

Apprenticeship in the Public Relations Industry as Part of the Analysis of Ethical Standards

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ABSTRACT

In the public relations industry, there are mainly people with a higher level of education, although the type of completed studies and preparation for the profession plays an important role in achieving specific goals in professional work, with particular emphasis on the ethical dimension of PR practice. **Scientific objective:** Selecting variables related to learning the profession in the PR industry and analyzing their impact on the level of identification of professionalism and ethics in the PR profession, together with an indication of possible reasons for noncompliance with ethical standards in the industry. **Research methods:** Quantitative research using telephone surveying

technique (CATI) among people employed in the public relations industry (sample of 500 PR specialists) and desk research analysis taking into account the results of several research projects regarding the professional performance of PR duties. **Results and conclusions:** On average, every third person employed in the public relations industry has completed university studies that were not associated with this specialization, i.e. they did not provide the knowledge needed to perform daily professional duties. On the other hand, views consistent with professional ethics are most emphasized by people who have had a long contact with the PR education system, i.e. completed university and post-graduate studies related to PR. The accuracy of the information provided is a key standard that respondents consider when performing their work. **Cognitive value:** The presented results include a non-standard approach to analyzing the level of education of representatives of the PR industry, which allows more complete knowledge and characteristics of the paths that PR professionals had to follow, along with the distinction between ethical values that guide individual groups.

KEYWORDS

professional ethics, hierarchy of values, PR practitioner, apprenticeship, public relations

Reliability, honesty, and credibility (Olędzki, 2009) are words that should characterize the public relations (PR) industry. Each specialist operating in this area must treat them as the principles of his / her professional practices. Because this is a profession of high social trust, the more demanding is placed on the people who perform it (Stolarczyk, 2016). This is due to the specifics of this work, which includes, among others, building relationships, creating the expected image, and presenting real information about the organization (Tworzydło, 2017). All this means that the activities undertaken by PR practitioners are constantly monitored and evaluated by the entities that create their environment. These activities in their foundations assume respect for applicable ethical standards. How can one create a positive image without respecting moral and ethical standards? How to build relationships without observing the principles of social coexistence and respect for others? How to present only true information using manipulation? (Hope, 2006).

In this way, it should be stated that unethical activities are in conflict with the idea and goals contained in the definition of public relations and should not take place in accordance with ethical codes. It should be noted that one of the elements that determine the ethical dimension of PR activities is the level of education of people determining the strength of the industry and its specificity.¹ The basis of the analyzes presented in this paper were selected data collected in national surveys on a sample of 500 public relations specialists. The research was conducted by the Social Team of PR Experts (Professor Krystyna Wojcik; Ewa Hope, PhD; Jacek Barlik, PhD; Professor Jerzy Olędzki—Chairman of the Team) and are part of a project aimed at developing standards of professional PR (Barlik, Hope, Olędzki, & Wojcik, 2019). Based on the statistical analysis of data from these studies, one can conclude, among others on the level of ethical preparation of PR specialists in the context of performing daily professional duties.

¹ The study was carried out using the CATI based on quota-target selection, taking into account the type of enterprise in which PR practitioners work (public and private organizations, PR and non-governmental agencies).

Reasons for Noncompliance with Ethical Standards in the PR Industry

There are many examples of entities that do not treat the provisions of the ethical codes applicable to the Polish PR industry as guidelines for their work. This translates into a distant from the expected opinion about public relations employees in a social environment (Przybysz, 2018). This phenomenon is widespread and dangerous for the industry because it happens that PR practitioners are treated as unreliable and even potentially harmful because of their skills, which are perceived as manipulative. Fight against this negative image was a coalition to rebuild public relations reputation, which included the Faculty of Journalism, Information, and Book Studies of the University of Warsaw, Association of Public Relations Companies, Institute for Media Monitoring, and PRoto.pl, and this initiative was called “PR. No Comment.” Research conducted as part of the above project proves that it is justified to take actions to improve the image of professions related to PR (Przybysz, 2018). For 6 months, texts appearing in traditional media and on Internet portals, in which there were various expressions related to PR, were analyzed. It turns out that almost half of the materials in which PR or derivatives of this concept appeared have a negative connotation (Przybysz, 2019). It can therefore be concluded that the media contribute to showing PR and PR practitioners in a bad light. However, as Hope (2006) indicates, Poland is not an isolated case of poor perception of PR—research conducted in the United States in 1999 showed that the social trust for a public relations specialist is very low. Many researchers and professionals associated with this industry claim that this perception is influenced by the widespread violation of ethical and moral standards in the name of the belief that the end justifies the means. In addition, there are also situations in which representatives of the PR industry are inclined to violate ethical principles in which they have to function in everyday life (this is about the phenomenon of pursuit of sensation and picture culture) (Habecka, 2016).

