

ASSISTANCE INTERVENTION PROCEDURES IN RISK SITUATIONS

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Abstract: *The universe has been in continuous transformation since the beginning of the world. Throughout this system, people experience change at every step, constantly learning to adapt their personal goals to the challenges of their environment. Social assistance thus appears as a response to the problem of vulnerable groups, offering professional and specialized help to those in need. The current approach aims to follow the intervention procedure in risk situations, implemented by the social worker, with a preponderance in the case of victims of drug abuse. This phenomenon is constantly growing, the National Anti-Drug Agency, the main intervention body, are fighting a continuous battle against drug trafficking, which is developing with an alarming speed, intervening both at the national and county level, through the Anti-Drug Evaluation, Prevention and Counseling Centers.*

Keywords: intervention, social worker, vulnerable group, risky situations, drug addiction .

1. Introduction

In a world where social and political changes occur at every step, the role of social workers has gained complexity, being asked to get actively involved in the support offered in society, by developing approaches that meet the needs of vulnerable groups, as well as developing support services. Social work is not only a promoter of resources in crisis situations, but is involved in the entire process of social development and assistance to vulnerable persons/groups, a fact that has led to a reconstruction of the identity of the profession and the role of the social worker, due to the need for development of new skills and knowledge to keep up with the changes and emerging issues.

2. Risk situations. Vulnerable groups

The risk situation is a circumstance in which a large part of the population can end up, for various reasons, and often without fault (for instance natural disasters, earthquakes, etc.). According to Law 292/2011 on Social Assistance, "the situation of difficulty is the situation in which a person who, at some point during the life cycle, for socioeconomic, health reasons and/or resulting from the environment socially disadvantaged life, lost or limited their own social integration capacities; families, groups of people and communities may find themselves in a difficult situation, as a result of the majority of their members being affected;". Social risk situations have a direct impact on the economic situation of the individual and his family, such as a decrease in income (unemployment, pension) or an increase in expenses (illness, maternity).

The vulnerable group is represented by individuals or families who are at risk of losing their ability to meet daily living needs because of illness, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol addiction or other situations that lead to vulnerability economic and social. Also, there are external situations, macro-social level events that can turn certain people into vulnerable people: earthquakes, floods, wars, economic crises, etc. (according to art. 6 letter h) of Law 219/2016 on the social economy and art. 6 lit. p) from the Social Assistance Law no. 292/2011)

From the assistance point of view, the vulnerable group refers to a social category with certain characteristics, which may be in common situations of difficulty, generating marginalization or social exclusion, permanently or for a certain period of time. The limitation, the non-existence of own or community resources, the impossibility of accessing existing opportunities determine serious consequences on the development of intellectual capacities, physical, moral and spiritual integrity. Considering the fact that the phrase "vulnerable group" is often identified with that of risk group or marginalized group, the definition of risk groups can also be valid for vulnerable groups.

In any society there are such groups that struggle with lack of power and control, with persistent problems, with physical, emotional, mental and social deterioration, with the absence of inner resources, with a lack of family and social support, with discrimination, stigmatization, and often with human rights violations. (Buzducea, 2010) The problem of vulnerable groups is the object of social policies designed and implemented by public administration authorities, but despite this fact there is no explicit definition based on which they can be identified. Thus, a number of socioeconomic indicators are used, such as worse living conditions, a low level of education, lack of income. It can be observed that the state of poverty is the main indicator of the level of vulnerability of a social category, whether it is permanent or temporary, cases in which living conditions do not rise to the level considered acceptable for these groups.

The Ordinance no. 68 of August 28, 2003 regarding social services lists the following categories of people as vulnerable groups: children; old people; disabled people; people addicted to drugs, alcohol or other toxic substances; persons who have left prisons; mono-parental families; people affected by family violence; victims of human trafficking; people with no or low income; immigrants; homeless people; persons infected with or suffering from HIV/AIDS; chronic patients; people suffering from incurable diseases; other people in situations of social need.

