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Image of the Community of Legal Professionals in the Television Coverage – a Case Study

Wizerunek środowiska prawniczego w Polsce w przekazie telewizyjnym – studium przypadku

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study, which is of a scientific and research nature, is to present the mass media image of the community of legal professionals in Poland. It is a case study based on a specific television coverage in the form of a pseudo-documentary series titled *Caste* (Pol. *Kasta*) broadcast by Polish public television. This image is important for the correct organisation of social relations. The significance of the issue and the way it is presented deserve a closer insight, especially since lawyers have not been in high positions in public opinion polls on the prestige of professions for years. The pseudo-documentary was chosen as the research material for the study, because it falls within the broader concept of a documentary while being a certain novelty. For the purpose of the study, a test sample was selected. As a result of the research, it has been shown that the picture of the community of legal professionals presented in pseudo-documentary TV shows in Poland is negative. The usual plot of such shows is that as a result of various kinds of informal deals, unfair decisions are made which are harmful for the victims of the deal, for which the entirety of legal community is blamed, including primarily judges. Exceptions are very rare, and the only hope are young, idealist advocates who are presented as lawyer role models. The TV show *Caste*, operating unfair simplifications and stereotypes, was part of a series of actions aimed at discrediting the legal community in Poland and did not improve its image. The balance between facts and fiction has been disturbed, which served to support a presupposition that Polish realities are flawed due to the conduct of legal professionals, especially judges. Only those problems in the judiciary have been emphasised, which have helped to prove the need for reform, particularly corruption. Educational opportunities typical of this form of

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communication were not used, hence the level of legal awareness of Polish society was not raised. It can be hypothesized that the presented image from a medium that constitutes the main source of information and has the largest audience, could have affected the opinion about legal practitioners in Polish society. The TV series met a response from the public, which however requires a separate study.

Keywords: image; community of legal professionals; pseudo-documentary; opinion; caste; corruption

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study is to present the image of the community of legal practitioners in Poland, which was shown in the pseudo-documentary TV series titled *Caste* (Pol. *Kasta*). It seems that the importance of the issue and the way it is presented in a show produced by public television deserve a closer analysis.

Image is "the way in which a person or object is perceived and presented".[1] It is "the comprehensive, subjective idea that an individual has about a particular object".[2] In the study, the concept of image refers to the broadly understood community of legal professionals, i.e. of those who practice legal professions in the strict sense and other professions related to the justice system.

The perception of lawyers in society is important for the proper organisation of social relations. The need to contact a lawyer usually arises out of problems that must be resolved. It is understandable that every case that goes to court is expected to be properly processed – in a just and fair manner, compliant with the procedure provided for by law, by judges who not only have expertise in the field but who also are guided by high ethical qualities. Similar high requirements are expected from other legal professions, which are rightly classified as professions of public trust, and the professional self-government organisations, as stated in Article 17 of the Polish Constitution,[3] should take care of their proper practising within the limits of the public interest and its protection.

Any unreasonable action to diminish the image of lawyers in society, particularly through simplification and unjustified generalisation, could have far-reaching negative social consequences, especially since this image has not been positive for years. This is evidenced by opinion polls, according to which legal professions are not ranked high in the category of profession's prestige. In 2022, out of 34 pro-

[1] *Wizerunek*, https://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/wizerunek.html (access: 28.3.2023).

[2] T.J. Dąbrowski, *Rola mediów w kształtowaniu wizerunku*, "Marketing i Rynek" 2013, no. 9, p. 10.

[3] Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 (Journal of Laws 1997, no. 78, item 483, as amended). English translation of the Constitution is available at https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htm (access: 10.2.2024).

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fessions, the advocate was ranked 15th and the judge 17th.[4] Both professions were ranked even lower in 2021 (19th place for the advocate, 20th place for the judge out of 35 professions).[5]

The mass media, especially television, can play an important role in shaping or consolidating the perception of the legal community, as it is the main source of information for Poles (83% use it) and is at the forefront of the level of trust (40% trust the radio and 38% trust the television).[6] It is the mass media (television, press, the Internet) which are the main source of knowledge for Poles about judges and courts (52%)[7] and the coverage they provide plays an important role in shaping the image of the work of the judiciary.[8] Thus the audience acquires information about law through a communication channel referred to as intermediary.[9] The audience members do not always realize, however, that the content being broadcast is often borrowed and filtered, and that the media image tends to simplify reality and succumb to the so-called iceberg syndrome (only a small part of reality is discussed, while the part thereof that is kind of "below the surface" is ignored) and to abuse stereotypes.[10] The boundaries between what is fictitious and what is real, and therefore confirmed in reality, are also blurred.[11] These properties pose a threat of using the coverage for pursuing political goals.[12]

To achieve the aim of the study, the image of the legal community was used, shown in the pseudo-documentary series titled *Caste* (pol. *Kasta*) broadcast on the first channel of Polish public television in the seasons 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and from 5 September 2022 until the end of December 2022. The choice is not random and was based on several considerations. Firstly, the pseudo-documentary had

[4] Infor, *Najbardziej poważane zawody w Polsce*, 5.5.2022, https://kadry.infor.pl/wiadomosci/5462751,Najbardziej-powazane-zawody-Polska-2022-ranking.html (access: 3.4.2023).

[5] *Ibidem*.

[6] M. Kolanko, *Sondaż: Głównym źródłem wiedzy dla Polaków jest telewizja*, 22.4.2019, https://www.rp.pl/kraj/art9371821-sondaz-glownym-zrodlem-wiedzy-dla-polakow-jest-telewizja (access: 30.3.2023).

[7] K. Pankowski (comp.), *Społeczne oceny wymiaru sprawiedliwości*, Komunikat z badań CBOS no. 95/2022, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_095_22.PDF (access: 19.1.2023), p. 7.

[8] K. Daniel, *Rola mediów w kształtowaniu społecznych opinii o sądach*, [in:] *Media, władza, prawo*, ed. M. Magoska, Kraków 2005, p. 89.

[9] A. Gryniuk, *Świadomość prawna (studium teoretyczne)*, Toruń 1979, p. 47.

[10] M. Czopek, D. Chomont-Parzyńska, D. Czerwińska, M. Kołodziej, R. Kudzia, M. Morawska, A. Ostrowska, A. Szymkowiak, *Rola mediów w kreowaniu wizerunku*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uczelni Jana Wyżykowskiego. Studia z Nauk Społecznych" 2016, no. 9, p. 87.

