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## **Advocacy, Lobbying & Leadership**

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### **Abstract:**

*This article examines advocacy tactics and practices among social workers in direct human service nonprofit organizations, emphasizing leadership roles. The study integrates literature from social work, organizational theory, nonprofit sector research, and social policy to explore how individual, organizational and environmental factors shape advocacy efforts. While leaders in large organizations can focus on systematic policy influence, community-based nonprofits often lack resources to pursue strictly political agendas. Current trends and changes in welfare systems, such as the transition from New Public Management to New Public Governance and their impact on leadership strategies and advocacy approaches are highlighted. The findings underscore the need for professional development in advocacy skills and identify challenges and opportunities for social work leaders navigating complex socio-political landscapes.*

### **1 Introduction**

The article discusses the current state of research on advocacy tactics and practices utilized by social workers in direct human service nonprofit organizations as part of their leadership roles. Other than large associations and lobby organizations bringing voices of the marginalized systematically into the policy arena as their primary mission (Mason, 2015), I focus on community-based nonprofits, catering to service users and defining their mission not as strictly political in the first place. While the academic literature offers a plethora of research on social work advocacy (Bliss & Ginn, 2019), this article highlights the intersection of advocacy and leadership, primarily at the organizational level, by integrating various strands of literature from social work, organizational theory, nonprofit sector-research, and social policy.

Against this backdrop, I would like to address two questions:

- 1) How do social workers in leadership roles engage in advocacy, and what kind of tactics and practices do they utilize?

## 2) How do organizational and environmental factors influence social work leaders' policy advocacy efforts?

First, I want to briefly introduce and clarify the key terms of advocacy and lobbying in the context of social work. Section 3 then addresses the topic of advocacy from a leadership perspective and examines the linkages between the two concepts. It provides insights into how leaders in human service organizations can influence policy and social change, both within and beyond the organization. Section 4 presents a literature review that examines the influence of individual, organizational, and environmental factors on the advocacy efforts of social work leaders. Subsequently, Section 5 identifies emerging trends and changes across welfare regimes while also addressing current challenges for the implementation of advocacy. The findings demonstrate how social work practitioners in leadership roles respond to organizational and environmental challenges and effectively navigate complex social and political environments as change agents for social justice (Saxena & Chandrapal, 2021). Finally, the potential for individual and organizational capacity building in social policy implementation will be discussed.

## 2 Advocacy and Lobbying in the Context of Social Work

Advocacy is understood as a process of strategic efforts taken to promote the well-being and rights of individuals, families, communities, or vulnerable populations (Day et al., 2023, p. 243).<sup>1</sup> In this section, I want to discuss advocacy practices and strategies, leveraged by social work leaders to effectively influence social policy. The process often involves collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including clients, community members, policymakers, and other professionals to advance social justice, equity, and human rights (Saxena & Chandrapal, 2022, Mellinger 2014).

The more specific terms “policy advocacy” (Day et al., 2023, p. 243) and “policy practice” (Pawar, 2019, pp. 15-16, Gal & Weiss Gal, 2020, see also Chapter Gal & Weiss Gal) refer to influencing public policy and legislation to address systemic issues affecting vulnerable populations. As policy practitioners, social workers are formally involved in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, contributing to long-term changes in policies and programs (Pawar, 2019). They may engage in lobbying, policy analysis, and working with advocacy organizations to shape laws and regulations. From the perspective of a leader acting on behalf of their professional organization, the term “institutional advocacy” underscores policy engagement as a key management responsibility (Alexander & Fernandez, 2021, p. 371).

While advocacy also includes non-legislative activities, such as community building and networking, the narrower concept of lobbying can be understood as a subset of advocacy, encompassing all activities aimed at influencing specific legislative changes (Ross et al., 2021). This paper uses the generic term “advocacy” because policy engagement in human service organizations is not always organized in a formal way.

