

REVIEW

A dissertation on the topic:

"Barriers in the social worker's communication with relatives of users of social services"

Doctoral student: Anna Mihailova Georgieva

Research supervisor: Associate Professor Dr. Silvia Tsvetanska

Professional direction 3.4. Social activities, Doctoral Program "Social Activities" - Communicative and Behavioral Strategies,

prepared by **Prof. Dr. Krasimira Petrova**, VTU "St. Cyril and Methodius"

1. Data on the doctoral student.

Anna Mihailova was born on 08.12.1969. In 1992, she graduated in acting at NATFIZ "Krastyo Sarafov", specialty actress in the class of Stefan Danailov. In 2007, he graduated with a master's degree in "Chernorizets Hrabar" VSU - Applied Psychology. In 2017 - Specialization at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" - "Gerontological social work", and since 2019 he is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of "Social Work" at the Faculty of Pedagogy at SU. She has worked as a freelance artist in the USA, the EU and Bulgaria since 1992 and is currently a psychologist-consultant for 6 years at the Residence "Serdika" - Sofia until 2022. She has 7 publications - one study and 6 articles and 8 participations in scientific forums related to her dissertation research. More significant are: "Education for Life", initiated by VTU "St. Cyril and Methodius" and implemented with the help of Prof. Hadjiyski /exchange of various therapeutic techniques between Italy and Bulgaria for work with addictions and emigrants /; European project on the initiative of the municipality of Sliven for the integration of the Roma and control of illiteracy; Forum theater organized by private schools in Sofia for the prevention of aggressive behavior among students. He also participates in volunteer initiatives - inclusion in campaigns on the occasion of national and Christian holidays to help socially weak families, elderly people, single parents, disabled people, by delivering food products to their homes /"Holiday Heroes" initiative/.

2. Data on doctoral studies.

From the documentation received by Anna Mihailova, doctoral student at the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski", I declare that the documents proposed for review have been precisely prepared and no violations have been found in the procedure,

according to the Normative base for the acquisition of scientific degrees in the Republic of Bulgaria and at Sofia University. The minimum requirements for scientometric indicators for doctoral students in Bulgaria are covered.

3. Data for the dissertation and the abstract.

The dissertation offered for defense is undoubtedly of scientific interest and is relevant, considering the fact that one of the main reasons for the poor quality of social services is rooted in the presence of a number of communication barriers among social workers and clients. Misunderstanding, lack of trust and inadequate forms of behavior are prerequisites for serious difficulties in the helping process. The motivation for choosing the problem is dictated by the specific work of the doctoral student, which is a prerequisite for a successfully realized dissertation project. The dissertation has a classic structure – introduction, two logically connected chapters, conclusion, conclusions, appendices and references, spread over 196 pages. The text contains 23 figures and 6 tables. A total of 121 sources are included in the bibliography, of which 94 are in Cyrillic and 27 are in Latin. Their correct citation in the text makes a good impression.

The introduction is distinguished by its essay style, but in terms of content it has the necessary components such as goal, tasks, hypothesis, subject, object.

In the first chapter: "**THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A SOCIAL WORKER AND A CLIENT**" the main concepts related to communication and communication, the types of communication and the theoretical explanatory models for these phenomena are defined. A good impression is made by the historical and modern interpretation of the communication process. In the same chapter, the basic interpretations relating to social work and more specifically to communication in the helping process are laid down. The text provided for review shows the good theoretical preparation of the doctoral student, the developed abilities to work with scientific text and the search for the relevance of known theoretical models to their practical application in social work. The style of the doctoral student is rigorously scientific, at the same time comprehensibly presented, padded with numerous illustrative examples, well visualized with figures, which is a prerequisite for a successful scientific product. The conceptualization related to communication barriers, the effort to typologize them, allows to smoothly reach the specific manifestations of communication barriers in social work. Anna Mihailova's psychological literacy contributes to the fuller development of the analyzed issues and further enriches knowledge in the field of social work. I would define as a contribution the fact that the doctoral student is not satisfied only with findings about communication barriers, but also offers ways to overcome them. The reference to the literary sources is correct, and the conclusions at the end of the chapter are a kind of transition to

the subsequent ones. In the second chapter, the program for the empirical research with stages, methodological tools and the limitations resulting from the specific characteristics of the people of the third age is placed. I define the choice of work /research/ by case /case-study/ as appropriate, in view of the fact that in old age, the changes that occur in the physical and mental development of the personality are strictly individual and not subject to quantitative interpretations.