Social work and assistance thus appears as a response to the problem of vulnerable groups, offering professional and specialized help to those in need. Possessing a solid theoretical basis, crowned by varied practical experience and a well-developed common sense, social workers become agents of change. Social work and assistance are based on effective action in the intervention, a fact that requires the social worker to have solid theoretical knowledge in various fields such as psychology, communication, sociology, political science, legal science and others, knowledge that has the role of helping him to understand in depth what happens with the elements of the client-social worker system. The specialist not only stores and reproduces information and knowledge, but has the ability to access elements from various theories in order to focus them towards the field on which he intervenes. On the other hand, the social worker cannot carry out an operative and intensive action all alone, considering the complexity of the beneficiaries' problems, a fact that requires the social assistance activity to be carried out in collaboration with various specialists from fields with diverse objectives, but focused on the same aspect: the person as a whole.

3.Social work as an field interlacing

It can be said about social work or assistance that it is both an art, a science and a profession; theorists and specialists in the field assign to it the idea of art because "it assumes on the part of the one who practices it a series of personal qualities, special skills, which through education develop skills and abilities, form the talent necessary to act in a great diversity of situations, so you can understand people and help them help themselves." It is a science because, although it is at the intersection of various disciplines, it has borrowed and shaped ideas, concepts and principles from each to form its own theoretical basis. Furthermore, it is a profession because it has a set of systematized theoretical knowledge, it is a long-term activity put at the service of social needs, carried out professionally both for the benefit of the person

and for the good running of society, it is found as a specialization in the academic field and it also relies on its own legal system and code of ethics.

Social work as a profession was built around two values: respecting the dignity and integrity of the human being, and recognizing democracy as an essential requirement of social life. Starting from these, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) enunciated in the Encyclopedia of Social Work the following professional values (Neamțu, 2003): "Respect for fundamental human rights; Development and promotion of social responsibility; Promotion of individual freedoms; Supporting self-determination".

The assistance intervention is necessarily based on the interaction of two personalities: the client, who brings into the assistance relationship his or her set of problems and functional deficiencies, and the social worker, whose role is to unpack and harmoniously reorganize that set. In other words, the essence of the interaction is a process of directly or indirectly changing the client's behavior to help him acquire skills and resources for self-help.

The International Federation of Social Workers states that "the profession of social worker promotes social change, problem-solving in human relations, empowering and liberating individuals to enhance social well-being. Using theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their living environments. The principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work." (Neamțu, 2016). In Doru Buzducea's opinion, "the social worker is the one who assists clients in solving their own problems. He or she intervenes when people are faced with need, imperfection, lack, and various other problems. The mission of the social worker can be found in participating in solving community social problems, in ensuring a decent minimum of life and increasing the quality of life of vulnerable social groups, in improving the social functioning of people, as it restores what has been disordered."

The relationship between the social worker and the client is based on a partnership; the social worker is not a person who miraculously solves the problems that the client identifies, but has the role of collaborating with that client in the long run based on a commitment through which the client's self-determination is pursued. This process of change is achieved only through collaboration (the client participates in setting goals and making decisions, because if the specialist were to impose certain activities on the client, the latter would not show sufficient interest in getting involved) starting from the resources that the client already possesses, those strengths and skills that work for him or her, in order to detect some constructive solutions. The long-term objective is to give the client the ability to help himself in case of subsequent problems, so the help provided by the specialist is for a limited period, an aspect discussed from the beginning of the case resolution.