The Social Work Code of Ethics provides professionals with fundamental guidelines for advocacy and policy-making, ensuring that social workers' actions align with the core values of the profession (NASW Code of Ethics (2024) 6.04, IASSW Global Social Work Statement of

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<sup>1</sup> Depending on the research question and area of interest, a multitude of advocacy terms can be found in the literature, such as individual advocacy, community advocacy, collaborative advocacy, institutional advocacy, or capacity building.

Ethical Principles 2018 pp. 3-4). However, as many executives and supervisors in human service organizations continue to come from professions outside of social work, ethical principles may play an increasingly minor role within the organization (Bliss et al., 2014, p. 8).

### *Advocacy Tactics*

Advocacy tactics are strategies and methods used to influence public policy and affect social change. Kollmann (1998) differentiates between “inside” and “outside” lobbying tactics as two distinct strategies used by advocates to influence public policy and decision-makers. Inside lobbying involves direct interaction with policymakers and government officials, whereas outside lobbying aims to mobilize the public and use media to indirectly pressure policymakers by raising public awareness and support for an issue. Examples of inside tactics are face-to-face meetings with legislators and government officials, providing data & research, building relationships, testifying at hearings, drafting legislation, while outside tactics involve organizing public campaigns, media engagement, grassroots mobilization, public demonstrations, rallies and coalition building (Mosley et al. 2020, p. 338, Almog-Bar 2014, p. 415, Kollmann 1998, p. 35).

## **3 Advocacy as a Core Leadership Skill**

Leadership can be viewed as social influence processes that collectively articulate and initiate systemic change within organizations and communities (King Keenan et al., 2018, p. 487). In the context of advocacy, leadership involves guiding, inspiring, and mobilizing individuals or groups to achieve a common goal related to social change, policy reform, or community improvement. In a broader sense leadership, can be exercised as “relational leadership” in any role or position without necessarily implying a formal or bureaucratic hierarchy (Packard 2006, p. 144, King Keenan et al. 2018, p. 487). According to this definition, any social work professional working with clients, volunteers or community stakeholders can be a leader. With increasing managerialism and professionalization, many nonprofits tend to adopt more formal, business-like structures, resulting in clearly defined hierarchies and leadership positions, whereas grassroots nonprofits may prefer to adopt informal and non-hierarchical forms of self-organized leadership (Simsa 2020 pp. 158-159). This also includes strategies and practices of front-line social workers as community leaders as they engage in activities to initiate social change. From a management perspective, advocacy can be perceived as a process in which a group of organizational leaders develop an advocacy strategy, gain the support of relevant stakeholders, and establish legitimacy based on expert knowledge pivotal to policy discussions (Alexander & Fernandez, 2021, p. 371)

Addressing advocacy from a leadership perspective, I examine strategies and practices from two different angles:

1. **Internal Strategies:** Empowering social workers and staff to enhance their advocacy efforts and embedding advocacy into organizational structures. This may include implementing an advocacy strategy, structures, and procedures within the organization.
2. **External Strategies:** Extending leadership beyond organizational boundaries to garner support from relevant stakeholders and establish legitimacy in the external environment.

## **4 Internal Advocacy Strategies: Individual and Organizational Perspectives**

In this section, I will discuss the influence of individual factors on advocacy engagement, such as individual attitudes, personal leadership style, expertise, and ability to collaborate. At

the organizational level, I will examine how organizational characteristics facilitate or constrain social work leaders' advocacy efforts.

#### **4.1 Individual factors for advocacy engagement**

An organization's decision to engage in advocacy is typically made by top management. Executive directors at the top level often have the primary responsibility for carrying out policy advocacy, as staff members frequently lack the time, expertise, and authority (Mosley, 2013, p. 76).