[11] K.M. Cwynar, *Środki masowego przekazu w kulturze współczesnej – informacja i oświecenie czy manipulacja?*, "Przegląd Politologiczny" 2015, no. 2, p. 122. The production of pseudo-documentaries is intended to imitate "real-life" events and give an impression that the situation being presented is not staged but really takes place. See J. Wrzochul-Stawinoga, *Między fikcją a rzeczywistością, czyli po co i dlaczego ogląda się seriale paradokumentalne*, "Kultura Popularna" 2015, no. 2, p. 224.

[12] K.M. Cwynar, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

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a chance to reach a broad audience. Secondly, although this type of research material is a kind of novelty, its use can also produce interesting results in legal sciences, especially in sociology of law.[13] It should be noted that "in social research, there is almost no barriers to the units of analysis, i.e. who or what is to be studied".[14] These are supposed to be social products, i.e. any creations of social beings or effects of their behaviours.[15] So these are only text data in hard-copy form, but increasingly visual data in the form of films or photographs. Therefore, nothing prevents these from being also a film production in the form of a pseudo-documentary.[16] The above became possible with film becoming treated as as a narrative medium, the various genres of which can serve to describe the surrounding world, as an attempt to reflect social life and relations forming part of it.[17] Thirdly, it is difficult to analyse the show's message detached from the socio-political situation and past actions of the government, which in response to what was believed to be public expectations, amended the justice system legislation starting from the end of 2015 and tried to justify legal solutions that raised constitutional doubts and met with opposition from the legal community. The timing of launching the series was associated with the March of a Thousand Robes, where representatives of all legal professions protested against another regulations to discipline the judges (the so-called "gag law").[18] After billboards showing examples of judges-thieves, the online discrediting of judges who openly opposed the government through the Caste/Anti-Caste (Pol. *Kasta*/*Antykasta*) group and after the TVP Info's programme *Caste* (Pol. *Kasta*), showing controversial rulings of Polish courts, a series with the same title appeared. It seems that the change in the form of production was deliberate. It turned out that the programme broadcast over several months provoked response from people

[13] The relationship between law and film, in the context of answering the question: Can film, as one of the most popular fields of culture today, be a means to say something interesting and valuable about law? – was discussed in a special issue of "Archiwum Filozofii Prawa i Filozofii Społecznej". See P. Jabłoński, M. Pichlak, *Obrazy prawa w sztuce filmowej. Wprowadzenie*, "Archiwum Filozofii Prawa i Filozofii Społecznej" 2021, no. 1, p. 6.

[14] E. Babbie, *Badania społeczne w praktyce*, Warszawa 2003, p. 113.

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 118.

[16] Pseudo-documentary has already become the subject of scientific research conducted within various scientific disciplines, including linguistics, an example of which may be a study by A. Bronder titled *Rzeczywistość do rzeczy. Serial paradokumentalny w świetle genologii lingwistycznej* (Katowice 2017). According to the author, even though this kind of mass-culture content sometimes seems to be nonsensical, it is an important material that allows us to observe the mentality and condition of the communication community we are part of.

[17] R. Pilawska, *Film jako kulturowa przestrzeń edukacji nieformalnej*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2021, no. 61, pp. 211–212.

[18] K. Meller (comp.), *Prawnik rozprawił się z „Kastą". Obnażył manipulację TVP*, 18.2.2021, https://teleshow.wp.pl/obnazyl-manipulacje-tvp-prawnik-nie-zostawil-suchej-nitki-na-kascie-6609509779430240a (access: 4.4.2023).

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who felt affected by the unreliable way of presenting the issue[19] or even raised more far-reaching allegations, including forgery of documents for the purpose of broadcasting.[20] Hence, the form of pseudo-documentary has been adopted as safer, because it does not have to stick strictly to facts, which in principle relieves the authors from formal responsibility for the content. Moreover, it is more attractive to the viewer. Lastly, the series has been noted by the public, but many people have heard about it, and not so many have seen it, which further inspires research in the formula of the case study as stated in the title hereof.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The pseudo-documentary is "a feature film made in the manner of a documentary, based on facts".[21] Its tradition dates back to Orson Welles' radio play of 1938 *War of the Worlds*, considered to be an utmost achievement in influencing the audience perception, as it led thousands of Americans to believe in a Martian invasion and to take to the streets terrified of an attack by an alien civilisation.[22] However, the development of the pseudo-documentary did not occur until the 21st century, and as the first show of that type in Poland is considered *W-11 Investigation Department* (Pol. *W-11 Wydział śledczy*) broadcast by TVN. Today, it is a very popular genre occupying most of the airtime of the main TV stations. The show *Caste* is of a type of docu-crime, which has features of a documentary and a detective story, but there are also court shows which are staged court hearings and docu-soaps which have a social drama character.[23]

The series *Caste*[24] has 340 episodes, including 102 episodes which were analysed for the purposes of this study: the first 20 and the last 20 episodes (to see

[19] A petition was submitted to the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights. See. Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej RPO, *Obywatel skarży się na program TVP pt. „Kasta". RPO prosi o opinię KRRiT*, 4.3.2020, https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/obywatel-skarzy-sie-na-program-tvp-kasta-rpo-pyta-krrit (access: 4.4.2023).

[20] Rzeczpospolita, *Prezes sądu w Szczecinie: w programie „Kasta" sfałszowano oświadczenie sędzi*, 28.2.2020, https://www.rp.pl/sady-i-trybunaly/art862461-prezes-sadu-w-szczecinie-w-programie-kasta-sfalszowano-oswiadczenie-sedzi (access: 4.4.2023).

[21] *Paradokument*, https://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/paradokument.html (access: 28.3.2023).

[22] M. Czopek, D. Chomont-Parzyńska, D. Czerwińska, M. Kołodziej, R. Kudzia, M. Morawska, A. Ostrowska, A. Szymkowiak, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[23] A. Jabłoński, *Krótka historia seriali paradokumentalnych w Polsce*, 10.12.2015, https://www.today.pl/JX69c (access: 3.4.2023).