In the opinion of Lymberly (2001), there are three perspectives on the field of social assistance: traditional, market-oriented and of partnership. The traditional perspective sees social work as "a relationship between a professional and a client, between whom there are differences in power and knowledge, as well as a certain social distance". According to the market perspective, the social worker is "a supplier (provider) of services and the user of the service is a consumer, having a relationship that is understood as a commercial exchange". The partnership perspective is derived from the traditional one, providing that "social workers engage service users in active and equal participation which recognizes the expertise the service user brings to the helping relationship". (Neamțu, Condor, 2016)

4. The theoretical-methodological universe of assistance intervention

Recognizing the scientific status of social assistance necessarily requires recognizing its own methodological body, so that the following elements can be identified: a) reference theories (big models), b) knowledge and intervention methods and techniques, c) the procedures for evaluating the empirical reality and its theoretical reconstruction, as well as the degree of efficiency of the assistance approach.

The specific theories in social assistance appeared relatively late, due to the fact that they incorporate foundations from most of the older sciences, it being a fairly recently formed science, a product of the modern era. Thus, the theoretical basis of the intervention was based especially on professional practice, which is why, although classical theories are recognized in the specialized literature, in practice specific theories, born from empirical knowledge, are used more.

In the scientific community, the idea is accepted that any theoretical construction has a minimum factual basis (made of empirical data), and on the other hand any empirical investigation relies on a minimum of theory. More precisely, there is a unity between the empirical and the theoretical, the two dimensions coexist in any approach from the socio-human disciplines: hypotheses, theories, ideas, in general, enhance concrete research, and empirical findings lead to the formulation of new hypotheses, interpretations, theories.

We have chosen as a research topic *Intervention in the situation of drug abuse*. The reason why this aspect captured our interest the most, out of the multitude of social problems that a social worker can face, is that drug abuse and addiction is a real and devastating social problem that affects especially young people. Romania already faces a relatively large number of drug users/addicts, and the speed with which the trafficking is developing is worrying. New substances appear, with increasingly complex and devastating effects, which from a medical point of view are difficult to remove, new forms of trafficking appear and the age at which consumption begins drops dramatically. However, in the struggle with the phenomenon of drug use, a social worker can feel discouraged in the face of the challenges that this scourge brings. Whether we are talking about the onset of consumption at younger and younger ages, changes in the profiles of users of psychoactive substances, the development of new substances with unprecedented manifestations, as well as the long-term implications from a physical, psychological and socio-economic point of view of consumption, all imply the imminent need for a multidisciplinary intervention. Thus, the National Anti-Drug Agency is fighting a continuous battle against drug trafficking, which is developing with an alarming speed, intervening both at the national and county level, through the Anti-Drug Evaluation, Prevention and Counseling Centers. It is an uphill battle of a few people against a growing phenomenon that requires patience, work, trust and an iron will, and even if the entire phenomenon cannot be eradicated at once, even saving a single life is a victory.

According to the principle of unity between the quantitative and the qualitative, the present approach aims to combine the two styles of research in order to obtain a vision as consistent as possible with reality, thus using the case study method and the sociological survey based on questionnaires.

Qualitative research aims to understand certain ideas, attitudes, desires, needs, in relation to the problem that is the basis of the research. The goal is achieved by obtaining free answers, which can be interpreted in several ways, without emphasizing statistics, but only the meaning of the collected data, offering the possibility that this information is analyzed in a way in which the main role is played by words and phrases. Qualitative research uses a number of empirical methods in data collection, such as case study, in-depth interview, participant observation, introspection, life story, document analysis.

Quantitative research uses numbers and methods of statistical analysis. They tend to be based on the numerical measurement of specific aspects of the studied phenomena with the aim of testing causal hypotheses. The methods most often associated with quantitative research are: sociological survey and opinion poll. The most used data collection techniques within these methods are the questionnaire and the quantitative content analysis.