##### *Individual Attitudes and Preferences*

Executive leaders' attitudes toward advocacy and their influence within the organization often determine the extent to which the organization engages in advocacy. Human service organizations were more effective when their top leaders were highly engaged in policy advocacy (Mellinger, 2014, p. 160), when they appointed a specific person in charge of advocacy or when they implemented a formalized advocacy strategy approved by the board of directors (Mellinger, 2014, p. 160). In contrast, Leroux and Goerdel (2009, p. 530) came to an opposite conclusion in their study: Having elected officials to serve on the board negatively impacted charity mobilization activities from the nonprofit leaders. They explained this finding by suggesting that nonprofit leaders felt politically constrained by the presence of the board officials (Leroux & Goerdel, 2009, p. 530).

Mason (2015, p. 301) applied principal-agency theory to explain advocacy in nonprofit organizations, considering the leader as the agent and the organization's various stakeholders, such as donors, volunteers, and board members, as the principals. According to the common agency framework, a leader's personal preferences will have implications for organizational behavior pertaining to the organization's advocacy efforts. As an agent, a nonprofit leader seeks to act on behalf of the stakeholders, choosing options that align with their own preferences. A major finding of the study was that the leaders' political ideology had a substantial effect on whether the organization engaged in policy issues (Mason, 2015, p. 304). Other determinants influencing the choice of advocacy tactics included funds for hiring lobbyists and the level of professionalization (Mason, 2015, p. 317).

##### *Leadership style*

The individual understanding and vision of leadership has a major influence on how social workers engage in advocacy efforts. Participatory leadership models, such as transformational leadership, self-leadership, and post-heroic leadership are viewed as particularly suitable for the social work profession. Transformational leaders are open-minded, create a shared vision among their followers, act as role-models, and inspire them to become leaders themselves (Jaskyte, 2004, p. 55). Following King Keenan et al. (2019, p. 487), leadership conceptualized as social influence processes enables collective responses to persistent issues and facilitates systemic change within organizations and communities. They found three different comprehensive leadership styles that front-line social workers employed in advocacy and lobbying efforts: 1) The motivation to challenge injustice and change mindsets by promoting fairness and equity in organizational and community interventions. 2) Acting as conduits for change, as social workers try to dismantle bureaucratic barriers within their organizations, and 3) organizing resources and relationships as effective networkers (King Keenan et al., 2019, pp. 491-496).

##### *Advocacy Expertise*

Leaders who “know the game” of advocacy should be more effective in creating an organizational climate conducive to social workers’ advocacy engagement. In a qualitative study of homeless service managers, Mosley (2013) found that effective advocacy is linked to the leaders’ expertise in the political system and their personal motivation to engage in advocacy activities. A substantial number of the participants were not familiar with lobbying or misunderstood lobbying to be illegal<sup>2</sup>. Almost all managers reported a lack of staff, time and resources as primary constraints to advocacy involvement (Mosley, 2013, p. 82, Berry 2020). Having a leader with a higher degree, especially in nonprofit administration, was associated with a higher rate of advocacy involvement (Mosley, 2013, p. 77 and 82). Service-oriented managers considered advocacy a nice-to-have activity, only to be done when time and resources allowed (Mosley, 2013, p. 82). However, high personal motivation and training could not offset organizational constraints like small size and lack of funds (Mosley, 2013, p. 82).

### *Collaborating and Networking*

Social workers, with and without managerial responsibility, organize relationships and resources by participating in professional networks, coalitions, and collaboration at local, regional, and state levels (King Keenan et al., 2019, p. 497). As relational leaders, front-line social workers can utilize various collaborative tactics to address issues of social justice: Lahat et al. (2023, pp. 405-406) identified three distinct types of policy engagement by social service workers: 1. Participating in long-term, structured collaborations to address policy issues at the government level, 2. addressing policy issues in their local settings in a less formal manner, and 3. improving social services through engaging in sporadically organized, non-formal collaborations. Networking and collaborating with external stakeholders can lead to unintended side effects in advocacy: Findings from a survey of nonprofit executives revealed that strong and trusting relationships positively influenced their advocacy efforts, even when their primary purpose was related to other goals. (Lu 2018, p. 517).