[24] The series was broadcast from 1 October 2020 till the end of December 2022. The Management Board of TVP entrusted the production of the series to the Like Vision company. See Onet, *Producent „Kasty" dla TVP w 2020 r. miał ponad 6 mln zł przychodów*, 16.7.2021, https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/producent-kasty-z-6-milionowym-przychodem-wczesniej-zarobil-prowadzacy/

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possible changes in the message), and then every fifth, starting from episode 22 which was randomly drawn. Each episode was analysed in terms of the problems specified in the questionnaire prepared for this purpose. The analysis was accompanied by a constant need to ensure its scientific nature, with the awareness that it was made on quite peculiar material.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

The representation of the image of the legal community is discussed based on such elements of image as appearance, behaviour and manners, interpersonal skills, professional qualifications and experience, professional achievements and lifestyle.[25]

1. The image of judges as key to the image of the community of legal professionals in Poland

The message from the pseudo-documentary *Caste* is focused on judges, though not exclusively. It is however the judges who are the point of reference for the cases presented, with the preconceived assumption that a wrongful, unfair decision could be (and this is confirmed in the vast majority of cases on the show) the result of some form of judge's entanglement. The judges are shown here as a professional group dominated by those who breach the law, the rules of professional ethics and simple human decency. "Good" judges are a clear minority – with only a few being active judges and the rest having been forced by conspiracy participants to retire.[26] It is worth noting that information about judges is obtained from sources that are difficult to verify, including rumours from court lobbies.[27]

Moving on to the individual elements of the image, it might seem that the issue of appearance is of secondary importance, but it is primary in the so-called first impression effect, especially since the pseudo-documentary as such operates not only with a word but also with a picture. This first impression is not positive. Most of the judges presented in the pseudo-documentary are unattractive men who, when appearing outside the courtroom, are carelessly dressed. These are mostly middle-aged people, and if they are young judges, they are criticised on the show

dv7rj7x (access: 3.4.2023). The episodes of the series referred to in the study were downloaded from https://vod.tvp.pl.

[25] M. Czopek, D. Chomont-Parzyńska, D. Czerwińska, M. Kołodziej, R. Kudzia, M. Morawska, A. Ostrowska. A. Szymkowiak, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–82.

[26] Episode 107 *Zemsta*.

[27] Episode 212 *Szkolny prześladowca*; episode 325 *Samoobrona*; episode 292 *Korporacja*.

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of being too much respectful to advocates, especially the prominent ones.[28] Female judges are shown to be at least not nice, although they seem to have been treated a little milder than men.

As regards behaviour and manners, the pseudo-documentary presents judges unfavourably. They are usually arrogant and overconfident, feel impunity and even use vulgar language.[29] In particular, they do not care about convincing others that the sentence is correct. When asked to talk about the judgment, they either do not want to talk at all[30] or, while agreeing, most often they only cite the grounds of the judgment.[31] Judges cannot establish correct relationships with other legal practitioners[32] unless they have some sort of deal with them.[33]

They do not have communication skills, although they have direct contact with people when doing their job. Judges, especially in the courtroom, seem completely inaccessible to the parties to the proceedings. In the courtroom, they are threaten to be fined[34] or removed from the courtroom.[35] They do not always state the reasons behind the judgment – the lack of any substantiation for the judgment cannot be explained by the timeframe of the series.[36] The judges are also susceptible to manipulation, e.g., by the mass media,[37] and even by other judges.[38]

Most allegations are related to the way in which the judges do their job. While it is difficult to find in the series examples where their professional qualifications or experience are questioned, the skills they have acquired are primarily used to pursue their own interests. Judges are accused of committing crimes and acting in ways which, even if not directly illegal, may cast doubt on their impartiality. The principles of judicial ethics, which stipulate that a judge may not by his or her conduct give rise to even the appearance of disrespect for the legal order, are breached.[39] Not only does the pseudo-documentary refer to "appearances", but

[28] Episode 27 *Spacer*.

[29] Episode 17 *Sędzia pod wpływem*.

[30] Episode 8 *Dom*; episode 327 *Kopalnia*; episode 333 *Nieprzytomni*.

[31] Episode 102 *Sport to zdrowie*; episode 107 *Zemsta*.

[32] Episode 18 *Plagiat – nieuczciwa gra*.

[33] Episode 27 *Spacer*.

[34] Episode 62 *Jeden za dużo*; episode 287 *Wspólność majątkowa*; episode 318 *Własny kąt*; episode 332 *Synek*.

[35] Episode 112 *Pomocna dłoń*.

[36] Episode 272 *Samosąd*.

[37] Episode 19 *Ziarna i plewy*.

[38] Episode 137 *Dobre imię*.

[39] § 16 of the Resolution No. 25/2017 of the National Council of the Judiciary of 13 January 2017 on the announcement of the consolidated text of the Collection of Principles of Professional Ethics of Judges and Court Assessors, https://www.krs.pl/pl/o-radzie/zbior-zasad-etyki-zawodowej-sedziow/591-uchwala-nr-25-2017-krajowej-rady-sadownictwa-z-dnia-13-stycznia-2017-r.html (access: 26.4.2023).

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judges are even accused of committing serious crimes. This includes primarily bribery – they accept payment for sentences to be passed.[40] They do this in a simple way (just by accepting cash in thick envelopes),[41] or in a more sophisticated way (by devising a mechanism of corruption).[42] They are portrayed as people with whom any deal is possible to be made, it is just a matter of the right sum of money,[43] but they are generally very cautious, which makes it difficult to prove them guilty.[44]

Although the judge's salary is shown to be "high",[45] some judges seek additional sources of income even in branches that do not have approval among the public, e.g. as sleeping partners in an escort agency business.[46] They also commit other crimes, such as VAT fraud.[47]

A very strong criticism is that judges are involved in all sorts of conspiracies and even described as the "protectors" of this kind of informal structures.[48] The term "conspiracy" (Pol. *układ*) is significant in that the pseudo-documentary was touted as referring to people harmed by the "system", the title *Caste* defined as informal deals between judges, prosecutors and businesspeople. Indeed, there are more participants in these agreements (including notaries, expert witnesses, advocates, officials and even gangsters). The word *caste* in Poland gained popularity at the threshold of judicial reform due to the speech of a judge of the Supreme Administrative Court Irena Kamińska at the Congress of Polish Judges in 2016, when she said about the "extraordinary caste" to emphasise the role that judges should play in the face of changes taking place and the duties incumbent on them. However, this term was adopted by the ruling circles as an expression of the judges' conviction of the extraordinary position of that profession, separation from society, or even a sort of arrogance. In the show, the caste is not so much identified with a privileged, closed group, but with a conspiracy.

With their conduct, the judges contradict the principle of impartiality by violating the Principles of the Ethics of Judges, in particular § 10 or § 17 (1). They do not exclude themselves as disqualified judges from cases in which they are related with the parties or their relatives in some way, such as of emotional (affair),[49] family,[50]

[40] Episode 72 *Rowerzystka*; episode 323 *Stłuczka*.
[41] Episode 5 *Celebryta ponad prawem*; episode 132 *Wysokie ceny*.
[42] Episode 10 *Kupiona niewinność*; episode 97 *Pokaz*.
[43] Episode 62 *Jeden za dużo*; episode 267 *Intratny interes*.
[44] Episode 62 *Jeden za dużo*.
[45] Episode 132 *Wysokie ceny*.
[46] Episode 172 *Sąsiadka*.
[47] Episode 322 *Zaginiony testament*.
[48] Episode 97 *Pokaz*; episode 102 *Sport to zdrowie*.
[49] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*; episode 4 *Utracona odznaka*; episode 82 *Działkowicz*.
[50] Episode 8 *Dom*; episode 20 *Wirtualny kredyt*; episode 77 *Świadek*; episode 92 *Kółko teatralne*; episode 232 *Złe filmy*; episode 162 *Wszystko dla córki*.