The Public Relations Ethics Council stands guarding compliance with ethical standards and the promotion of desirable behavior among employees of the PR industry. It is an institution dealing with education and monitoring compliance with ethical standards by entities operating in the industry. The Council respects the standards of professional PR. An example of PREC’s activities in this area is the appeal issued in January 2019 to people involved in professional communication for compliance with ethical standards in the process of communication and exchange of information on the web. The appeal particularly concerned the principles of information reliability, confidentiality and transparency, in accordance with the 2017 Helsinki Declaration. It is important that the Council is not a penalizing body, it only issues opinions on matters that are ethically questionable. Therefore, the right question seems to be whether such opinions are effective and whether the fear of negative opinion is actually able to stop a PR practitioner from unethical behavior. Apparently not, since codes are still violated, and the quoted studies show that respect for ethics among PR specialists is a problem for many.

It should be noted that people working in the PR industry are aware of the low quality of their own activities in the context of their ethical significance. This is confirmed by research results regarding the condition of the industry. Only 39% of PR specialists (research group) agreed with the statement that companies providing public relations services pay special attention to the ethical dimension of their activities. It is worrying that among persons in management positions the percentage of affirmative answers was even lower and amounted to 31%. The dimension of ethicality of activities was one of the poorer rated in cross-section of all tested components of the industry’s condition (Tworzydło, Szuba, & Zajic, 2017). This is confirmed by the data from Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of Dimensions Constituting the Condition of the PR Industry

No.	Dimensions related to the PR industry (scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is extremely negative and 7 is extremely positive)	Number of answers	Average	Standard deviation
1.	The PR industry in Poland is developing very quickly	154	5.08	1.126
2.	The demand for PR services in business circles is very high	151	5.08	1.230
3.	The market value of the PR industry in Poland is increasing	151	4.80	1.217
4.	Companies allocate more and more resources to PR activities	151	4.66	1.451
5.	Polish PR agencies provide high quality services	151	4.61	1.177
6.	It is very easy to find good PR practitioners in Poland	152	4.36	1.340
7.	Companies providing public relations services pay special attention to the ethical dimension of their activities	151	4.13	1.522
8.	The expression “public relations” has universal positive associations	152	4.01	1.619
9.	Customer awareness in the field of PR is very high	153	3.93	1.204
10.	The Polish education system prepares students well for work in the PR industry	152	3.60	1.532

Source: Tworzydło, D., Szuba, P., & Zajic, M. (2017). *Analiza kondycji branży public relations*. Rzeszów: Newslime.pl

Working in any profession requires contractors to comply with ethical norms and principles. Many professions, such as teachers, nurses, clerks, and attorneys, have developed codes of professional ethics, which are not only a signpost of how to proceed, but also a tool in resolving moral and ethical dilemmas. Such documents have also been developed by the Polish public relations industry, although in relation to other professions it is very young, because the industry is only 25 years old. Specialists in this field can refer to the codes proposed, among others by the Association of Public Relations Companies (Code of Good Practices) and the Polish Public Relations Association (Code of Ethics of the Polish Public Relations Association). The codes apply to members of associations and entities, but, as indicated in the study, entitled “Public Relations Professionalism in Poland” conducted in 2019 (Ołędzki, Wojcik, Hope, & Barlik, 2019)—over 90% of specialists do not belong to any industry organization. In addition, if one considers the number of 700 public relations agencies that are currently credible on the Polish market, one can state that only every twentieth of them are associated in an industry organization (Polish Association of Public Relations Companies).² Certainly, low participation rates may be one of the reasons for noncompliance with ethical standards. In addition, there are no penalties for noncompliance, except for social assessment or a judgment issued by the Public Relations Ethics Council and published on the Council’s website.