## **4.2 Determinants of Advocacy at the Organizational Level**

Structural characteristics of an organization, including size, funding, professionalization, bureaucratization, and organizational learning have a direct impact on advocacy efforts of leading and non-leading social workers (Mosley 2013, p. 74, Fyall & Allard 2017, p. 279). In addition, relationships with internal stakeholders, such as the board of directors, trustees and volunteers play a crucial role for advocacy.

### *Size and Funding*

Organizations that are effective in advocacy are more likely to have formal organizational structures, use formal communication between leaders and staff, and allocate resources to policy engagement (Mellinger, 2014, p. 159). Unlike larger citizen advocacy groups or nonprofits whose primary mission is to lobby for the interests of marginalized groups at the state or national level, community-based nonprofits providing services on the front line often lack the resources to engage in advocacy (Berry, 2001, p.7). In grassroots organizations, proponents of advocacy often have to compete internally for scarce resources that could otherwise be used to pursue the organization’s mission, highlighting the trade-off between advocacy and responsiveness to service users. (Berry 2001, p. 1, Mosley 2013, p. 82).

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<sup>2</sup> The study was conducted in the USA, where most human service organizations operate under section 501(c)(3) status of the Internal Revue Code. This clause imposes restrictions on direct lobbying activities, including influencing legislation and endorsing candidates. However, 501(c) (3) organizations still have adequate leeway to safely engage in advocacy efforts (Berry 2020, p. 1).

### *Professionalization, Bureaucratization, and Hybridization*

Furthermore, the level of professionalization within an organization significantly determines how its leaders advocate for their clients at the community or political level. Highly professionalized human service organizations which are run like a business, are more likely to utilize advocacy as a management tool and integrate advocacy goals into their mission (Mosley 2013, p. 82, Leroux & Goerdel 2009, p. 519). A higher level of professionalization is associated with building more frequent interactions with their funding principals, enabling them to invest resources in establishing an infrastructure for an advocacy culture (Leroux & Goerdel, 2009, p. 519).

Findings in the literature about the linkage between professionalization and advocacy are inconsistent. Some scholars argue that as organizations shift toward professionalization, advocacy tends to become a depoliticized managerial process designed and coordinated by qualified executive leaders (Alexander & Fernandez, 2021 p. 374, Mosley 2013, p. 85). According to Lu & Park (2018, p. 391), professionalization only generates a negative effect on advocacy engagement for minimally bureaucratized organizations. Following these findings, professionalization can also lead to mission drift, with leaders prioritizing organizational self-sustainment over pursuing community-defined issues of social justice. (Alexander & Fernandez 2021 pp. 373-374). Other scholars suggest that professionalization might enhance advocacy engagement by providing funding, expertise, and specialization through formal training, which in turn facilitates the ability to respond to social problems (Lu & Park 2018, pp. 382-383).

Human service organizations are subject to hybridization – the blending of practices, structures, and strategies from both nonprofit and for-profit sectors within a single organization (Evers & Laville, 2004, p. 154). This often involves adopting business-like approaches to achieve social missions, such as generating revenue through commercial activities and utilizing entrepreneurial methods (see also Chapter Cohen & Offek). With blurring boundaries between value orientation and business practices, it can be reasonably assumed that the knowledge and skills required for advocacy will increase. As Schnurbein & Hengevoss (2020, p. 40) put it “Nonprofit-leaders have to be excellent in explaining ‘the reason why’ of their organization.”

### *Promotion of organizational learning*

Human service organizations can enhance their policy efforts by integrating advocacy into their organizational learning practices and culture. This includes embedding advocacy into their mission, vision, and strategic plans. Leaders play a pivotal role by conveying the organization’s norms and values throughout all levels, serving as role models in an inspiring and supportive manner. According to Bass, Arons, and Guinane (2007), organizations that embed advocacy in their mission are more likely to engage consistently and effectively in advocacy efforts (Leroux & Goerdel, 2014, p. 517).

