The comparative aspect of the changes in the tools used, the form of contact with the client, and the subjectively felt emotions are presented in the results [6].

3 Theoretical frame

The initial sociological concept in this article is change, which refers to the social situation and the way family assistants do their work in the absence of developed methods of working with families under the conditions of pandemic crisis threat as an emergency crisis. The unexpected and dynamic changes associated with the pandemic, especially during the first months, resulted in the need to develop new processes and practices, a “new order,” in the public administration of welfare support to respond [7]. The

pandemic demonstrated the need for welfare support to adapt to the best way to meet the needs of people due to change “exogenous”. Expected changes enable forecast on work surroundings which get purpose to preparing for this new. Sudden changes, not planned are unexpected called exogenous Sztompka [8], necessitate adjustment, and adaptation. External changes as a pandemic crisis bring risks brought about by unpredicted. Moreover, the rigidity of action boundaries, and executive regulations within social assistance, had built on formal acts rigid to adapt, requiring change of law to take up the system's accepted ways of doing social work in epidemic crisis situations [9]. In the face of exogenous change (external, unexpected) formal changes of norms in the welfare system, compared to formal norms, they are more complex in quick adaptation to a crisis.

During the pandemic, workers in the welfare system faced the challenge of social assistance [10]. It was a time of unclear regulations and a lack of regulations for emergencies like a pandemic [11]. It was a challenging time for the social service sector [12]. The existing law required new regulations. Working with the family in the face of reduced contact has made it difficult to monitor the progress of the family. Additionally, it was difficult for employees to evaluate their independent family problem-solving skills in the face of remote work, telephone calls, and limited home meetings [13]. Social workers and family assistants became one of the professions that was closest to working directly with clients in this area. Family assistants are professionals in the social welfare system in Poland employed in social welfare centers and working in the local community. As a profession, it was introduced into the welfare system by the act in 2011.

The employment of family assistants is the responsibility of the municipality. In the years 2012–2014, it was an optional task and from 2015 it became an obligatory task. There was a requirement to employ family assistants in every municipality in Poland. They are professionals in the public social assistance sector in each municipality. Their privileges and tasks are diverse. However, a single-family assistant cannot work with more than 20 families. The family assistant works with family members who have difficulty performing care and education functions. All tasks of the family assistant are indicated by the act. The same act dictates the level of education for family assistants, which is higher education in the field of pedagogy, psychology, sociology, family science, or social work or higher education in any field, supplemented with training in working with children or families and at least 1 year of work experience with children or families, or postgraduate studies covering the scope of the training program. In the case of the profession of family assistants, there is no reference abroad to this profession outside the country.

For variety, a social worker has exclusive access to conduct a social interview as the basis for social benefits. The number of social workers employed is limited by the respective public system. In proportion to the population of the municipality, one social worker is employed per 2,000 inhabitants or for less than 50 families. This requirement does not exist for family assistants about the number of inhabitants.

In other countries, the occupation of social workers is crucial in the social welfare system. Bacter et al. [9] write about social workers during the Romanian pandemic. Ashcroft et al. [14] present research using an online survey among current Canadian social workers.

The lack of family assistants as a profession in the welfare systems of other countries limits citations. The profession of a family assistant as a frontier worker in Poland is unique to other European social assistance systems. This profession has its national association of family assistants. There is no international association such as the National Association of Social Workers. Therefore, there are no comparative European publications on this profession. The entire social policy focuses on social workers as a free profession in international comparisons [15].

The Lower Silesian region of Poland has 2.9 million inhabitants. Based on this public information, the population of family assistants in Lower Silesian centers (social help centers) as employee family assistants had been estimated at approximately 300 people in 2018. Estimates in other Ministry of Family and Social Policy reports point to 3,900 family assistants in Poland in 2018.

The manager of the social welfare center in the commune may grant assistance to the family in the form of a family assistant. It is a support for a certain period to overcome life's problems. The assistant has different tasks than the social worker. Knowing the background of family problems, the family assistant composes with them a working plan for better-functioning families. If the family needs activation or support with the development of parental competence, the family assistant shows information about the place where the caregiver can take a course. Helps with contact to overcome problems and find solutions in the local community.

4 Changes in family assistant work: the consequences pandemic

The World Health Organization on 11 March 2020 declared the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak a global pandemic. Conclusions of the research report [14] on the

impact of the pandemic on the professional situation in 27 Member States of the European Union indicate that practices mitigating the adaptation of employees to work in pandemic time are remote work, teleworking, changing working hours, and changing work organization [16]. The punch line of this report indicates how many tasks are suitable for remote work in selected professions.

Here, the author of this article poses a question: to what extent will work in social welfare professions such as family assistant be successfully implemented remotely? Digital tools in the work of family assistants have become a kind of "praxis" in which action and adaptation to the constraints of the environmental situation changed the way of communication with the family. On the other hand, the main tasks and tools of the family assistant, such as the preparation and execution of the family working plan, have not changed.