Another reason may be the very specificity of the profession, which is considered a liberal one, and it does not require specialized education, as in the case of a doctor or lawyer. As indicated by Kaczmarek-Śliwińska (2015), “no ministerial standard of education for these specializations

² The Association of Public Relations Companies had 36 entities on October 1, 2019 (industry leaders), see <https://zfpr.pl/agencje-czlonkowskie/>.

has been developed so far, and their program is the result of the work, possibilities, and studies offers of a given university” (p. 32). In the industry, one can often meet individuals who are self-taught or have completed studies in other fields, among which, based on the analysis of available bios, there are: journalism (28.5%), management (14.4%), marketing (10%), Polish philology (8.9%), political science (8.4%), sociology (7.9%), international relations (5.8%), law (5.4%), economics (5.1%), and others (Łaszyn, 2016). Comforting is the fact that ethics plays a significant role in the program of most of the fields mentioned.

There is no professional skills verification or certification system in the PR environment, and there is no obligation to belong to an industry grouping regulating PR standards. So how to require professional actions and knowledge of the rules of ethics of the profession, if one joins it without proper preparation? Therefore, the low position of the educational aspect is not surprising—an average of 3.60 on a scale of 1 to 7 (see Table 1).

However, one cannot ignore the fact that professionalism is closely connected with good preparation for the profession. “In most PR codes, ethics are combined with the professionalism of those practicing this profession, which is why a PR employee should have a thorough education” (Polok, 2005). This applies to both scientific fields, such as economics, psychology, and sociology, and to the development of a value system, thanks to which a public relations specialist will make the right decisions. This system should be closely related to generally applicable ethical principles. It is impossible to learn ethical behavior in practice, by trial and error. This is associated with a sense of responsibility for the activities carried out. The importance of responsibility was emphasized by both practitioners and theoreticians of the public relations industry during the 1st “Ethics of Public Relations” Conference organized on December 13, 2019. Practitioners appealed to scientists to discipline them in ethics and watch over their actions, because, as they claimed ethics escapes in everyday work. In the courses on preparation for the profession, a significant part of the classes is devoted to ethics, instilling in young PR students values and desired behaviors that should be the norm in their future professional practice.

Another important problem closely related to noncompliance with ethical standards in communication processes is combining journalism with promotional activities to obtain benefits (not necessarily material). These types of practices often boil down to publishing content that includes product placement, but without a clear annotation in this regard (this is deliberate misleading the recipient). The problem is serious, because the profession of PR specialist is most closely associated with journalism—70% of PR practitioners declare experience in journalism (Łaszyn, 2016). Jerzy Olędzki (2019) in an interview for the PRoto.pl portal, drew attention to the process of increasing commercialization in communication. In his opinion, “it results from the marketing fetishization of increasing profit, without paying attention to social costs. Of course, looking for profit has good sides, such as the development of the economy, but it largely contributes to the spread of unfair practices” (para.10).

Vocational Education of Representatives of the Polish PR Industry, with Particular Emphasis on Ethics

One of the aims of the “Public Relations Professionalism in Poland” study (Olędzki, Wojcik, Hope, & Barlik, 2019) was to try to see how the methods of learning the profession of PR specialist affect ethical standards in the industry. The research carried out by Exacto’s Strategic Research and Analysis Department was of a diagnostic nature. Searched for answers including

to the following questions: What are the problems faced by the industry representatives in their professional practice?; What are the sources of these problems?; What affects the weakening public confidence in the profession of a PR specialist? One of the variables taken into account in this study was the level of education of industry representatives.

The respondents declared that they learned the profession of PR specialist mainly during several years of higher education (44%) or during post-graduate studies (30%). We do not have information on exactly which fields are concerned, however, it is likely that a relatively small proportion of these people have completed public relations as the main specialization of their education. The analysis of bios of Polish PR specialists mentioned earlier, shows that only 29% of them have completed PR studies (Łaszyn, 2016). The image of the educational path that emerges from the “Public Relations Professionalism in Poland” study is complemented by declarations of 23% of respondents who participated in shorter professional courses or acquired the necessary knowledge themselves (as many as 42% chose the answer “I gained knowledge myself—I am self-taught”). In the case of higher education, there is no doubt that the right amount of time is devoted to ethics (although this may depend on the field of study), while in the case of postgraduate studies and vocational courses it is rare that ethical issues are found in their curricula. Analyzes also showed that ethics in the PR profession can hardly be learned through experience. Wojcik (2019) in the conclusions of the research on public relations professionalism in Poland writes: “Knowledge in this field [ethics] was not provided by (to about 40% of respondents) experience, because in the last twelve months they have not faced an ethical problem. Perhaps the vitality of the problem of ethics of the profession / PR practice in the public and respondents’ awareness is fueled by a loud and fairly widely expressed negative assessment of the industry, which cannot convincingly oppose it” (p. 1). Can it be concluded that the way of learning the profession of a public relations specialist is important in the implementation of ethical standards?