Individual and organizational learning of advocacy can be promoted by implementing the following tools:

- workshops and training programs to build technical skills (interpreting and analyzing data, campaign planning, negotiating, interacting with media)
- internal learning platforms,
- integrating advocacy in career planning and performance appraisals

- conducting after action-reviews to refine future advocacy strategies,
- partnering with other nonprofits or academic institutions.

Lewis et al. (2011) developed a micro-level advocacy skills training for social justice counselors that combined scholarship, social justice counseling, advocacy, and leadership. The goal of the training was to overcome barriers by developing new leadership roles and strategies for advocacy. (Lewis et al. 2011, p. 10). Participants discussed their personal and professional experiences in small breakout groups. The peer-counseling method proved effective in addressing typical barriers to advocacy, such as funding issues, lack of community support, unexpected resistance, difficulties in building collaborative networks, and cultural biases (Lewis et al., 2011, p. 11).

## 5 Emerging Advocacy Trends and Changes across Welfare Regimes

How does the external environment influence the organizational advocacy practices of leaders in human service organizations? This section aims to broaden our understanding of the extent to which organizational advocacy efforts differ across welfare regimes and how strategies and tactics of political engagement have changed over the past decades.

### *Environmental opportunity structures*

As demonstrated by Gal and Weiss-Gal (2020), the nature of the political environment exerts a profound impact on how social workers engage in advocacy. They observed that government institutions in different countries provide specific opportunity structures for advocacy engagement. Significant disparities in the policy environment do not only influence the extent of social workers' advocacy engagement but also the selection of their tactics and activities (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2020, p. 7). By utilizing neo-institutional theory, they refer to institutions as part of the external environment with specific rules, practices, and narratives that determine social workers' access to the policy arena. (Gal & Weiss-Gal 2020, p. 10).

Lahat et al. (2023) identified distinct features of the administrative cultures and policy styles in Germany and Israel that influenced the social service workers' engagement in advocacy. In Israel, there was a stronger inclination toward entrepreneurial endeavors and a desire to alter social policy, whereas in Germany, social service workers were more likely to seek authorization and assistance from their supervisors (Lahat et al., 2023, pp. 410-411, see also Chapter Cohen & Offek).

Regional disparities in access to resources can either mitigate or limit opportunities. For example, white-led nonprofits in affluent urban areas have closer ties to donors and funders compared to grassroots organizations serving people of color (Alexander & Fernandez, 2021, p. 374). However, the latter are often located in less wealthy neighborhoods and seem to be associated with a stronger motivation for political activity (Fyall & Allard, 2017, p. 280).

### *New Public Management*

The global spread of neoliberal ideologies and the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) have created challenging economic conditions for human service organizations, resulting in funding cuts and financial constraints (Lu, 2018, p. 518). Under the NPM paradigm, the relationship between government and non-profit organizations fundamentally changed. Human service organizations became business partners, entering into contracts with

government entities. The strong emphasis on efficiency and performance management requires human service leaders to achieve measurable outcomes and cost-effectiveness, often at the expense of service quality (Alexander & Fernandez, 2021, p. 373).

Resource dependency theory posits that organizations develop internal structures and strategies to secure access to resources from their external environment (Leroux & Goerdel, 2009, pp. 521-522). In this context, leaders may opt for “soft advocacy” to avoid confrontational advocacy when engaging with funders as business partners (Alexander & Fernandez 2021, pp. 374-375, Almog-Bar 2014, pp. 423-424). It can be assumed that nonprofit managers strive to establish and maintain close ties with their government funders (Mosley et al., 2020, p. 338), thus creating a more collaborative environment between government agencies and nonprofit organizations, offering new opportunities to influence policy through formal channels.