The second chapter: "**EMPIRICAL STUDY OF BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A SOCIAL WORKER AND A CLIENT WHEN PROVIDING A SOCIAL SERVICE**" reveals developed analytical abilities of the doctoral student for working with empirical data. The methods of conducting the research are presented selectively, which I determine to be relevant to the research problem, namely – case work, semi-standardized interview, research in the course of the action and observation. The two social services in the community where the study was conducted are described, and a comparative analysis of three cases of service, distinguished as public and private, is made. A research scheme was constructed for each case, including observable behaviour, social inclusion, attitudes, expectations and perceived barriers. Based on these parameters, the behavior of the service user, his relatives and the social worker is analyzed. It can be seen from the obtained data that communication barriers in social work with elderly clients is determined by many factors that are related to both the personality and professional qualifications of the social worker, as well as the personality as the health and mental state of the client, as well as the relationship between the social worker and the client's relatives. It is difficult to derive significant regularities in the helping process, especially when we are talking about old people. So I define the study as the first stage in the research work, which should be supplemented by a larger number of cases and a longer-term study. This does not diminish the work of the doctoral student, on the contrary, the findings reached are conclusions and recommendations that can prevent communication barriers in the helping process, on the one hand, and on the other - to develop modules to motivate social workers who to improve the communication skills of service users and to optimize the interaction "social worker - user-close to the user". This can be achieved through group, individual and family forms of work, subordination to the idea of optimizing the social service.

The conclusion is concise, informative, sufficiently summarizing and analytical, presenting in abbreviated form the author's conclusions, summaries and recommendations for future work in the field of communication in social services.

The conclusions have been measured and prove the raised hypothesis that ".. timely detection and prevention of communication barriers improve the conditions for communication and ensure lasting trust in specialists and institutions". The abstract fully corresponds to the dissertation development and

in a synthesized form presents the main moments of the content of the dissertation.

4. Scientific contributions.

I fully accept the doctoral student's contributions to the dissertation work and comment as follows:

I. Theoretical-scientific contributions:

1. Basic theoretical explanatory models for the essence and understanding of social communication in a specific field of applied activity, such as social work, are systematized and scientifically argued.

2. Competently structured and clear statement of the author, rich theoretical basis and excellent highlighting of the concepts in the text.

3. Good knowledge of the interpreted issues, as an additional value of the work is conveyed by the professional expertise of the author.

4. In each chapter and subchapter there are summarized conclusions, which gives completeness to each thesis of the doctoral student, placed at the beginning of the chapter, developed as reflections and summarized at the end.

II. Practical-applied contributions:

1. The conducted empirical research is distinguished by its systematicity, complexity, excellent selection of tools and represents a well-implemented and analyzed study, which is highly prepared for applicability in other types of social services.

2. The rich set of research methods, substantiated and precisely applied, show developed analytical abilities of the doctoral student to interpret and present the results of the research.

3. At an empirical level, the variety of communication barriers that hinder successful social work with elderly clients is highlighted, and mechanisms for awareness and self-regulation of the behavior of social workers in the process of communication are indicated, which favor overcoming barriers in professional communication in social work.

4. The conclusions, summaries and recommendations made can serve as a basis for constructing modules for working with clients and their relatives, for increasing the qualification of social workers and, in general, for improving social services in the community for people of the third age.

5. Notes, questions, recommendations.

I have no objections to the work, only recommendations: in order to popularize the dissertation work, I recommend that it be published in a book body, as it will be useful, both for specialists in the field of social pedagogy and social work, psychology, especially for specialists, who directly work with relatives of users of social services. My other recommendation relates to future developments of the PhD student - to deepen the study by including more users and their relatives, and to make the case work longer in time, so that the studies

have a higher value. 6. Publications and participation in scientific forums. The doctoral student has 7 publications that fully correspond to the topic of the dissertation research and were published in prestigious specialized publications. They are out of print. The indicated participations in scientific forums, listed in the biographical data and supplemented by her creative autobiography, correspond to the topic of the dissertation. Scientific metrics are sufficient for this type of science degree. /125t./

7. Conclusion.

On the basis of the above analysis, I propose to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively for awarding the PhD to Anna Mihailova with a dissertation on the topic: "Barriers in the communication of the social worker with relatives of users of social services" in direction: 3.4 . Social Activities Doctoral Program Social Activities - Communicative and Behavioral Strategies I give my positive vote.

28.08.2022
City of V. Tarnovo

Reviewer:
/ Prof. Dr. Kr. Petrova/