The transition from daily duties to their limitations by the pandemic concerns many aspects of the family assistant job [17]. Changes in family assistant work during the epidemiology crisis in 2020 arise from formal restrictions implemented. The author of this article posed the question: to what extent will work in social welfare professions such as family assistants be successfully implemented remotely? The following are risks that made rapid changes difficult.

1. Restrictions in direct meetings with clients in the social assistance center (institution social welfare).
2. Restrictions in direct meetings with clients in local surroundings and communities [18].
3. Epidemiological restrictions in the office as a precaution: rotation work in the same room for the longer distance between workers, remote job, order to wear a facial mask [3].
4. Changed document rotation and limited direct contact between workers at work.
5. The limited source of knowledge about the clients directly from local surroundings as a result restricts direct meetings.
6. Reduced source of knowledge about clients obtained directly from the local community.
7. Change in time spent in fieldwork and office: to the disadvantage, less time was spent in the local environment [15].

Therefore, there was a growing epidemiological threat in 2020 to grasp the temporal point when changes were also started in Poland's welfare state. In their web survey among family assistants, asked about time. The pandemic has changed the perception of time in existential, psychological daily work [19]. The starting point process of social changes resulting from the implementation of the state of

epidemiological threat is important from the perspective of daily competition such as a family assistant or social worker.

The economic changes resulting from the pandemic have caused limitations for many occupations in Poland. As written about other professions and sectors Aidukaite et al. [20]. Also in education where mass contact with a large number of people in school mass contact is daily, the government introduced the obligation to wear masks in all public places and started enforcing rules about social distancing, and introduced changes from stationary education to web education. Krasiejko wrote that March 2020 was a key year for the reorganization of the work of family assistants to date [21].

5 Results

Regarding the responses obtained from Lower Silesian family assistants in their research, as indicated in Figure 1, most of the respondents declare limitations in working directly with the client, starting from March 2020 [22].

The return of answers to the questions was of varying levels. I, therefore, indicate how many people answered the question. Desired change in the professional environment has emerged came with the legal changes from 8 March 2020 but it was a legal change, clearly for one social workers profession. Not every profession in social welfare received such precision in acting on how to work in a time of epidemiological crisis. The means of communication by the distance between social workers and clients had been legitimized by the legal act in Poland (Act No. 374/2020 on special solutions related to the prevention, counteracting, and combating of Covid-19, other infectious diseases, and crises caused by them [23]). With the epidemiological changes, the daily occupation in the profession of family assistants also changed. In the formal aspect document, the “work plan with family” had been replaced from direct personal contact with the client in contact by phone call.

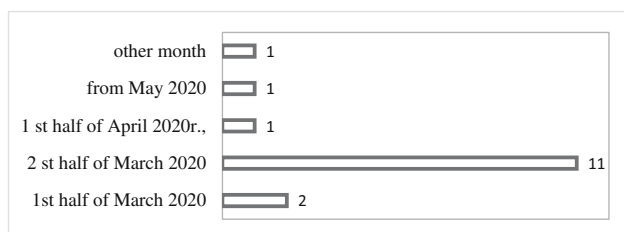


Figure 1: Date of implementation of restrictions in direct work with clients in the work of family assistants, Poland: Lower Silesia district, $N = 16$ (5% regional population).

As the respondents indicate, all limitations in epidemiological crisis in the work of the family assistant are limited: limitation of client visits to the Municipal Social Welfare Centre, ban on business trips to the local community, and replacement of personal contact by remote work in the profession of family assistant in the system of public social policy in Poland in 2020. It is the main change in daily life. These changes must implement organizational guidelines for the smoothness of tasks in social welfare centers during the pandemic [24]. The responses of the respondents about the limitations implemented in daily work are summarized in Figure 2.

The data confirmed the most important restrictions that currently change the work of the family assistant from personal contact to off-site. The responses confirmed that direct contact with clients is one of the main barriers to daily work jobs among family assistants from a family member's point of view. There are less dispersed opinions among family assistants when we asked about using the tool, which is the family work plan. Eight out of all respondents (half of the assistants) indicated that due to the pandemic crisis, the way of executing the plan of working with the family has not changed. Figure 3 illustrates the dispersion of opinions in this question. Although personal work with family was limited, the main tool using negotiated and conciliation dialogue on daily work still was implemented on daily work, but the realization was made by a phone call in an epidemiological time crisis. Figure 3 illustrates the dispersion of opinions in this question.