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business[51] or social[52] nature. They do not approach the evidence presented in cases correctly, ignoring those that could be relevant for the case.[53] The least severe objection is that judges are not doing their job properly, they are just lazy.[54]

In terms of professional successes, achievements and accomplishments, judges are not considered to be respectful people. The message conveyed by the pseudo-documentary reinforces the notion that one can always try to bribe a judge to win a case.[55] Moreover, they are also not resilient enough to practise their profession. Even if from the point of view of an ordinary person the decisions made by judges can be justified from a human point of view, the gravity of the office and the social position they occupy impose stricter requirements on them. They are prone to acquit, fearing the disclosure of facts that damage their image (e.g. an affair, a drug history[56] or compromising photographs[57]). They allow to be intimidated when gangsters kidnap their loved ones[58] or threaten their children.[59]

The image of judges is damaged even by their feelings for their family members. A loving judge is ready to do a lot to save the life and health of his wife[60] or child[61] or to protect his daughter from criminal liability.[62] The above leads to the clear conclusion that there are no unbreakable judges, one can always find their weak point.[63]

Even when judges are subject to disciplinary procedure, they are often ultimately not held accountable at all,[64] or face minor punishment in the form of an

[51] Episode 11 *Prosto w serce*; episode 320 *Pewny zysk*; episode 72 *Rowerzystka*.

[52] Episode 2 *Pasażer*; episode 67 *Poświęcenie matki*; episode 102 *Sport to zdrowie*; episode 127 *Celebrytka*; episode 252 *Wrobiona*; episode 257 *Podwójne życie*; episode 282 *Syn marnotrawny*; episode 332 *Synek*.

[53] Episode 67 *Poświęcenie matki*; episode 132 *Wysokie ceny*; episode 277 *Niebezpieczna bursa*; episode 333 *Nieprzytomni*; episode 42 *Szary pracownik*; episode 329 *Gra o wszystko*.

[54] Episode 42 *Szary pracownik*.

[55] Episode 330 *Ślub dla pieniędzy*.

[56] Episode 152 *Desperacki krok*.

[57] Episode 227 *Porzuceni*.

[58] Episode 315 *Zamach*.

[59] Episode 322 *Zaginiony testament*; episode 327 *Kopalnia*.

[60] Episode 9 *Amerykańskie alimenty*.

[61] Episode 14 *Z dobrego serca*.

[62] Episode 237 *Pod wpływem*.

[63] Episode 11 *Prosto w serce*.

[64] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*; episode 322 *Zaginiony testament*; episode 8 *Dom*; episode 14 *Z dobrego serca*; episode 15 *Szokujący mobbing*; episode 87 *Agencja pod ochroną*; episode 92 *Kółko teatralne*; episode 97 *Pokaz*; episode 102 *Sport to zdrowie*; episode 122 *Zawodowy oszust*; episode 132 *Wysokie ceny*; episode 137 *Dobre imię*; episode 142 *Spółdzielnia*; episode 152 *Desperacki krok*; episode 202 *Nie do obrony*; episode 212 *Szkolny prześladowca*; episode 227 *Porzuceni*; episode 232 *Złe filmy*; episode 292 *Korporacja*; episode 336 *Hochsztapler*; episode 22 *Zabójcza kwarantanna*; episode 32 *Hakerka*.

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admonition[65] or reprimand.[66] A way of avoiding responsibility is leaving the active service,[67] early retirement[68] or transfer to another court.[69] One of the ways of avoiding accountability by judges is the immunity they enjoy.[70]

Judges' lifestyles, including their personal lives, often do not serve as role models. The image of a judge who behaves in an undignified manner: he is a violent husband who uses physical and psychological violence against his wife, appeals strongly to the viewer's imagination.[71] Male judges are also immoral: they are womanisers, having a bad midlife crisis,[72] using services of women of dubious reputation, cheating on their wives.[73] Female judges are promiscuous,[74] they demonstrate excessive female solidarity.[75] Some judges are addicts – be it gambling ("a roulette judge") or drugs,[76] which makes them vulnerable to blackmail by those whose cases they hear.

Judges are shown not only in the courtroom, but also in other situations – especially in nightclubs[77] or isolated car parks, in the evening, when they are accepting fat envelopes or talking with people about further proceeding in the cases heard by them.[78]

Summing up this part, it should be stated that judges are portrayed negatively. They are presented as not mature enough to practise their profession and unaware of the consequences of their rulings for ordinary people. There are isolated examples of "good judges", but nonetheless they are unable to do anything to prevent unjust sentences.[79]

2. Advocates – an ambivalent image: "the good ones" and "the bad ones"

Other legal professions are not subject to such broad vivisection as judges, but the image of advocates is quite precise against this background, although it is not so clear, as both "good" and "bad" lawyers are shown. The first group undoubtedly includes advocates from the Wolscy & Wspólnicy Law Firm who conduct the cases

[65] Episode 22 *Zabójcza kwarantanna*; episode 32 *Hakerka*; episode 222 *Działka*.
[66] Episode 177 *Bezdomna*; episode 242 *Omerta*; episode 257 *Podwójne życie*.
[67] Episode 10 *Kupiona niewinność*.
[68] Episode 20 *Wirtualny kredyt*.
[69] Episode 162 *Wszystko dla córki*.
[70] Episode 17 *Sędzia pod wpływem*; episode 323 *Stłuczka*.
[71] Episode 8 *Dom*.
[72] Episode 325 *Samoobrona*.
[73] Episode 329 *Gra o wszystko*.
[74] Episode 277 *Niebezpieczna bursa*.
[75] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*; episode 252 *Wrobiona*.
[76] Episode 197 *Szkoła życia*.
[77] Episode 112 *Pomocna dłoń*; episode 287 *Wspólność majątkowa*.
[78] Episode 72 *Rowerzystka*.
[79] Episode 132 *Wysokie ceny*.

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presented in the pseudo-documentary, which is a kind of model for a positive image of a legal practitioner.[80]

The fact that they are young people comes to the fore from the point of view of elements of their image and socio-demographic characteristics. It seems that it is not a coincidence, because they do not carry the ballast of the past, they are not entangled, they have an idealistic view of the world, in which justice should prevail. They are elegantly dressed men in suits and women in modest but good quality suits or blouses. All in all, the first visual impression is very good.