The level of education of PR practitioners in dichotomous terms (N = 500) is presented in Figure 1 and 2.

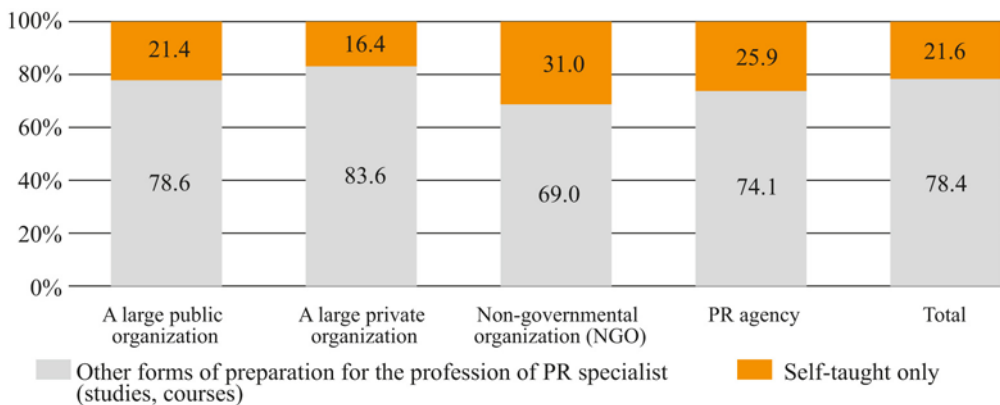


Figure 1. Education of PR Practitioners in Relation to the Workplace: Self-Taught Variant

Source: Own study

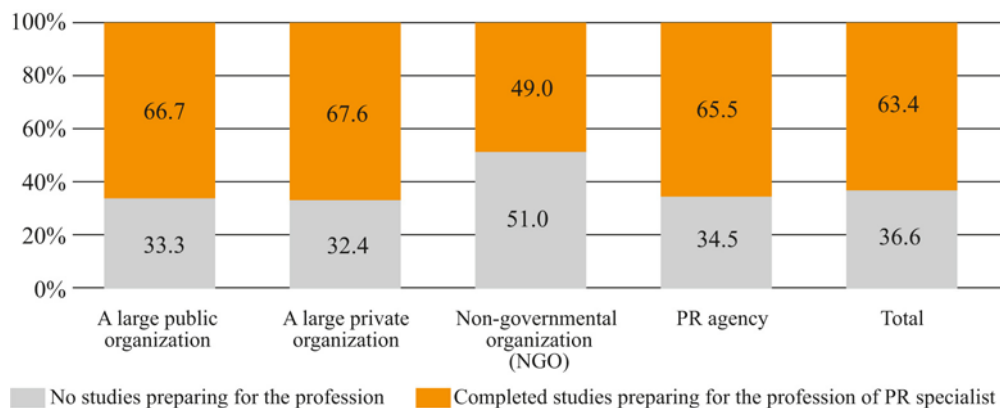


Figure 2. Education of PR Specialists in Relation to the Workplace: Study Variant

Source: Own study

More in-depth analyzes in the context of PR specialists' experience³ have shown that, on average, every fifth respondent has no public relations education, and he / she learned the profession only on his own. However, 78% of research samples are people who, deciding on their profession, used other sources of knowledge acquisition—not always higher education. Nearly 64% of respondents were the practitioners with a higher level of education. In other cases, it should be assumed that the respondents learned their profession during post-graduate studies and during various types of courses preparing for work in the PR industry.

A relationship between the level of education and the place of employment of the respondents was also observed. Most self-taught people work in non-governmental organizations (31%), slightly less in PR agencies (26%), and in state-owned companies (21%), the least in private companies (16%).⁴ It is the latter sector that is mainly made up of people (84%) who used various forms of preparation for the profession (studies, courses, training).