In conclusion, the recomposition of the attitudes of family assistants during the 2020 pandemic was influenced by the formal limitation of direct contacts in the local family environment. This fact eliminated open avenues, initiating social integration in the local community. The dominant attitudes in daily work-family assistants were replaced by phone calls. It is an indirect, more passive form of support than personal contact. According to the respondents, changes in communal social welfare institutions were most often implemented in the second half of March 2020. How the workshop of family assistants has changed in terms of the distribution of working time in the field and office work is described in the following. The fact is that during the 2020 pandemic, face-to-face visits by family assistants have significantly reduced. As the family assistants surveyed declare, the working time spent in the field with the client decreased by more than one-third due to the increase in the risk of falling ill during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Infected clients or workers had been excluded from together direct meetings. This means the risk of losing contact with clients who do not have mobile phones or do not use messengers. Responses to

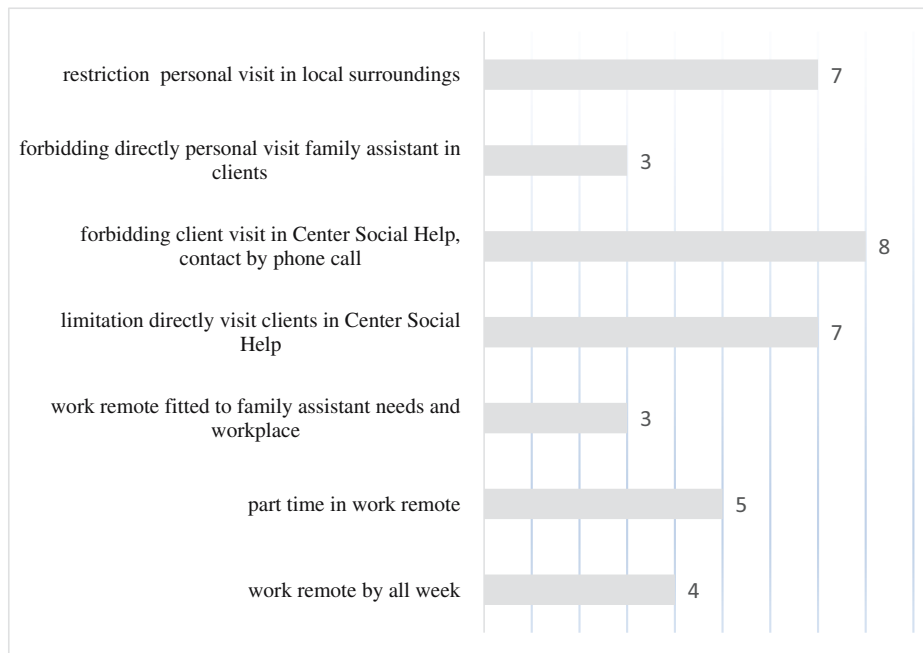


Figure 2: Are restrictions implemented on the job given the pandemic crisis threat of the Covid-19 virus? Indicate all pandemic restrictions implemented at your place of work. Respondents can choose more than one. The maximum indicates seven restrictions; average indicates four of the restrictions.

the respondents' statements about the time spent in the local community are shown in Figure 4.

The declarations of the family assistants surveyed suggest that along with the coronavirus pandemic and the limitations of face-to-face meetings, the working time in the environment of clients and families understood as field work of family assistants changed by at least one-third. The epidemiological crisis, in effect, changed time proportions of time working spending in the field. The proportions were reversed in favor of most of the work office and administrative work, including phone calls with clients, and obtaining documentation to carry out work with the family. Less time working directly on customer meetings.

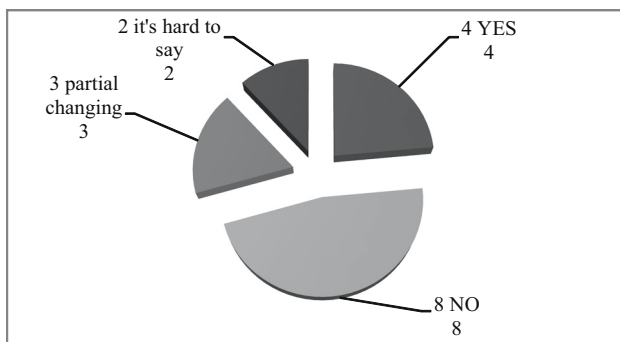


Figure 3: Do you take a different measurement/performance indicator work plan with the family during the pandemic? $N = 17$.

5.1 The family assistant and his place of work in transition: time constraints in the 2020 pandemic crisis

The legal basis for changing the organization of work with the family, including family assistants in Poland, was the act implemented during the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Everyday changes in the work professions of the social welfare sector consisted of the implementation of digital forms of working with clients (telephone, helpline), as described by Necel and Zaręba [3]. Non-existing family assistants as an occupation outside Polish welfare systems allow us to refer only to the comparison with the profession of a social worker functioning in an international context.

The legal provision of the act introduced the possibility of remote work, not been practiced so far: “contact *with*

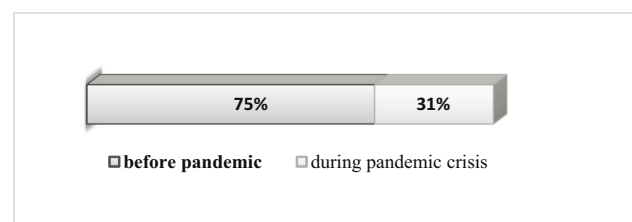


Figure 4: Family assistant's working time spent in the field before/during the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 in Poland.

clients replaced by phone, email, and based on document analysis” [17]. This change in the organization of work brought the mediation of contact with the client to the social welfare sector, both in the work of social workers and family assistants. Messaging services such as Messenger, Zoom, Skype, and telephone were the dominant forms of contact with clients as described by Iwińska and Matejek (2020:97), Białas et al. [24], and Krasiejko et al. [21].

