

Social Work Profession in a Mirror of the Russian Immigrant Media in Israel

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Abstract : The present study seeks to analyze representation of social work in immigrant media, focusing on the case of online newspapers established by immigrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel. This immigrant population is particularly interesting because social work did not exist as a profession practiced in the USSR and hence most FSU immigrants arrive in Israel without a basic knowledge of the essence of social work, the services it provides and the logic behind its treatment methods. The sample of 37 items was built through a Google search of the Russian online newspapers and portals originated in Israel by using keywords such as “social worker,” “social work services” and the like. All items were analyzed by using qualitative content analysis. Principal analytical categories used for the analysis were: Assessment of social work services (negative, positive, neutral); social workers’ professionalism and effectiveness; goals and motives underlying their activity; cross-cultural contact with immigrants and methods used in working with immigrants. On this basis, four dominant images used to portray Israeli social work services and social workers were identified: Lack of professionalism, cultural gaps between FSU immigrants and Israeli social workers, repressive character of social work services and social workers’ involvement in corruption and crime.

Keywords : FSU immigrants, immigrant media, media images, social workers

Conference Title : ICSWESD 2015 : International Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development

Conference Location : Madrid, Spain

Conference Dates : November 12-13, 2015