



OPINION

By Associate professor, PhD Veselina Nikolavea Ilieva
for a dissertation on:

"COMMUNICATION BARRIERS BETWEEN THE SOCIAL WORKER AND
THE FAMILY MEMBERS OF SOCIAL SERVICE USERS".

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional field

3.4. Social activities

with author Anna Georgieva Mihailova

Information about the PhD student

Anna Mihailova was born in 1969.

In 1992, she graduated The National Academy of Theater and Film Arts, "Krstyuu Sarafov", Sofia, and in 2007 she completed her master's degree in psychology with a specialization - applied psychology, professional qualification - master's degree in psychology, University of Veliko Tarnovo "Chernorizets Hrabar". After that, she continued her education with a specialization in "Gerontological Social Work", Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia. She was enrolled on 28.06.2019 as a full-time doctoral student at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", professional direction 3.4. Social Activities, Doctoral Program "Social Activities" and was dismissed since 20.06.2022. Anna Mihailova works as a freelance creative practice as an actor - theater, cinema, television in Bulgaria, the EU, the USA, and in the period 2014 - 2020 she held the position of psychologist-consultant in Residence "Serdika", Sofia.

Analysis of the dissertation development

The dissertation submitted for the preparation of an opinion is structured in an introduction, two chapters, conclusions and a conclusion.

The INTRODUCTION focuses on the social worker's communication being seen as professional communication, requiring continuous regulation and modification of one's own behavior so that it is possible to achieve maximally effective interactions with a variety of clients or their relatives. The requirements for the social worker, on the one hand, are defined by the duties and responsibilities to the institutions, on the other, by the specifics of the users and their needs, and this raises the question of creating one's own system of concepts and skills that would facilitate his activity.

In the first chapter "THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A SOCIAL WORKER AND A CLIENT", first of all, a theoretical overview of communicative models and approaches to describing communication as a social phenomenon is made. Here, the focus is not only on the exchange of information, but also on the ability to do so. The ability to communicate in certain patterns, but also to follow rules, shows the tendency to create quality social interaction. In this chapter, the concepts of communication and communication are defined and the types of communication are determined - national and intercultural communication is differentiated according to nationality; depending on the means, communication is verbal (written, spoken) and non-verbal (body language, facial expressions, gestures). Another way of looking at communication is informal, formal, vertical, horizontal. Of interest to the development topic is formal and horizontal communication, which is framed by professional rules and requirements.

Further in the chapter theories of communication, social communication and communication patterns are considered. In this context, the following are discussed here: Aristotle's communication model; model after K. Bühler. Theoretical trends and their modern application in social work are shown - Shannon and Weaver's model, Laswell's model, Schram's communication model, Berlo's model, Heimp's model, Shiffrin's model, etc.

The author of the dissertation develops the thesis about social work and explanatory models of social communication related to relationships with relatives and clients. It is stated here that different schools consider different aspects of communication. None of the theories manage to fully explain the overall manifestation of this phenomenon. The different concepts do not contradict each other, but complement and build on each other. It is indicated that from Aristotle to the present day, scientists have discovered more than 40 approaches to this phenomenon, for example: Symbolic interactionism - studies the influence of the exchange of symbols and their impact on the dynamics of relationships between people in society.; Erwin Goffman's Impression Management Theory - focuses on impression management and how it affects people, observes relationships within their social games, in social relationships people are actors on the stage of life and perform a performance for an audience.; Attribution theory - deals with how the perceiver of social information uses it, i.e. examines the cause-and-effect relationships of events; Humanistic model - the concepts of Roger and Maslow are considered.; Psychodramatic model - Gestalt psychology, Wertheimer, Koehler, Koffka and Lewin.

Doctoral student Anna Mihailova also focused on the question of the relevance of theories and models in social work to communication and revealing resources for application in the practical activity of social workers, pointing out that the social worker is required by his intervention and supportive behavior to stimulate those abilities in your client to allow him to improve his quality of life. The wide variety of cases that professionals face in their daily lives builds in them diverse skills to create their own strategies in their work with different types of clients. It pays attention to the importance of communication skills in the professional activity of the social worker; the client's activity to overcome communication barriers; the approaches in the practical work of social workers to achieve trust; helping behavior as an important element of social work.

The author of the dissertation pays special attention to communication barriers, pointing out that psychological barriers are the most common. And in this light presents a classification of types of barriers. Common barriers in the working relationship between the social worker and the user of social services are indicated. The impact of communication barriers in social work is identified.

Chapter Two presents "EMPIRICAL STUDY OF BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SOCIAL WORKER AND CLIENT IN THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICE".

PhD student Anna Mihailova conscientiously describes the research design, along with the types of questions used in it. Also described are the methods by which empirical information is recorded - case work, action research, semi-structured interview, observation method in social work. It then substantiates empirical research on common barriers in communication between the social worker and relatives of clients placed in residential care for the elderly. Argues the selection of institutions in which to observe real cases from practice.

A description of the observed cases and differentiation of communication barriers is made. This description takes place according to the following parameters: observable behavior, social inclusion, attitudes and expectations, identified barriers, and in view of the empirical research itself, emphasis is placed on the latter. Summary information on relationships and barriers in communication between the social worker and the resident's family is presented in a table. In the same way, the factors for the occurrence of communication barriers are presented. A system for marking communicative barriers in social work is argued. A summary of the researched process has been implemented.

Analysis of the obtained research data was done with professionalism. It emphasizes that the discovery and minimization of communication barriers improves the quality of communication between relatives and specialists, creates greater trust in the services offered in residential care homes. This supports, improves interactions and helps achieve peace and well-being. The synthesis of communication barriers based on the studied cases is proved.

The author of the dissertation gives extremely valuable recommendations for overcoming problems in communication based on the conclusions of the research process.

At the end of the dissertation, doctoral student Mihailova makes eleven valuable conclusions from the proposed dissertation work, which are of interest not only to the scientific community, but also to the community of social workers in Bulgaria.

Critical notes and questions

I have no critical remarks and questions for the PhD student.

Conclusion

With conviction, I give a positive assessment of the dissertation work on the topic: "Barriers in the communication of the social worker with relatives of users of social services" and recommend to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to award Anna Mihailova the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field

of education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences", professional field 3.4 "Social activities".

05.09.2022

Prepared the opinion:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V. Ilieva', with a stylized flourish extending downwards from the end.

Assoc. prof. PhD Veselina Ilieva