The findings of this survey are consistent with other research which has found the most popular tools used to work with clients during the pandemic crisis. The Web survey among family assistants indicates the classification of using work tools by family assistants. They claimed that private services and computers were also used. The family assistant who uses company tools or limited access for documents necessary for work is required to work in a rotational system. Work in rotation with other workers in the room for risk reduction infections. It is a solution for the enablers of the workplace with the use of the infrastructure of the social welfare center, not only private tools for work from home.

The number of indications is 30. The dispersion of the answers is presented in the graph in Figure 5.

Other research results by Piotr Sliż refer to the tools of work during remote work [18].

In these national studies, the computer-assisted web interview survey was used and addressed to a diverse group of remote work employees. The conclusions of the research confirm that both the office and the private computer or the mobile phone as communication tools are the dominant means of communication with the client. The telephone and computer used in the work of family assistants (also in rotation or remote work) are necessary work tools that cannot be automated for remote work, requiring a diagnosis of the client's social situation.

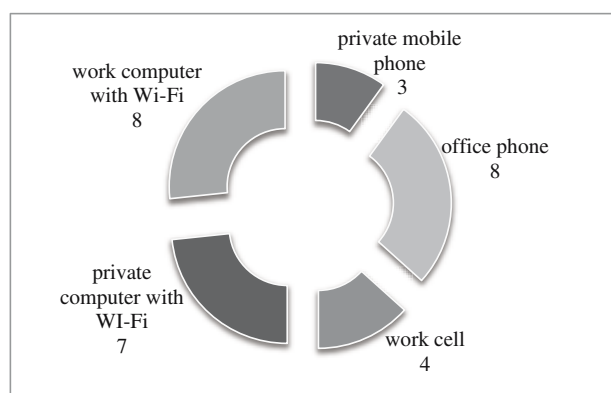


Figure 5: Tools used to work with the client during the Covid-19 pandemic, responses: 30.

When asked about the main form of communication used during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, responses from surveyed employees performing remote work confirm that telephone and email communication are the most frequently used forms of communication indicated by respondents. The conclusions of the research [18] indicate the declared advantages and limitations of remote work. The most numerous advantages of remote work of the surveyed employees of the organization ($N = 117$) are as follows:

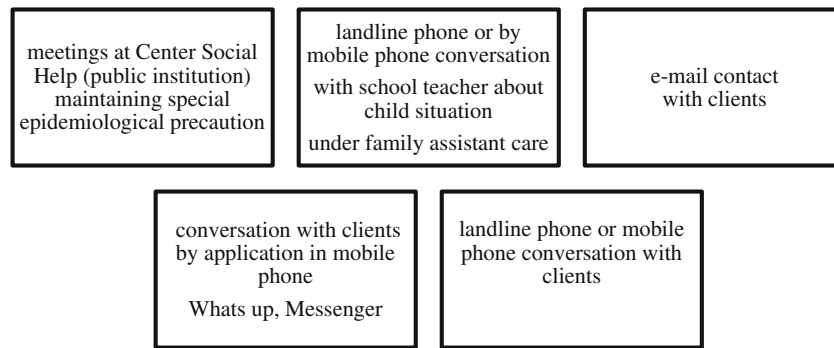
- Flexible working hours (63% of the respondents).
- Spending less time on public transport, 29% of the respondents.

Respondents perceive the following barrier in remote work:

- Lack of direct contact with other employees; 83% of the respondents indicated this problem.

A relationship with other colleagues perceived as a limitation or deficit reminds us of the importance of professional relationships at work. This problem corresponds to the degradation of the relationship at work described by Danuta Walczak Duraj. She wrote that “the moral space of work is constantly eroded by replacement of direct relationships in a work in the distance.” This social separation was deepened by the social situation resulting from the restrictions related to the Covid-19 threat in the years 2020–2021. At the same time, remote work solutions, recommended as legitimate for reducing epidemiological risk, are becoming the cause of the erosion of professional interpersonal relationships. Face-to-face relationships are entering revolution time through avatars, profiles, and online presence statuses in the public sector. Conclusions from the research report [19] on the impact of the pandemic on the professional situation in 27 Member States of the European Union indicate that practices mitigating the adaptation of employees to work in pandemic time are remote work, teleworking, changing working hours, and changing work organization [19]. The punch line of this report indicates how many tasks are suitable for remote work in selected professions.

The findings of previous studies were confirmed by this pilot study with Lower Silesian workers. Half of the Lower Silesian family assistants in the sample confirmed that the diagnostic methods used in the family working plan are the same during the pandemic crisis and before. The indicators in the family planning plan during the pandemic crisis are the same as before the pandemic, but only the tools were changed. As a result, telephone contact has become the dominant form of conversation with clients during the pandemic time. This fact was confirmed by the respondents, such as family assistants, of the Lower Silesian pilot study conducted in 2020.