Similar conclusions are provided by the analysis of the level of experience broken down into the lack or presence of studies among people dealing with public relations on a daily basis. It turns out that those who are responsible for communication processes in non-governmental organizations, for the most part, do not have completed studies providing knowledge about the profession of PR specialist (51%). On the other hand, the remaining groups are dominated by PR students who were preparing for the profession during their chosen higher and / or postgraduate studies (approx. 66%).⁵

Significant differences are also visible in the main goals of activities undertaken by specialists in the PR industry (two out of six cases analyzed). It turns out that people who have a specialized education (studies, courses, training) more often than self-taught specialists declared that they deal with marketing support and care for relations with the strategic environment. Such an attitude can be considered consistent with the classic way of defining the term "public relations," where compliance with ethical standards in professional work plays an important role.

³ Two dichotomous variables coded 0-1 have been identified.

⁴ Chi-square = 9.375; $p = 0.025$; Cramer's $V = 0.137$.

⁵ Chi-square = 11.261; $p = 0.010$; Cramer's $V = 0.150$.

Table 2. Main Goals of a PR Practitioner Depending on His / Her Education

Please indicate which goals are the main subject of your activities as a PR practitioner? Scale of 1—definitely not, to 5—definitely yes	Education of PR specialists: self-taught variant	
	There was preparation for the profession	Self-taught
Providing information expected by the environment and explaining the organization's behavior	4.35	4.29
Marketing support ***	4.05	3.53
Caring for relationships with a strategic environment *	4.50	4.28
Ensuring constant presence in the media and public opinion, „so that they would write and talk about us”	4.04	3.90
Crisis prevention and reduction of negative effects of crises	3.99	3.76
Publicity for an organization / distinction in a group of a similar type	3.94	3.95

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Own study

The fact of completing studies preparing for the profession of PR specialist can translate into the frequency of achieving specific goals in professional work. A relatively higher average in each variant occurred in the group of persons having completed higher and / or postgraduate studies. In the case of marketing support, the observed differences were statistically significant (people who graduated from this type of studies more often pointed to this goal of their work).⁶

Table 3. Main Goals of PR Practitioner in Relation to Completed University Studies

Please indicate which goals are the main subject of your activities as a PR practitioner? Scale of 1—definitely not, to 5—definitely yes	Education of PR practitioners: Studies Variant	
	Professional training completed	No studies preparing for the profession
Providing information expected by the environment and explaining the organization's behavior	4.36	4.31
Marketing support ***	4.09	3.68
Caring for relations with the strategic environment	4.48	4.40
Ensuring constant presence in the media and public opinion, “that they write and talk about us”	4.04	3.95
Crisis prevention and reduction of negative effects of crises	3.98	3.86
Publicity for an organization / distinction in a group of a similar type	3.96	3.91

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Own study

⁶ $F = 14.354$; $p = 0.001$.

The research allowed to capture the relationship between the tasks performed, the place of employment, and the way of acquiring education in the PR industry. In order to create a more complete picture of the education of specialists in this field, one more important result should be noted (Figure 3).

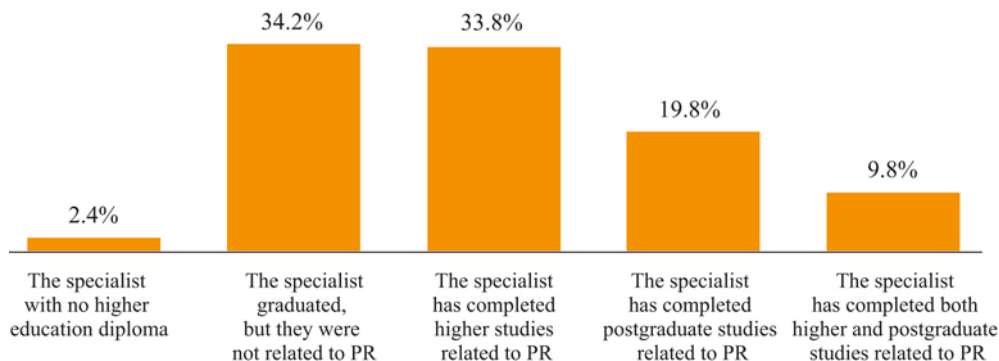


Figure 3. Education of PR Specialists, N = 500

Source: Own study

Higher education is legitimized by virtually all respondents (97.6%), although the percentage of people who studied in subjects closely related to public relations was definitely lower and amounted to 63.4%. In connection with the above, on average, every third respondent, despite completed studies, he / she did not study and did not complete the preparation course (at least partly) for the profession of PR specialist (34.4%). This type of employees is the largest in non-governmental organizations (47%), compared to public organizations (32.5%), private (30.7%) or PR agencies (29.3%). They also prevail in executive positions (44%) compared to executive and management ones—32.3%, and managers—29.4%