5. Highlighting the results obtained

This approach brings to the fore a study carried out in 2018 in the town of Reșița, Caraș-Severin county, which summarizes some clarifications with regard to the following lines of investigation: the degree of information of young people in relation to the issue of illicit

substances, determining the average age of at which consumption begins, the effects determined by drug consumption. We chose to collect the quantitatively relevant data through a survey, using a structured questionnaire with closed and open questions, applied to a randomly selected sample of 100 young people aged 14-20. Being a sensitive topic, it took a lot of convincing about the confidentiality of the answers to get the subjects to complete the questionnaire. After interpreting the statistical data, we noticed the following trends:

- Most respondents know that drugs can be addictive after consumption. Also, a part believes that they damage the physical and mental body, and two other answer options are related to the well-being that consumption provides.
- Most young people first hear about drugs in their circle of friends, which means that information can be uncertain and have a negative influence. However, discussions with parents have a significant weight, which is gratifying. Living in the age of technology, it is obvious that a good part come into contact with the subject on the Internet or other mass media. And health education lessons seem to fail to achieve their goal, being a means rarely mentioned in the responses.
- It seems that all respondents have knowledge about Marijuana, Ethnobotanicals and Cocaine. Ethnobotanicals are still considered legal drugs in their view, although they have been outlawed for several years.
- Most of the young people were offered drugs for consumption, the next part were enticed to buy, and the last percent were protected from these offers.
- It is worrying that many young people accept or are indifferent to the idea of drug use, while a smaller percentage totally disapprove of the practice.
- It seems that the majority of respondents have tried drugs at least once, a significant percentage use occasionally or weekly, and fewer have never tried.
- Unfortunately, we are talking about young ages of the onset of consumption, mostly at 15-16 years, then 14 years and even 13 years.
- It is gratifying to note that a significant percentage of respondents have abstained from consumption so far. The most popular substances are Marijuana, Ethnobotanicals and Ecstasy, being easier to obtain and cheaper.
- Fortunately, substance abuse is not practiced in most families. A few respondents are not sure, answering that they do not know, and a very small percentage observed this behavior in the family.
- Family relationships are predominantly harmonious. However, we found a link between poor relationships and the consumption of young people in the respective families.
- Young people are generally part of organized families. There is a tendency for the consumers to belong to the disorganized or in other situations.
- Most of the respondents consider themselves in a generally good condition, but there are people who feel depressed, tired, even with aggressive tendencies. Generally, among consumers.
- The majority of young people believe that the environment is the main determining factor in starting drug use. Another important factor is curiosity, and the next is represented by family problems.
- Most of the respondents' entourage are substance users, the young people surveyed know quite clearly the habits of their friends, which means that the young users do not bother to hide their vices, even though they constitute illegal acts.
- It is most often consumed at parties, in bars and with friends. Another reason to consider that the environment is a very important factor in determining consumption.
- It seems that a lot of young people want more understanding from their parents, although family relations were mostly declared to be harmonious. Those concerned about school would be more satisfied with the improvement of the school situation,

and the rest of the respondents want understanding from friends or more interesting pastime activities.

- Finally, the questionnaire ended with the possibility of choosing not to have started consumption. 60% of respondents regret having chosen this path, but a significant percentage is firmly convinced that drugs have not left a negative mark.

In order to outline the most unified perspective on the topic of discussion, we qualitatively analyzed the files of some beneficiaries of the Caraș-Severin Drug Prevention, Evaluation and Counseling Center, users of illicit substances, focusing on the assessment of personal history, the assessment capacities, resources, relationships, etc., defining the central problem and the general lines of work established in partnership with the social worker in charge, carrying out the intervention as well as evaluating the results obtained after a period of time. Notable progress has been registered in the cases concerned, a fact that demonstrates the usefulness of integrated assistance to the consumer, as a beneficiary of a specific anti-drug center, as well as the imperative of promoting the services of these institutions, especially in the educational environment.

6. Proposals and recommendations; directions for future approaches

Drug abuse and addiction are a real and devastating social problem that affects young people in particular. Following the applied study, we were able to form an opinion on this phenomenon, both from a statistical point of view and from the psycho-emotional implications determined by the impact of this scourge. Young people are increasingly interested in the consumption of illicit substances; either under the influence of their surroundings or out of curiosity, they decide from an ever younger age to try, starting with drugs considered "light" and continuing with various substances whose manifestations often surprise them.