Scheme 1: The forms of contact most often used by family assistants work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a question about the forms of contact in daily work when direct meetings had been restricted during the pandemic, the family assistants declared the following forms of contact used in their daily duties (Scheme 1). This article presents the results of responses to open-ended questions.

Moreover, in local research, we addressed family assistants' questions about using applications and messaging their professional work. The vast majority of declared family assistants (10 of the 14) used WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Skype, MS Teams, and Telegram applications during their professional work, performing the duties of a family assistant during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. It was pointed out that landline telephone conversation remains the main form of remote communication among clients who do not use applications or mobile phones (Figure 7).

By exploring questions about digital work tools used by Lower Silesian family assistants, we could confirm our assumptions (Figure 6). Most of the family assistants 10 of 14 respondents who answered this question declared used messaging for their professional work using applications on a mobile phone such as Facebook and Messenger. The WhatsApp application used on mobile phones was indicated in second place. The responses of the respondents are summarized in Figure 7.

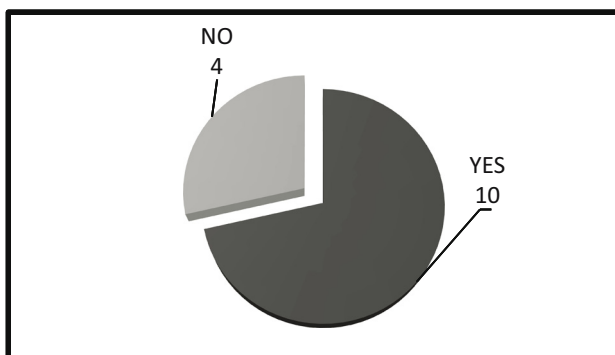


Figure 6: Declaration using applications or communication assistants at work during the Covid-19 pandemic. $N = 14$.

We asked respondents about the ranking of the barriers that appear most frequently in contact with clients during the Covid coronavirus pandemic crisis. As indicated by the responses of 12 family assistants (70% of the respondents in the pilot study), the most frequent barrier was considered to be the client's failure to respond to attempts to contact by phone. The second barrier identified by clients was related to the lack of smartphones. Digital barriers are also social deficits who have the clients beneficiary from the social welfare sector this is part of state exclusion and a reminder about inequalities also are in the digital sphere of life.

6 Changes in attitudes during the pandemic in 2020: family assistants case

Human attitudes are defined by active or passive action. In sociology, social attitude beginnings research about attitudes was published by Florian Znaniecki and Wiliama Isaac Thomas [25] Polish Peasant in Europe and America. Monography of life narratives of a Polish immigrant [26]. As

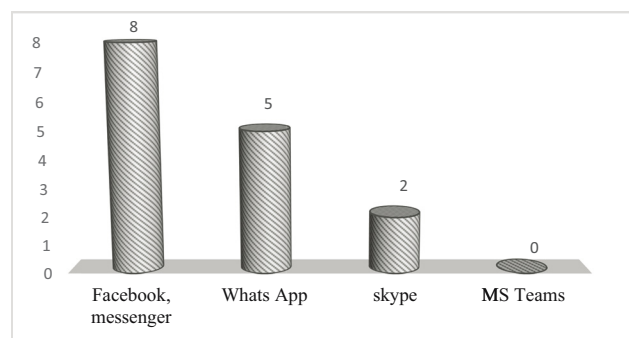


Figure 7: Ranking the applications or messengers used most frequently in professional work by Lower Silesian family assistants in Poland, family assistants $N = 9$, number of indications = 15.

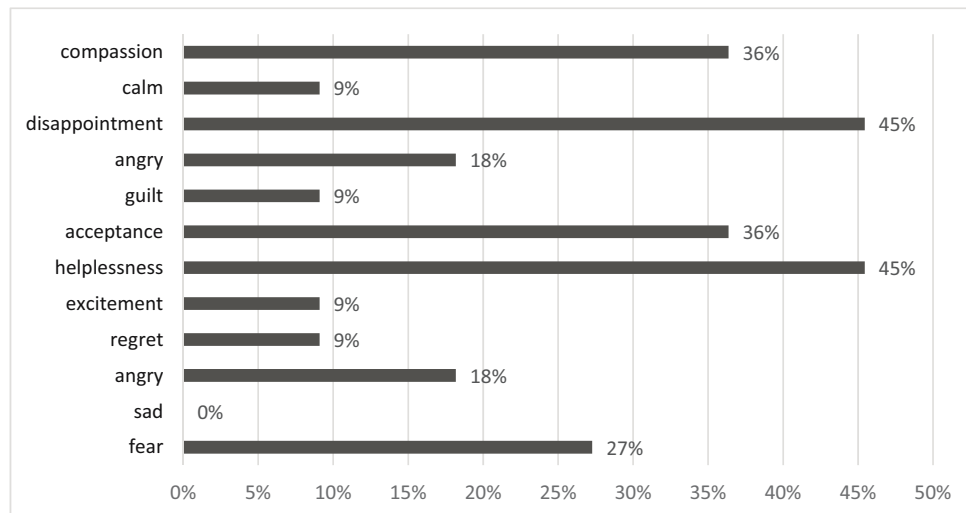


Figure 8: Emotions toward clients in the time of the pandemic. Respondents indicate three of the most important from the list.

understood by these authors, an attitude is a process of individual consciousness that determines the actual activity of an individual toward the social world, as per Nowak [27]. Importantly, attitudes constitute an important direction of activities in professional work. Working conditions and the working atmosphere are important factors for engaging in work, the intensity of which expresses active or passive professional attitudes [27]. As the literature shows, human attitudes relate to other people or material objects. Therefore, attitudes are related to personal and professional values. The ability to solve ethical dilemmas is a necessary element of consistent attitudes at work [28].