Ethical Standards in the Work of a PR Practitioner

The presented results allowed for the crystallization of a specific image of a public relations specialist in Poland. It was found that the vast majority is a person with a higher level of education, but not always industry-oriented. Almost one-fifth of public relations specialists learned their profession on their own. Does the way the education was obtained affect the ethical principles and standards professed and practiced by the PR specialist?

Much of the research on “Public Relations Professionalism in Poland” (Ołędzki, Wojcik, Hope, & Barlik, 2019) was devoted to finding the answer to this question. Respondents were asked, among others to respond to the statement: “In the activities and decisions of the organization in which I work as a PR specialist, only the goals set matter and these goals sanctify all means.” Views consistent with professional ethics are most emphasized by people who have had long contact with the public relations education system (their disapproval is at the level of 63.3%), i.e. they completed university and postgraduate studies related to PR.

Table 4. Main Goals of PR Practitioners Depending on His / Her Education

In the activities and decisions of the organization in which I work as a PR specialist, only the goals set matter and these goals sanctify all means	Public Relations specialist...				
	no higher education	graduated, but the studies were not related to PR	completed higher education related to PR	completed postgraduate studies related to PR	completed both higher and postgraduate studies related to PR
No, in my work the goal does not justify the means (responses consistent with ethical principles)	41.7%	60.2%	55.6%	60.6%	63.3%
I do not know	33.3%	23.4%	25.4%	28.3%	18.4%
Yes, in my work the end justifies the means (answers contrary to ethical principles)	25.0%	16.4%	18.9%	11.1%	18.4%

Source: Own study

On the other hand, opinions contrary to ethical principles were relatively common among PR specialists who do not have higher education (25%). In addition, the most evasive responses were noted in this group, as every third person indicated “I don’t know” in the survey.

Another proof confirming the relationship between the level of education and compliance with the rules of ethics in professional work is the distribution of answers to the question about how to define professionalism in the public relations industry. Respondents were asked to assess on a scale of 1 to 5 the statement: “In my opinion, the professionalism of a PR specialist is synonymous with compliance with ethical standards: One can be called a PR professional only if one apply PR ethics in practice,” with higher average values inform about greater compliance with the above issue. The responses of people who learned the PR profession during various forms of vocational training gave an average of 4.45 and it was significantly higher than 4.26 in the self-taught group.⁷ This means that studies / courses in the field of PR strengthen the level of identification of professionalism and ethics in the profession of a PR specialist.

In addition, individuals gaining knowledge in college are more convinced of the need to accredit PR specialists, which will guarantee an increase in the ethical condition of the industry (average 3.76). In the group of people acquiring knowledge of public relations only on their own, the average value was 3.42.⁸

It is also interesting that compliance with the opinion: “The introduction of the accreditation of PR specialists (i.e. confirmation of their qualifications by industry organizations) will raise the professional level of the PR industry in Poland” increases as the second variable is also taken into account—completed studies preparing for the profession of a PR specialist. In this case, the

⁷F = 4.332; p = 0.038.

⁸F = 6.588; p = 0.011.

average value oscillates at an even higher level, because in the group with completed studies it was 3.83, and in the reference group—3.44.⁹

Finally, it is worth paying attention to the hierarchy of ethical values within the acquired experience to work in the PR industry. In general, the key standard that specialists take into account is the accuracy of the information provided. The exception to this rule is the self-taught group, which values honesty in building relationships with stakeholder groups (Table 5).