The impact of market mechanisms and managerialism on advocacy in human service organizations remains unclear: Leaders, who become more focused on addressing organizational challenges rather than serving their mission or pursuing community-defined issues may reduce, increase, or shift the content of their advocacy efforts. (Alexander & Fernandez 2021, pp. 373-374). If social workers are required to justify their advocacy activities within the framework of organizational goals, it might lead to a shift in the content of their advocacy efforts.

While managerialistic organizations can enhance training and development of advocacy skills, they may also result in bureaucratic and less grassroots-oriented advocacy. This could potentially create a distance between social workers and the communities they serve or lead to a more depoliticized approach where advocacy is viewed as secondary to direct service provision (Alexander & Fernandez, 2021 p. 374).

### *New Public Governance*

New Public Governance (NPG), which can be viewed as an advancement of New Public Management (NPM) shifts the focus toward collaboration, networks, and partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit sectors (Brock, 2020). Instead of only focusing on market-driven mechanisms and managerial techniques, it places greater emphasis on democratic accountability, citizen engagement, and the co-production of services. Nonprofit organizations became desirable partners under NPG because they align with democratic values, address community needs, and demonstrate the ability to leverage civic action (Brock, 2020, p. 260).

While research on the impact of NPG on advocacy engagement in human service organizations has been somewhat limited, I will present evidence from two studies conducted in Israel and Canada: Chief executives of human service organizations in Israel described their advocacy style predominantly as a partnership with the government, indicating a preference for insider tactics with softer and less confrontational advocacy practices (Almog-Bar, 2018, p. 423). In contrast to the effects observed under NPM, which often result in less politicized advocacy engagement, the case of Israel demonstrates that the use of insider tactics has been accompanied by a variety of aggressive outsider tactics. These include exerting political pressure through the media, appealing to the courts, rallying, mobilizing, and educating the public (Almog-Bar, 2018, p. 424). In an environment where leaders build close and trustful relationships with the government on equal footing, they obviously feel safe and comfortable using more confrontational advocacy methods.

An example from Canada indicates that in a collaborative environment under NPG, nonprofits, as outsiders to government, may become part of a public sector politicization process rather than remaining merely independent advocates. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) directly involved human service organizations in the decision to augment funding allocations to assist homeless people in filing their tax returns. Human service organizations were advancing into new roles, evolving from lobbyists to co-creators in the design of policies. (Brock 2020, p. 265).

### *National Regulations on Lobbying*

National regulations on lobbying represent another key factor influencing the extent to which social work leaders engage in advocacy and the tactics they employ. Grants and contracts awarded to human service organizations by the government typically do not include funding for advocacy activities (Berry, 2020, p. 4).

A significant number of leaders in the US nonprofit sector, particularly those in smaller organizations, appear to view advocacy as a secondary concern. This is due to the formal restrictions placed on lobbying for 501(c) 3 organizations (Gal & Weiss-Gal 2020, p. 10; Mosley et al. 2020, p. 336; Philips, 2020, p. 15). The evidence indicates that the regulatory environment during the Trump administration exerted even greater pressure on the landscape of human service organizations (Berry, 2020, p. 4). A considerable number of leaders became discouraged or turned away from advocacy, seeing no need to integrate advocacy practices into their organizational structures (Mellinger, 2014, p. 159). CEOs misunderstood the legal framework and mistakenly believed that they were prohibited by law from engaging in lobbying. As a solution, Berry proposes that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provide clear communication to precisely define lobbying and clarify the scope of legal lobbying tactics through “non-threatening guidelines” (Berry, 2020, p. 5).

In the United Kingdom, where formal and informal consultations with external actors have been a cornerstone of the policy process since 1967, social workers can participate in consultation processes at an early stage of policy discussions (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2020, p. 11), enabling them to use primarily insider tactics.