Teenagers are special people: adults in the making, beings easily influenced by the multitude of attractions in the world. Thus, they are the surest target of drug dealers, who first lure them by offering illusions in a pill, by appearing friendly because they offer them an expensive thing, totally disinterested in appearance. The moment life puts them to the test, when the family environment no longer provides them with the resources necessary for a harmonious development, it is easy to find their validation in the magical substances that erase any trace of sadness for a few hours. It's just that the effect passes, and passes faster with each dose taken; thus themselves needing more, more often, until addiction sets in. And at that point, he would do everything possible to turn back time and stop before taking the first drug, because now it hurts all over the place and it's hard to bear.

But the reality is not as simple as pressing a delete button. The parents, whom they wanted in the past to be more understanding, more benevolent, are perhaps the only support in the fight against drugs. The National Anti-Drug Agency, through its county branches, is doing everything it can to reintegrate consumers and give them a chance for a new start, but that depends entirely on their determination. The earlier the intervention is made, the more the chances of success increase, it being easier to keep an addiction under control for a few months or 1-2 years than decades of consumption. However, in each case there is a risk of relapse at any time.

All these aspects lead to the formulation of several proposals and recommendations:

- Good communication within the family as well as at school, these being the main socialization environments of a child, is essential for preventing the start of substance use. Temptations appear earlier and earlier, so the information should also be done early. Of course, there can be the question of being tempted to try if the subject is brought to their attention, but we believe that the parents' openness, offering unconditional love, trust and free will could cancel the temptation of the "forbidden fruit". When children feel loved, respected, and know their worth, they don't need to gain validation from deviant behaviors.

- Promotion of activities as healthy alternatives to drug use in schools, prevention and information from specialists.
- Supervising pupils from disorganized families and other risk groups, providing them with support and counseling in case of difficulty, with a view to keeping them away from harmful influences.

7. Conclusions

Assistance intervention in risk situations represents a challenge in the practice of any social worker. The dynamics and diversity brought about by the situations in which the beneficiaries can find themselves, require the specialist to have thorough training and a multidisciplinary approach to be able to carry out an effective intervention. Social assistance or work, considered by some authors to be at the same time an art, a science and a profession, appears as a response to the problem of risk groups, which include children, people with disabilities, people addicted to alcohol and psychoactive substances, people with disabilities, victims of violence domestic and others.

The social worker, agent of change, is the professional who combines art with science, even with several sciences, social assistance being at the intersection of several fields of activity, a fact that requires the use of concepts from sciences such as sociology, psychology, biology, law, etc. ; thus the social worker plays various roles such as Intermediary, Lawyer, Educator/Teacher, Counsellor, Case Manager, Manager of service tasks, Development factor of the staff of the institution where he or she works, Administrator, Agent of social change, Professional, etc. The social worker interweaves in the practice the set of theoretical knowledge, with a series of specially developed skills, together with his own experiences and personal experiences, in order to treat each case individually and appropriately, taking into account certain principles.

Although social work has established itself relatively late as a science in its own right due to the fact that it incorporates foundations from most of the old sciences, it has developed its own theories and methods from practice depending on the variety of problems of the beneficiaries. Also, the intervention is carried out professionally, following certain strategies and intervention plans recorded in a written agreement with the beneficiary, called a contract.

The research part is dedicated to the study of certain phenomena classified as social problems, respecting a principle of unity between empirical and theoretical: hypotheses, theories, ideas, in general, enhance concrete research, and empirical findings lead to the formulation of new hypotheses, interpretations, theories. In order to be sure that the results obtained are as close as possible to the truth, the methodology requires both a quantitative and a qualitative approach, depending on the nature of the studied phenomena, the theory from which the study is claimed, but also depends on the accessibility of the methods and techniques, on the existence or absence of the appropriate investigation tools, of the financial resources, of the time interval we have at our disposal for carrying out the study, of the desired depth of the conclusion.

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