Table 5. Hierarchy of Ethical Values in Relation to the Ways of Learning the Profession of a PR Specialist¹⁰

Level of education		Hierarchy of values in professional work				
		1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	5th place
Self-taught	Studies and / or courses and / or training on PR	P	U	S, J	-	L
	Self-taught only (knowledge acquired only on your own)	U	P	L	S	J
Studies	Completed studies preparing for the profession of PR specialist	P	U	S	J	L
	Lack of studies preparing for the profession of PR specialist	P	U	J	L	S
Specialist	The specialist with no higher level of education (maximum secondary)	P	U, J, S	-	-	L
	The specialist is a graduate, but the studies were not related to PR	P	U	L	J	S
	The specialist has completed higher and / or postgraduate studies related to PR	P	U	S	J	L

J – openness, transparency of activities

L – loyalty to the client / organization

P – the accuracy of the information provided

U – honesty in building relationships with groups of stakeholders who are not clients

S – effectiveness of actions

Source: Own study

Customer loyalty is strongly internalized by self-taught individuals and people who have completed university studies in no way associated with PR (third place in the hierarchy of values). The effectiveness of actions, the achievement of which may differ from the ethical dimension of PR practice, was best classified in the group without higher education (in second

⁹F = 11.892; p = 0.001.

¹⁰Classification according to the level of means measured on a scale of 1—definitely not, up to 5—definitely yes.

place as well as honesty and openness). However, the last place in the hierarchy of values was assigned to “effectiveness of actions” by those specialists who completed their studies without any specialized training. Respondents strongly rooted in the industry education system (spent the most time on vocational education) rated the highest in veracity in communication, before honesty towards stakeholders, the effectiveness of their own actions and their transparency, ending with loyalty to the client or employer. It is worth noting that the relatively highest average in the context of assessing all values (4.77—for the accuracy) characterized just a group of specialists who completed university or postgraduate studies in public relations or even participated in both these forms preparing for the exercise of their profession.

Despite the differences that occur in the hierarchy of ethical values of people with a certain level of preparation for practicing the profession of a PR specialist, no significant relationship¹¹ has been observed between:

- education of a PR specialist and assessment of obstacles to compliance with ethical principles (this is about pressure from marketing departments and clients ordering PR services, the fear that ethical behavior will weaken the market position, and orders will be undertaken by another company, and ignorance of the essence of PR among decision-makers of the organization for which the surveyed specialist operates);
- education of a PR specialist and the frequency of behavior deviating from recognized ethical standards in professional work, e.g. deliberate misleading information recipients or justifying violations of ethical standards by the speed of actions;
- education of a PR specialist and the frequency of solving ethical problems while performing everyday professional duties (regardless of how the profession of PR specialist was taught, answers about the absence of ethical problems in the last 12 months dominated).

Summary

The analyzes showed that the public relations industry is far from ideal in society, and its specialists are aware of this. They also know that it results from a lack of respect for ethics in their activities, which they often admit (only 39% of respondents agreed with the statement that companies providing PR services pay special attention to the ethical dimension of their activities). Reasons for this state of affairs researchers saw, inter alia, in the way of gaining knowledge in the field of public relations.

Analyzes have shown that the vast majority of industry professionals are people with a higher level of education, but as many as one in three of them have completed studies not related to PR, which (based on research results) can be considered as one of the reasons for violations of ethical standards. In addition, the majority of Polish PR specialists (70%) have experience in journalism, which may intensify ethical dilemmas.

Individuals who have been educated in fields related to PR equate professionalism in performing their profession with fully ethical behavior. This relationship may result, for example, from the fact that public relations studies have subjects closely related to ethics in the profession in their program. There is also a noticeable trend that the respondents who were preparing for the profession of a PR specialist in major studies and courses more often emphasized that in

¹¹ Each time the statistical test was irrelevant, for $p > 0.05$, which indicates comparable opinions, regardless of the ways of learning the profession of a PR specialist, included in various configurations.

practice they care for relations with the environment, i.e. they emphasized those actions that are key and define public relations in a way. Analyzes have shown that people who studied in fields related to PR most strongly emphasize views consistent with professional ethics. Studies and PR courses also strengthen the level of professionalism and ethics in the profession. People educated in PR studies more often than self-taught indicated the need to introduce accreditation of PR specialists, which in their opinion may improve the aspect of ethical behavior in the industry. Respondents who prepared themselves as the public relations specialist in the first place among ethical values in PR indicated integrity, and not, like representatives of other groups, the accuracy of the information provided.

In a nutshell, it is worth noting that the research pointed to the need to further educate the industry in the field of ethics in the public relations profession, because only in this way it will be possible to achieve the effect of not only greater professionalization of the profession, but also to strengthen the foundations of ethics of activities carried out by specialists.

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