When it comes to behaviour and manners, advocates are compassionate and polite.[81] They respect simple people, they use language properly. They behave correctly in relation to other legal professions, but this does not mean that they are always of good opinion of them.[82]

The strength of the advocates from the Law Firm are their interpersonal skills – they have mastered the art of relations with other people. It seems to be in their nature.[83]

Advocates from the Law Firm are reliable in doing their job, while being honest with their clients. They do not promise to win, but they offer their clients hope and declare that they will do anything possible.[84] They are modest[85] and courageous.[86] They are ready to fight,[87] even to the detriment of their career.[88] A certain heterogeneity of message occurs at this point, at least in terms of declarations: on the one hand, they firmly state that they "must not act against the law",[89] and, on the other, when a just cause is concerned, they are ready to act on the verge of legality.[90]

Noteworthy is the way in which the manner of operation of a modern law firm is shown, as it includes activities of "a little more discreet" nature.[91] In fact, it is more like a private investigations business than a law firm. Lawyers are ready to conduct surveillance outside the office, they organise provocations.[92] The work of the advocates is a team effort: each case is handled by two people and in almost every case it is necessary to use the help of IT specialists and detectives.[93] They support the

[80] Episode 312 *Zły pies*.
[81] Episode 322 *Zaginiony testament*.
[82] Episode 8 *Dom*; episode 67 *Poświęcenie matki*; episode 322 *Zaginiony testament*.
[83] Episode 15 *Szokujący mobbing*.
[84] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*; episode 13 *Diler wyroków*; episode 32 *Hakerka*; episode 326 *Idole*.
[85] Episode 316 *Przybrana rodzina*.
[86] Episode 77 *Świadek*; Episode 142 *Spółdzielnia*.
[87] Episode 72 *Rowerzystka*.
[88] Episode 10 *Kupiona niewinność*.
[89] Episode 329 *Gra o wszystko*.
[90] Episode 13 *Diler wyroków*; episode 222 *Działka*.
[91] Episode 15 *Szokujący mobbing*.
[92] Episode 314 *Spowiedź*.
[93] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*.

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lawyers with their skills to access information obtained in a quite unofficial way. Thus, not all the evidence collected can be used in court. This slightly changes the image of a lawyer locked within the four walls of his office and browsing legal codes. Legal doubts are not exposed and the lawyers' work focuses on the factual findings of the case. It turns out that nowadays, legal reasoning and traditional evidence-gathering alone are not enough, but additional activities are necessary. It is also noteworthy that there is a "friendly atmosphere" in the Law Firm, which is appreciated by clients.[94]

The interest of the advocates in their clients does not end with a ruling, especially an unfavourable one – they seek support for them from a foundation that helps those harmed by the judiciary (including with respect of their fee).[95] The issue of the lawyers' fees for their work is present in the pseudo-document, but is not exposed.[96]

As regards the issue of achievements and professional accomplishments, for the advocates of the Law Firm it is client's satisfaction that matters most and this is the most important measure of success for them, which allows them to solicit new cases.[97]

As far as lifestyle is concerned, the young advocates from the firm are very busy people, which often means that they do not have personal life. When off work, they are ready to help wronged people.[98] Although they have their problems and flaws, or rather little weaknesses,[99] but these seem to be shown deliberately as harmless in comparison to the deficiencies of other lawyers portrayed in the series and to make the characters credible.

Apart from the Law Firm's lawyers, other representatives of this profession are presented in a positive way only incidentally, such as a retired advocate,[100] while others are portrayed in a definitely negative way. Two general types of advocates can be distinguished here: the first are people who do their job badly, uncommitted,[101] inept,[102] especially when they are court-appointed defence counsels.[103] The second group are advocates who have the opinion of good professionals, but at

[94] Episode 167 *Oszukana*.

[95] Episode 72 *Rowerzystka*.

[96] Episode 9 *Amerykańskie alimenty*; episode 10 *Kupiona niewinność*.

[97] Episode 8 *Dom*; episode 12 *Gwiezdny pył*; episode 67 *Poświęcenie matki*; episode 62 *Jeden za dużo*; episode 97 *Pokaz*; episode 137 *Dobre imię*.

[98] Episode 325 *Samoobrona*.

[99] Episode 6 *Fałszywy gwałt*; episode 10 *Kupiona niewinność*; wpisode 14 *Z dobrego serca*; episode 16 *Trzy procesy, dwa wyroki*; episode 77 *Świadek*.

[100] Episode 92 *Kółko teatralne*.

[101] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*; episode 72 *Rowerzystka*; episode 318 *Własny kąt*.

[102] Episode 7 *Komorniczy przekręt*.

[103] Episode 222 *Działka*.

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the same time are bound by various arrangements.[104] These are very well paid people with connections,[105] including judges.[106] They are ruthless[107] and cannot lose.[108] The advocates described as "top shelf" professionals[109] often come from families with lawyer traditions. They are immoral people, they like to live a fancy lifestyle and abuse alcohol.[110] When running the case of a client, they are in fact willing to act in favour of the opposing party.[111] They lack refinement and tact, and just "ordinary human decency".[112] The motto of such a lawyer is: "The end justifies the means, you have to do everything to win a client's case",[113] including counterfeiting evidence.[114]

3. Image of other legal professions and other occupations

Most public prosecutors in the pseudo-documentary are presented in a negative way, although there are exceptions. The good prosecutor is a young man who is passionate about the case, but his work is hampered by corrupt judges.[115] Not all the prosecutors are indifferent about the outcome of the case[116] and they do not give up efforts to dismantle the conspiracy.[117] But most of them are involved in different kinds of agreements, e.g. with businessmen, expert witnesses and the mayor,[118] with local politicians,[119] with gangsters[120] or senior police officers.[121] These are people whose appearance is not appealing, who are arrogant and also vain: to gain popularity they "make the case to be subject of the media's interest".[122] They are not committed to the case to a sufficient extent, they are unprofessional.[123]

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[104] Episode 7 *Komorniczy przekręt*.
[105] Episode 47 *Koledzy*.
[106] Episode 27 *Spacer*.
[107] *Ibidem*.
[108] Episode 107 *Zemsta*.
[109] Episode 47 *Koledzy*.
[110] Episode 147 *Odrzucona*.
[111] Episode 167 *Oszukana*.
[112] Episode 117 *Cisza nocna*; episode 302 *Za zamkniętymi drzwiami*.
[113] Episode 297 *Kariera*.
[114] Episode 217 *Niepotrzebny ojciec*.
[115] Episode 62 *Jeden za dużo*.
[116] Episode 102 *Sport to zdrowie*.
[117] Episode 132 *Wysokie ceny*.
[118] Episode 16 *Trzy procesy, dwa wyroki*.
[119] Episode 32 *Hakerka*.
[120] Episode 13 *Diler wyroków*.
[121] Episode 52 *Przesiadka*.
[122] Episode 2 *Pasażer*.
[123] Episode 37 *Nagłe wtargnięcie*; episode 82 *Działkowicz*.