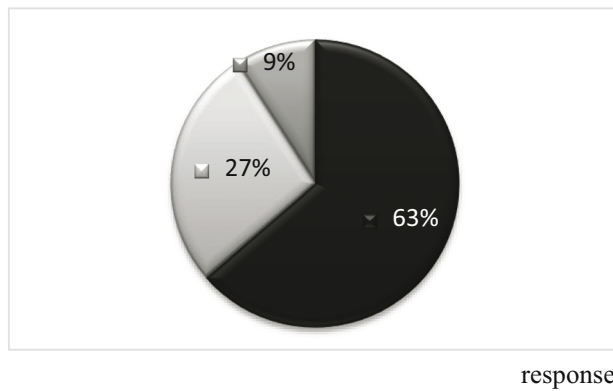
Attitudes toward a problem, issue, or social group, as indicated by Marody, express a person's attitude toward another subject [29]. Moreover, an attitude is an individual's predisposition to evaluate a given subject or object and an emotional response to it. This aspect highlights the three components of an attitude: the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements of an attitude. Both the psychological and social perceptions of attitudes toward work, waste segregation, and driving culture in road traffic have been and still are the areas of interest in the work of sociologists Nowak [27] and psychologist Katz and Scotland [30]. Analyses of the direction of attitudes: positive and negative or strength of attitudes (strong and weak) and the content of attitudes standardizing the attitude toward one subject or object: attitude caring, humanitarian, or exploratory attitudes show what the meaning have attitudes on work. This shows the dynamics of the attitude as a social category, which emphasizes the impermanence of the components of the attitude. Due to the diversity of attitudes over time, a distinction is made between temporary, changeable, or permanent attitudes [29].

More than three-fourths of the family assistants declared fear for their clients. Almost half of the responses indicate helplessness as a mostly identified emotion. In addition, the most frequently occurring emotions and feelings of family assistants toward their customers during pandemic restrictions following from Covid-19 are disappointment, compassion, and acceptance.

The findings of this survey are consistent with other research by Necel and Zareba [3]. Welfare-related professions during the epidemiological crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic show the emotional costs incurred by social welfare workers during the pandemic. The results of their research on family assistants confirm that the fear related to concerns about the situation of their clients is the emotion that arises during work during the 2020 pandemic (Figure 8).

The emotions of family assistants are related to the high risk of lack of contact with families with the problem of violence. Protecting children during the pandemic has been limited by access to family. The existing division of responsibilities and family roles has been altered during the pandemic [31]. Work and remote education resulted in the accumulation of emotions in families and the risk of domestic violence, especially where the victim was in isolation together with the person using the violence [30]. However, the pandemic crisis situation changed the availability of direct forms of obtaining information about the family and its members by limiting the work in the local community.

When the family assistants were asked about the adopted strategy in contact between them and individual clients (family members) during the pandemic, half of the respondents declared that they repeated contact with the



I feel my work comfort is worse than before the pandemic	63%	7
I feel that my work comfort is the same as before the pandemic	27%	3
I feel better at work than before the pandemic	9%	1

Figure 9: Sense of professional satisfaction of family assistants.

client in their way knowing the barriers and deficits of this client. How to respondents declare in the survey that half of the family assistants repeatedly make contact with the client. That is, communication, as a quality of work with clients is referred to as “the core of work” [32]. In our studies, family assistants were asked about their professional satisfaction after the changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. More than half of the respondents claim that it is worse than what it was before the pandemic crisis (Figure 9).

Dominant strategies between family assistants and clients during the pandemic time at the declaration level are recognized as active attitudes. Occupation activity is understood as an initiative to communicate and counsel a client who has social deficits and is threatened with social exclusion. Preventing the loss of contact by monitoring is understood as a maintenance contact.

Being involved in the work, have a job satisfaction, and organizational commitment are indicators of retention (holding) in the profession in the social policy sector, according to Geisler et al. [29]. The pandemic is a stimulus that causes anxiety about clients. Also, aspects of insecurities about the evaluation of work are important emotional components that shaped the professional attitude of family assistants in crisis time. These emotions are related to the cognitive aspect of professional attitudes. The lowest and highest indications of the respondents

that illustrate the dispersion of self-assessment effectiveness are important. The question asked of the respondents sounded as follows: How would you rate your level of effectiveness at work as a family assistant after the changes in your job due to the Covid-19 pandemic? The responses pointed to the average rate point of 44/100 percent.