In the European corporatist and social democratic welfare regimes, well-established and collaborative relationships between governmental agencies and nonprofit-service providers can be observed. Schnurbein & Hengevoss (2020, p. 32) provide an illustrative example of this phenomenon. In contrast to the United States, European nonprofit organizations are not subject to any restrictions on lobbying. The larger welfare associations in Germany have established boundary-spanning professional lobbying groups at the regional level (LIGA)<sup>3</sup>. Since January 2022, lobbyists at the federal level have been required to register in a publicly accessible lobby register. In this register, they must disclose their clients, the areas in which they are active, and their financial spending on lobbying activities. The administrative requirements and the extremely bureaucratic procedure to register can prove particularly cumbersome for small grassroots organizations. Smaller organizations may particularly lack the resources to navigate the process effectively or might refrain from lobbying at all to prevent registration requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege (State Consortium of Independent Welfare Work)

## 6 Conclusion

How do social work leaders in formal and informal leadership roles engage in advocacy? Which tactics do they utilize, and what factors influence their practices? The findings reveal that advocacy and lobbying are shaped by a complex interplay of individual, organizational, and environmental opportunities and constraints.

The social work policy field is characterized by the hybridization and professionalization of human service organizations operating within a highly regulated environment, influenced by government cutbacks and market-driven mechanisms. Nonprofit human service organizations are subject to restrictive lobbying practices (United States) or face tedious bureaucratic challenges to register for lobbying (Germany). In other countries, such as Canada, Israel and the United Kingdom, New Public Governance provides conducive opportunity structures, enabling social workers to formally engage in the policy formulation process as co-creators.

Against this background, social work leaders must possess the requisite professional expertise to effectively engage in community and policy advocacy.

It is evident that personal leadership styles play a crucial role in this context. Transformational leaders should inspire staff and clients to engage in advocacy, thereby enabling them to build technical skills. However, there is often a lack of expertise in professional advocacy and the engagement of social work educators in policy practice appears to be modest. (Pawar, 2019, p. 18). Given this context, skill-building training in social work study programs (B.S.W. and M.S.W.) is of paramount importance. These programs should encompass campaigning, policy analysis, negotiating and collaborating skills. Training programs should prioritize skill development with a focus on empowerment, as social workers frequently experience feelings of inferiority compared to professionals from other fields, such as doctors and attorneys. By developing self-leadership skills, social workers can maintain a positive outlook and adopt a more assertive stance to realize their potential and the opportunity structures in their environment.

At the organizational level, leaders in executive roles should develop and implement a clearly defined advocacy strategy and integrate advocacy into internal regulations and procedures in a systematic manner. The overarching goals of the advocacy strategy should be incorporated into the organization's HR strategy, turning them into individual goals. Moreover, the organization's advocacy goals should be transformed into clear, compelling messages disseminated by public relations to the public. It is the responsibility of the executives to cultivate a conducive climate for organizational learning and capacity building. This can be achieved by offering continuous learning opportunities, fostering reflective practice aligned with the core values of social work, and encouraging social workers to autonomously engage in social justice activities. Small grassroots organizations with limited funding and low professionalization should seek out powerful change agents with a strong reputation in the community and actively engage volunteers in an advocacy capacity to expand their sphere of influence.

While this article provides valuable insights into the connections among advocacy, lobbying, and leadership in human service organizations, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Most of the studies referenced in this article were conducted in the United States, Europe, and Israel, with limited representation from other countries. The studies often only identified

correlations for a limited number of variables. Thus, the complex interplay of individual, organizational, and external environmental factors is difficult to capture fully.

Further research on advocacy, lobbying, and leadership should examine not only the roles of leaders as individual actors and the tactics they employ but also the outcomes of their advocacy efforts (Ward et al., 2023, p. 1225). With the expanding literature on advocacy and lobbying, I hope to contribute to a clearer understanding of how social work leaders advocate for social justice within a complex organizational and political environment.

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