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Some are common criminals, e.g. they destroy evidence and order killings,[124] accept bribes[125] or hide the perpetrators.[126] There are also drug addicts, the addiction making them vulnerable to the pressure from those they are intended to prosecute.[127] Some are portrayed as immoral, having affairs with female advocates.[128]

Like the judges, the prosecutors enjoy immunity[129] and the system of their liability is not working properly either. Even if disciplinary proceedings are initiated against prosecutors,[130] they are generally slow-paced[131] and sometimes the way to avoid accountability is a transfer to another professional corporation.[132]

If one were to grade which professional group of lawyers is presented in the least favourable way after the judges, it is the notaries. According to the scheme adopted in the pseudo-documentary, their appearance does not inspire confidence. Although they are considered to be well-off people,[133] they use their function to earn additional financial benefits for themselves. They give false statements in court,[134] they accept bribes themselves,[135] but they also give them.[136] Having legal expertise, they suggest to undertake illegal actions.[137] They have no particular communication skills, although they perform slightly better than judges in this area. They are part of various kinds of conspiracies, which is due to the fact that many frauds could not be effectively carried out without the help of notaries, especially in order to acquire property for amounts inadequate to their value.[138] They deceive ordinary people, often vulnerable and ignorant of the law. They deliberately do not protect the interests of their clients.[139] It seems, however, that notaries are portrayed as being hold liable more likely than other legal practitioners,[140] although this is not the rule.[141]

The pseudo-documentary added little to the judicial enforcement officer's image in Polish public, and it seems that it has only strengthened the negative associations related to those who practise the profession. An opinion about the dramatic nature of

[124] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*.
[125] Episode 6 *Fałszywy gwałt*; episode 47 *Koledzy*.
[126] Episode 12 *Gwiezdny pył*.
[127] Episode 13 *Diler wyroków*.
[128] Episode 47 *Koledzy*.
[129] Episode 13 *Diler wyroków*.
[130] Episode 16 *Trzy procesy, dwa wyroki*.
[131] Episode 12 *Gwiezdny pył*.
[132] Episode 52 *Przesiadka*.
[133] Episode 318 *Własny kąt*.
[134] Episode 335 *In flagranti*.
[135] Episode 318 *Własny kąt*.
[136] Episode 67 *Poświęcenie matki*.
[137] Episode 335 *In flagranti*.
[138] Episode 57 *Zmowa mieszkaniowa*; episode 331 *Spadkobierczyni*.
[139] Episode 57 *Zmowa mieszkaniowa*.
[140] Episode 331 *Spadkobierczyni*.
[141] Episode 57 *Zmowa mieszkaniowa*; episode 67 *Poświęcenie matki*.

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enforcement proceedings was expressed, while stating that debts should be repaid, but enforcement officers themselves were presented as unfriendly, ruthless people, those who could "have it in" for the debtor.[142]

It is worth noting that the paradox sometimes refers to "lawyers".[143] Probably this refers to attorneys-at-law representing companies, but this profession occurs in the show only incidentally[144] which is interesting in view of the fact that nearly 47,000 people practise this profession in Poland.

Lawyers-academics, including those who combine their academic career with judicial service, appear in the series as a distinct category. Two groups can be distinguished among them: the first are those who cooperate with the Law Firm, privately advising the advocates,[145] themselves having been forced by the caste to retire.[146] They are presented in a way that, according to the series' creators, is consistent with the social image of law professors they often uses Latin phrases during conversations.[147] The second group is made up of academics appearing in connection with cases conducted by the advocates. These are no longer assessed positively. When a prominent lecturer should bear witness to the truth in the case of a former student accused of plagiarism, he fails to do so for the sake of his family.[148] The critical evaluation of some academics does not mean that academic work is undervalued, but the need to combine an academic career with practical experience is emphasised.[149]

Police officers also appear in the pseudo-documentary, with both good ones – helping the lawyers to get to the truth,[150] and bad ones. It seems that the closer we get to the end of the series, the more police officers are portrayed in a positive way as performing a "high-risk" function.[151] Perhaps this is a suggestion that the closer we get to the present day, the more positive changes have taken place in these services. However, as far as the image of bad police officers is concerned: they make deals, in particular with judges, prosecutors,[152] businessmen, gangsters, and they take bribes[153] and brag about connections.[154] They themselves are also sometimes

[142] Episode 7 *Komorniczy przekręt*.
[143] Episode 92 *Kółko teatralne*.
[144] Episode 72 *Rowerzystka*.
[145] Episode 9 *Amerykańskie alimenty*; episode 47 *Koledzy*.
[146] Episode 4 *Utracona odznaka*.
[147] Episode 331 *Spadkobierczyni*; episode 317 *Utracona ziemia*.
[148] Episode 18 *Plagiat – nieuczciwa gra*.
[149] Episode 307 *Synowa*.
[150] Episode 262 *Świadek zbrodni*; episode 336 *Hochsztapler*.
[151] Episode 315 *Zamach*.
[152] Episode 52 *Przesiadka*.
[153] Episode 8 *Dom*; episode 82 *Działkowicz*.
[154] Episode 328 *Matnia*.

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involved in crimes, e.g. by co-organising theft,[155] falsifying evidence,[156] giving false testimony.[157] They disregard the cases they are supposed to handle.[158] They neglect their duties and do not do their job reliably.[159] They show misunderstood male solidarity and behave in an inappropriate manner towards their female colleagues,[160] and in their in family life, they mistreat their wives.[161]

Sometimes disciplinary proceedings are initiated against police officers[162] and they are even dismissed from duty,[163] but there are also those who manage to avoid responsibility.[164]

Many words of criticism is addressed in the pseudo-documentary to expert witnesses.[165] Experts in various areas (e.g. medical doctors,[166] graphologists,[167] civil engineering inspectors[168]), while involved in various informal deals, draw up opinions beneficial to one of the parties in exchange for property benefits.[169] It is equally clear that it is a group, which often bears responsibility for its actions.[170]

Other professions, usually critically assessed, complement the image of lawyers. These include, e.g., public revenue officials,[171] officials responsible for tender procedures[172] or those dealing with spatial development,[173] as well as court interpreters,[174] municipal police officers[175] and public prosecutor's office staff members.[176]