These opinions indicate a dispersion of self-evaluation on the effectiveness of own work among family assistants. Awareness, not exhaustion contact, limited access to source information directly from the local environment as a work barrier during the pandemic, and limited job satisfaction during this time.

Dominant strategies between family assistants and clients during the pandemic time at the declaration level are recognized as active attitudes. Initialized contacts although by intermediary tools such as telephone are pre-imposed passive forms of cooperation to resolve family problems through epidemiological restrictions. Involvement in work through the attitude of family assistants is an important aspect of an active professional attitude.

To conclude, changes in attitudes in the daily work of family assistants in the context of a pandemic in Poland in 2020 were a shift of active attitudes with passive tools (telephone, mail) toward family contacts that possibly had been carried out in epidemiological situations by remote work.

7 Conclusion

The article presents the complexity of changes and effects on the professions of social welfare due to the pandemic alert. Family assistants are next behind to social workers the fundamental professions closest to family in Polish social welfare. So far, social work-based professions have focused on peer-to-peer realization in the local municipality. Along with the pandemic restrictions came changes with carry-out jobs. In the welfare system in context, professions and needs quickly transformed practice to adhere to public health guidelines, such as the use of personal protective equipment, adhering to physical distancing requirements and closure of workplaces from direct contact with clients, while still maintaining connections with their clients [14,33–35]. The results of the pilot web survey (using Survey Monkey) among Polish family assistants in the Lower Silesian, region of Poland, present the case of the profession during adaptation to changes in the performance of work brought about by the pandemic crisis. Local perspective case study on the professions that are family assistants in the Lower Silesian region involves narrowing down the target audience case study from the local

perspective with a comparative perspective in welfare system other countries. The local outreach of the research comes with narrowing down the target of the family assistant of the respondents. The web surveys conducted in the family assistant group focus on changes in their work during the pandemic. The area of work tools and the sense of work satisfaction and emotions toward clients are dimensions of changes in this profession revealed during the pandemic. Restrictions on work during the pandemic crisis limited contact with families. Results from web surveys claim that formal requirements related to visits to the client's home were replaced by telephone contact. The helplessness of employees and fear for their clients and low job satisfaction are the effects of the new professional situation during the threat of an pandemic crisis.

Studies about family assistants in Poland enrich the current evidence on the pandemic's effect on fever. Restrictions on fieldwork with clients in the local community, reducing visits to clients at the social help center, working on the phone, fear of clients, and worry about the assessment of work are the key to the conclusions of the local research. Changes in daily work in the family assistant profession due to the pandemic alert opened up an improvement action in various social welfare scenarios that were pandemic crisis risk in Poland.

Funding information: The author states that no funding was involved.

Conflict of interest: The author states no conflict of interest.

Informed consent: Informed consent has been obtained from all individuals included in this study.

Ethical approval: The conducted research is not related to either human or animal use.

Data availability statement: The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