[155] Episode 314 *Spowiedź*.
[156] Episode 17 *Sędzia pod wpływem*; episode 272 *Samosąd*.
[157] Episode 302 *Za zamkniętymi drzwiami*.
[158] Episode 87 *Agencja pod ochroną*; episode 232 *Złe filmy*.
[159] Episode 87 *Agencja pod ochroną*.
[160] Episode 333 *Nieprzytomni*.
[161] Episode 328 *Matnia*.
[162] Episode 232 *Złe filmy*.
[163] Episode 314 *Spowiedź*.
[164] Episode 52 *Przesiadka*.
[165] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*.
[166] Episode 328 *Matnia*; episode 330 *Ślub dla pieniędzy*.
[167] Episode 331 *Spadkobierczyni*.
[168] Episode 242 *Omerta*.
[169] Episode 11 *Prosto w serce*; episode 334 *Nieczysty biznes*.
[170] Episode 192 *Tajemnica sprzed lat*; episode 242 *Omerta*; episode 257 *Podwójne życie*.
[171] Episode 20 *Wirtualny kredyt*.
[172] Episode 62 *Jeden za dużo*.
[173] Episode 92 *Kółko teatralne*; episode 317 *Utracona ziemia*.
[174] Episode 67 *Poświęcenie matki*.
[175] Episode 92 *Kółko teatralne*.
[176] Episode 112 *Pomocna dłoń*.

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CONCLUSIONS

The pseudo-documentary presents Poland as a country in which society is divided into a privileged minority and ordinary people, into the elite and masses, with this division largely coinciding with the division into bad and good, rich and poor.[177] Attending a good private school, the fact of coming from a well-off family, or the celebrity status are the qualities that immediately put such a person in the circle of those who will find themselves in a privileged position before the judicial authorities.[178]

At this point, the question arises to what extent the image of the legal community presented in the pseudo-document reflects the real problems of the Polish justice system perceived by the public?

The problem of issuing unfair rulings by the courts, which permeates the series, is mentioned in opinion polls as the third most important problem of the Polish justice system.[179] The message of the pseudo-documentary is that the blame for such situation is put on the conspiracies ("the mafia"),[180] which make it difficult to speak of the impartiality of judges in Poland. Significant in this context is a saying that in order for a judge to be impartial, he would have to have no family, friends and political views.[181] For the social consequences of the irregularities shown, the pseudo-documentary blames the legal community, primarily judges. These consequences are very severe for the victims of unjust rulings: they suffer at least stress, but also depression, fall into addictions, their families break up, they have to use therapy and psychological help and even make suicide attempts.

The thesis, proposed in the literature on the subject, about the perception of the court not as a social institution, but as a repressive authority, which results in a mental construction based on the division between "us" versus "the apparatus of justice", is confirmed. The above "creates the possibility for the judiciary to be embedded in projected political social divisions".[182]

As a rule, the conspiracies are associated with money, and a corrupt judge is an image that is likely to become instilled in the public consciousness. However, the problem of corruption, undoubtedly capable of appealing to the viewer's imagination, was recognised in the series as coming to the fore while not having been

[177] Episode 332 *Synek*.

[178] Episode 13 *Diler wyroków*; episode 17 *Sędzia pod wpływem*; episode 42 *Szary pracownik*; episode 297 *Kariera*.

[179] K. Pankowski (comp.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[180] Episode 37 *Nagłe wtargnięcie*.

[181] Episode 1 *Autor nieznany*.

[182] J. Bralczyk, J. Wasilewski, *Wizerunek sądu i sędziów. Stan obecny, przyczyny, perspektywy*, [in:] *Media i sądy pro bono et malo. Wzajemne relacje w służbie demokratycznego państwa prawa. Materiały pokonferencyjne*, ed. B. Godlewska-Michalak, Warszawa 2008, p. 56.

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previously so strongly emphasised.[183] In public opinion surveys, corruption is mentioned fifth among the problems of the judiciary (26% of those surveyed);[184] moreover, it is not courts where it occurs most often, but is associated primarily with the actions of politicians.[185]

On the other hand, the problem of excessive lengthiness of court proceedings perceived by the public as the most important problem of the justice system in Poland has not been highlighted.[186] There are not many critical remarks in this respect.[187] In turn, alternative ways of resolving disputes are presented incidentally and in a way that does not encourage their use, e.g. mediation was considered to be a deliberate prolongation of proceedings.[188]

The pseudo-documentary also incidentally addresses problems such as the heterogeneity of case law,[189] or the issue of bad law and difficulties regarding its interpretation.[190] It seems that such problems could be incomprehensible and boring for the viewer, so they are left out of the main plot. There is virtually no mention of the issue that Poles rank second among the problems of the judiciary, namely the politicisation of courts and prosecutors' offices or the broader issues of too lenient or too severe penalties, or nepotism. But a problem appears that legal language is incomprehensible for ordinary people.[191] What draws attention is the fact that, in principle, references to politics do not appear explicitly. However, they do appear, but "under the surface", in the form of understatements, which are nonetheless clear to the attentive viewer, e.g. through paraphrased quotes from well-known politicians[192] or the irresistible impression that only those currently in power can break up the "conspiracy".

The presented picture of the world is interwoven with various lifestyle themes or moral dilemmas that stir up social emotions. These include the issue of the admissibility of abortion in the case of pregnancy resulting from rape, where maintaining

[183] E. Łojko, *Medialne wizerunki działalności zawodowej prawników*, [in:] *Prawnicy i dziennikarze. Współpraca, rywalizacja, manipulacja*, ed. E. Łojko, Warszawa 2013, p. 123. Older judges are perceived as more susceptible to corruption. See K. Daniel, *Normatywny i społeczny obraz sędziego*, [in:] *Sądy w opinii społeczeństwa polskiego*, eds. M. Borucka-Arctowa, K. Pałecki, Kraków 2003, p. 111.

[184] K. Pankowski (comp.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[185] A. Cybulska, K. Pankowski (comp.), *Różne barwy korupcji w Polsce*, Komunikat z badań CBOS no. 151/2021, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2021/K_151_21.PDF (access: 19.1.2022), pp. 8–9.

[186] K. Pankowski (comp.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[187] Episode 315 *Zamach*; episode 326 *Idole*.

[188] Episode 335 *In flagranti*.

[189] Episode 16 *Trzy procesy, dwa wyroki*.

[190] Episode 322 *Zaginiony testament*.

[191] Episode 142 *Spółdzielnia*; episode 192 *Tajemnica sprzed lat*.

[192] Episode 14. *Z dobrego serca*

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such a pregnancy is considered the right decision.[193] Therefore, here we deal with shaping preferred social attitudes.

It seems that the television production in question is full of half-truths, understatements, established patterns and often operates with stereotypes. This is not the first time when lawyers have been portrayed in an unfavourable light, as there are many examples of images of the legal community, e.g. in literature or cinematography, in which its representatives are people focused on professional and financial success, who lose their sense of decency, but also often pay a high price for it. The series in question, however, differs in that no such harsh assessment of the legal community has previously been made in a systematic way. Moreover, the message that "the stories presented are based on real cases from Polish courts"[194] was reinforced through the form of pseudo-documentary. Rather than stigmatising individual pathologies that occur in every profession, the legal community was accused as a whole.

It should be noted that the educational opportunities intrinsic in the show have not been exploited. Certain attempts to do so appear, but to a small extent.[195] The deficiencies in legal awareness of the Polish society, confirmed by empirical research,[196] have not been remedied in important matters. Moreover, the public are being told that final court decisions cannot be challenged,[197] whether by means of a cassation appeal or an extraordinary review, and that at most there are preparations for the resumption of the proceedings.[198] There is also no mention of many institutions that are important for citizens, such as the Commissioner for Human Rights. The opportunity of presenting the positive aspects of the use of the institution of free legal assistance, which was intended to help the poorest citizens, has not been used either. This issue has been presented either neutral or even negatively.[199]

To sum up, *Caste* definitely did not improve the image of the community of legal professionals in Poland, which may have an impact on deepening the social distrust of lawyers and their social role. The balance between facts and fiction has been disturbed, which served to support a presupposition that Polish realities are flawed due to the conduct of legal professionals, especially judges.[200] If the

[193] Episode 12 *Gwiezdny pył*; episode 187 *Sytuacja bez wyjścia*.

[194] This notice is displayed in each episode of the series.

[195] Episode 3 *Samoobrona*.

[196] The most recent studies in this area allowed the legal awareness of Poles to be divided into the following types: outsiders, sceptics, sensitive participants and active participants. See G. Skąpska, E. Radomska, M Wróbel, *Świadomość prawna społeczeństwa polskiego*, "Państwo i Prawo" 2022, no. 12, pp. 26–28.

[197] Episode 328 *Matnia*; episode 142 *Spółdzielnia*.

[198] Episode 177 *Bezdomna*.

[199] Episode 10 *Kupiona niewinność*; episode 97 *Pokaz*; episode 329 *Gra o wszystko*.

[200] The fact is that film, including pseudo-documentaries, is a type of research material where it can be difficult to delimit the "area of truth" and this requires reaching out to other sources of knowl-

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TV show was supposed to tell lawyers something about themselves, it is an even disastrous picture, which seems to have been designed in advance. One can put forward a hypothesis that the image presented may have influenced the opinion about Polish lawyers in our society, especially in view of the cultivation effect known in psychology, which is that "the more people 'live' in the television or film reality, the more likely they are inclined to translate it into the social reality in which they actually live".[201] The pseudo-document in question met with a response from the audience: from articles in the press to posts on social media, which is linked to the fact that the so-called old media, including television, remain in a culture of convergence with the new media, particularly the Internet, allowing for the commenting of the viewed content on an ongoing basis.[202] According to B. Borowska, the popularity of pseudo-documentary series stems from, among other things, the fact that they provide an opportunity for viewers to participate, using the Internet and other media, by expressing their opinions on the content presented.[203] However, the issue of the response of the public to the pseudo-documentary *Caste* deserves separate research.[204]

It should be noted that research on the condition of legal professions as presented to the Polish society by pseudo-documentary as a very popular TV show genre is within the scope of interest of legal sciences, and most notably sociology of law. Moreover, this kind of picture could have an important educational value by deepening the legal awareness of the Polish society, but the condition is that it must provide true image of the law and the procedures in force.

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edge about the phenomenon under investigation. See P. Kletowski, *Film jako materiał badawczy w studiach kulturoznawczych*, Kraków 2008, p. 239.

[201] A. Guss, *Wpływ negatywnej kreacji prawników w filmach na postrzeganie zawodów prawniczych*, "Palestra" 2021, no. 11, p. 99.

[202] H. Jenkins, *Kultura konwergencji. Zderzenie starych i nowych mediów*, Warszawa 2007, p. 11.

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ABSTRAKT

Celem opracowania, mającego charakter naukowo-badawczy, jest przedstawienie wizerunku środowiska prawniczego w Polsce. Jest to studium przypadku opierające się na konkretnym przekazie telewizyjnym w postaci serialu paradokumentalnego polskiej telewizji publicznej pt. *Kasta*. Wizerunek ten ma istotne znaczenie dla właściwego ułożenia relacji społecznych. Waga podjętej problematyki i sposób jej przedstawienia zasługują na bliższą analizę, tym bardziej że od lat w badaniach opinii publicznej dotyczących prestiżu zawodów prawnicy nie zajmują wysokich pozycji. Jako materiał badawczy wykorzystano paradokument, uznając, że mieści się w szeroko pojętym pojęciu dokumentu i stanowi jednocześnie pewną nowość. Dla celów opracowania dokonano doboru próby badawczej. W rezultacie przeprowadzonych badań wykazano, że zaprezentowany w paradokumencie wizerunek środowiska prawniczego w Polsce jest niekorzystny. W wyniku różnego rodzaju układów zapadają krzywdzące, dotkliwe dla ofiar układu orzeczenia, za które winą obarczane jest środowisko prawnicze, a przede wszystkim sędziowie. Wyjątki zdarzają się bardzo rzadko, a jedyną nadzieją są młodzi, pełni ideałów adwokaci, stanowiący wzór dla wizerunku prawnika. Serial *Kasta*, operując nieuprawnionymi uproszczeniami i stereotypami, wpisał się w ciąg działań mających na celu zdyskredytowanie środowiska prawniczego w Polsce i nie poprawił jego wizerunku. Nie zachowano odpowiedniej proporcji między faktami a fikcją, co posłużyło wykazaniu z góry postawionej tezy o skażeniu polskiej rzeczywistości przez prawników, zwłaszcza przez sędziów. Podkreślone zostały te problemy wymiaru sprawiedliwości, które pomogły udowodnić tezę o konieczności jego reformy, szczególnie korupcja. Nie wykorzystano też możliwości edukacyjnych tkwiących w tej formie przekazu, stąd nie został podniesiony poziom świadomości prawnej polskiego społeczeństwa. Można postawić hipotezę, że przedstawiony obraz pochodzący z medium stanowiącego główne źródło informacji i mającego największy zasięg sygnału mógł mieć wpływ na kształtowanie opinii o prawnikach w polskim społeczeństwie. Serial spotkał się ze społeczną reakcją, która jednak zasługuje na odrębne badania.

Słowa kluczowe: wizerunek; środowisko prawnicze; paradokument; opinia; kasta; korupcja