References

- [1] Walczak-Duraj D. The moral space of work - leading to revaluations. *Ann Soc Sci.* 2019;11(47):51–72.
- [2] Manyika J, Lund S, Chiu M, Bughin J, Woetzel P, Batra R, et al. *Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transitions in a Time of Automation*. Atlanta: McKinsey & Company; 2017. [12.12.2022]. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/industries/public%20and%20social%20sector/our%20insights/what%20the%20future%20of%20work%20will%20mean%20for%20jobs%20skills%20and%20wages/mgi-jobs-lost-jobs-gained-executive-summary-december-6-2017.pdf>.
- [3] Necel R, Zaręba M. Social assistance institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic: Experiences of polish social workers. *Int Soc Work.* 2020;63(6):803–6.
- [4] Heerwegh D, Vanhove T, Matthijs K, Loosveldt G. The effect of personalization on response rates and data quality in web surveys. *Int J Soc Res Methodol.* 2005;8(2):85–99.
- [5] Siuda P. Internet survey – advantages and disadvantages – recapitulation. In: Siuda P, editor. *Online Research Methods*. Bydgoszcz: Katedra; 2016. p. 28–81.
- [6] Oppenheim AN. Questionnaires, interviews, and measurement of attitudes. Poznań: Zysk; 2004.
- [7] Gavrilă-Ardelean M, Runcan R. The role of the social worker in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Polish Parliament. 4 Rev de Asistență Socială, anul XXI, nr. 4/2022;2022.* p. 33–45.
- [8] Sztompka P. *Sociology of Social Change*. Krakow: Znak; 2005.
- [9] Bacter C, Saveanu S, Marc C. Social work during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Adm Personal Response N Chall Soc Change Rev.* 2021;19(1):50–80.
- [10] Ebbinghaus B, Lehner L, Naumann E. Welfare state support during the COVID-19 pandemic: change and continuity in public attitudes towards social policies in Germany. *Eur Policy Anal.* 2022;8(3):297–311.
- [11] Gigauri I, Bogacz-Wojtanowska E. Effects of the pandemic crisis on social enterprise: A case study from Georgia. *Econ Sociol (Ternop).* 2022;15(2):312–34.
- [12] Cantillon B, Seeleib-Kaiser M, van der Veen R. The COVID-19 crisis and policy responses by continental European welfare states. *Soc Policy Adm.* 2021 Mar;55(2):326–38.
- [13] European Public Service Union. Research Led in the Framework of the Foresee Project: Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Social Services Sector and the Role of Social Dialogue. Brussels: European Public Service Union; 2022 [12.12.2022]. <https://socialemmployers.eu/files/doc/Report-Impact%20of%20the%20Covid-19%20on%20the%20social%20services%20sector%20and%20the%20role%20of%20social%20dialogue.pdf>.
- [14] Ashcroft R, Sur D, Greenblatt A, Donahue P. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Social Workers at the Frontline: A Survey of Canadian Social Workers. *Br J Soc Work.* 2021;52(3):1724–46.
- [15] Higham P. Social work and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Int Insights Eur J Soc Work.* 2022;25(5):927–8.
- [16] Holt S, Elliffe R, Gregory S, Curry P. Social Workers Response to Domestic Violence and Abuse during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Br J Soc Work.* 2023 Jan;53(1):386–404.
- [17] Hilus A. Challenges for centers social assistance during pandemic COVID-19. In: Piłkuła NG, Grewiński M, Zdebska E, Glac W, editors. *Chosen Domestic and International Aspects Policy Social in Time Pandemic Coronavirus*. Kraków: Scriptum; 2020. p. 165–76.
- [18] Sliż P. Remote work during the COVID-19 epidemic in Poland - results of an empirical study. *E-mentor.* 2020;3(85):50–65.
- [19] Weber T, Hurley J, Adăscăliței D. Employment and Labour Market. COVID-19: Implications for Employment and Working Life. Dublin: Eurofund; 2021. [23.11.2021]. <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2021/covid-19-implications-for-employment-and-working-life>.
- [20] Aidukaite J, Saxonberg S, Szelewa D, Szikra D. Social policy in the face of a global pandemic: Policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis in central and Eastern Europe. *Soc Policy Adm.* 2021 Mar;55(2):358–73.

- [21] Krasiejko I. Support families with children during a pandemic – tasks and organization of assistants work days. *Soc Work.* 2020;2(35):117–28.
- [22] Grondin S, Mendoza-Duran E, Rioux P. Pandemic, quarantine, and psychological time. *Front Psychol.* 2020;11:581036. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.581036.
- [23] Act No. 374/2020 on special solutions related to the prevention, prevention, and combating of COVID-19, other infectious diseases, and crises caused by them. 2017.
- [24] Białas A, Piechocki Z, Wojtanowicz K. How to implement tasks of aid center social over time crises. *Solut Organ Substantive Guide HR Soc Time Pandemic.* 2020. [21.12.2020]. Kraków. Association Certified Supervisors Work Social. <https://mcps.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/pandemia-poradnik-ops.pdf>.
- [25] Thomas WI, Znaniecki F. The polish peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an Immigrant Group. Boston: Gorham Press; 1920.
- [26] O'Brien W, Adamakis M, O'Brien N, Onofre M, Martins J, Dania A, et al. Implications for European physical education teacher education during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-institutional SWOT analysis. *Eur J Teach Educ.* 2020;43(4):503–22.
- [27] Nowak S. *Attitude Theories.* Warszawa: PWN; 1973.
- [28] Boguszewski R, Makowska M, Bożewicz M, Podkowińska M. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on Religiosity in Poland. *Religions (Basel).* 2020;11(12):1–14.
- [29] Geisler M, Berthelsen H, Muhonen T. Retaining social workers the role of quality of work and psychosocial safety climate for work engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. *Hum Serv Organ Manag Leadersh Gov.* 2019;43(1):1–15.
- [30] Katz D, Stotland EA. Preliminary Statement to a Theory of Attitudes Structure and Change. In: Koch S, editor. *Psychology: A study of science.* New York: McGraw-Hill; 1959. p. 428–9.
- [31] Iwińska M, Matejek J. Help and support for families experiencing violence during a pandemic. In: Pikuła NG, Grewiński M, Zdebska E, Glac W, editors. *Challenges for Social Policy in the Context of the Corona Virus Pandemic.* Krakow: Scriptum; 2020. p. 89–108.
- [32] Bradbury-Jones C, Isham L. The pandemic paradox: the consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence. *J Clin Nurs.* 2020 Jul;29(13–14):2047–9.
- [33] Hasenfeld Y. The attributes of human service organizations. In: Hasenfeld Y, editor. *Human Services as Complex Organizations.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE; 2010. p. 291–310.
- [34] Cook S, Ulriksen MS. Social policy responses to COVID-19: new issues, old solutions? *Glob Soc Policy.* 2021;21(3):381–95.
- [35] Mishra L, Gupta T, Shree A. Online teaching-learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic. *Int J Educ Res Open.* 2020;1:100012.