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TERRITORIAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AS AN ENVIRONMENT OF SOCIAL WORK USING A HELPING RELATIONSHIP TO SOLVE THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF INHABITANTS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Abstract

The territorial self-government environment creates opportunities for social work to intervene in citizens' individual, group, and community social problems, which benefits not only members of local communities but also the territorial self-government. The most effective means of social work intervention for the benefit of residents of territorial self-government is helping relationships. Therefore, we set the goal of our empirical research to identify factors that stimulate clients to solve their social problems within a helping relationship with a social worker in the conditions of a territorial self-government. In the theoretical part of the contribution, we deal with the application of social work in the conditions of territorial self-government in the Slovak Republic, as well as the helping alliance in social work.

Key words: territorial self-government, residents of local communities, intervention of social work, helping relationship, factors stimulating clients to solve their social problems

INTRODUCTION

To saturate the diverse needs and interests of residents of local communities, the territorial self-government provides space for the

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implementation of social work, the central goal of which is to professionally intervene in the occurrence or persistence of social events of members of the territorial self-government (including the application of preventive measures) to eliminate or completely remove them. To effectively fulfill the stated goal of this profession, it is necessary to focus attention mainly on the issue of the helping alliance between social workers working in the conditions of territorial self-government and their clients, as the practical performance of social work is primarily based on the use of social contact by helping professionals and the subsequent creation and maintenance of a helping relationship.

1 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE CONDITIONS OF TERRITORIAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Author Škultéty (2008) defines the territorial, or local self-government, as an organizational form of public administration, in which the community as a legal entity ensures the solution of tasks different from those provided by the state, but the implementation of these tasks is solved under the supervision of the state. Territorial self-government solves tasks established by law on its behalf and under its responsibility and is bound only by laws or legal regulations issued for their implementation (Škultéty, 2008). Another definition is provided by author Trellová (2018), who claims that "currently, local self-government refers in a broader sense to entrusting the management of local affairs to representative bodies of the community that are directly affected by these matters, the functions that they perform on their responsibility, and therefore usually without instructions and orders from higher local authorities. Local self-government as a political and legal institution is created in the form of a municipality as the basic unit of territorial self-government. The basic subject of territorial self-government is the people who live in local communities and their common interests resulting from living together in the same territory" (Trellová, 2018). We are convinced that the transfer of competencies from "superior" bodies to "lower" institutions within the territorial self-government represents a pragmatic solution that benefits not only the higher-ranking public administration bodies but also the residents of the territorial self-government. In our opinion, such a "division" of powers and responsibilities will "relieve" the burden on institutions at a higher level, and at the same time make the management of local problems more effective, since the successful elimination or mitigation of problematic matters requires the involvement of those citizens who are most affected by the problematic situation. Interested citizens can report most authentically about current difficulties and can best assess the seriousness of problems, which is important in finding a solution. We document our opinion with the statement of author Petrušková (2012),

who writes that thanks to the independent decision-making of the territorial self-government on the provision of public goods and services, considering local peculiarities, there is a more effective provision of those services that most correspond to local priorities and preferences (Petrušková, 2012).

According to author Siskovič (2018), the specificity of territorial self-government is that it is characterized by its territory and the state determined by the extent of its competence and the scope of its norms (Siskovič, 2018). Autonomous administration of a certain territory with the state assigned a range of powers is characterized by a high degree of flexibility in addition to the benefits mentioned above.

As part of the decentralization process, there was a territorial-administrative division of the Slovak Republic, and the territorial self-government was divided into the level of the self-governing region and the level of the municipality. Our statement coincides with the statement from the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (1992), where it is stated that "the basis of territorial self-government is the municipality. Territorial self-government consists of a municipality and a higher territorial unit" (Ústava Slovenskej republiky, 1992). These facts are followed by the opinion of author Nižňanský (2005), according to whom "the key instrument of changes in the organization of the state and public administration has become decentralization at all its levels - in political decentralization, in the decentralization of competences and the decentralization of finances. Since 1998, the territorial division of Slovakia has gradually changed and a second level of self-government (higher territorial units) has been created, several hundred competencies have been transferred from the state administration to municipalities and higher territorial units, the financing of territorial self-governments has changed and thus the decision-making autonomy of territorial self-government has been strengthened, as well as control mechanisms in public administration. The implementation of these changes created conditions for a higher degree of citizen participation in public administration, fulfillment of the principle of subsidiarity, strengthening of the position and responsibility of the territorial self-government in providing public services, but also in the development of municipalities, towns, and higher territorial units" (Nižňanský, 2005). We believe that the changes mentioned have an impact on increasing the quality of life of citizens, including through the intensification of their prerequisites to participate in the "management" of public affairs.

Social work is applied in the territorial self-government and its role according to author Schavel et al. (2009) is the decision about social insurance benefits, the decision about state welfare benefits, and the decision about social assistance (Schavel et al., 2009). In this context, author Gejdošová (2012) states that social insurance, state social support, and social assistance

make up the social security system in the Slovak Republic, while these three subsystems differ from each other in terms of the principles on which they are built, the type of covered social events, the method of financing and report (Gejdošová, 2012).

Social work in the conditions of local territorial self-government can also be carried out in the environment of the town office.

The town office is the executive body of the town council and the mayor of the town, while it ensures the administrative and organizational matters of the mayor, the town council, and other established bodies of the town council and performs tasks by the act on the municipal establishment (Mestský úrad, 2024). The town office ensures the written agenda of the town authorities and the authorities of the town council and prepares written versions of the town's decisions (Zákon č. 369/1990 Zb. o obecnom zriadení, 1990).

"Local self-government, as a part of territorial self-government, is an expression of the effort to realize the exercise of competences and fulfill tasks presupposing territorial development, satisfying the needs and interests of citizens who figure as a community defined on the territorial principle, but without the direct influence of the state, whose supervision over the very implementation of tasks by local self-government bodies it is not excluded" (Kováčová, Kováčová, 2022). Following the local territorial self-government, authors Kováčová and Kováčová (2022) identify its four main functions, namely social, territorial-technical, economic, and coordination functions (Kováčová, Kováčová, 2022). In our opinion, the social work carried out in the territorial self-government is most connected with the social function of the local territorial self-government. We are based on the statement of author Kováčová (2011), who writes that the social function of local territorial self-government is, due to decentralization processes, characterized by the transfer of competencies in the social field to local self-government, which, in addition to the safety of citizens and the protection of their property, also includes the provision of social care and social services, as well as the elimination of social injustice in income distribution (Kováčová, 2011 In: Kováčová, Kováčová, 2022). Social care and social services are the domain of social work, which points to the mutual connections between the social function of local territorial self-government and the profession of social work.

1.1 Helping relationships in social work

Social work is characterized as the direct, intentional, and prepared contact of a social worker with a client, group, or community to establish a social diagnosis and carry out social therapy (Oláh et al., 2008). According to author Levická (2007), the goal of social work is to eliminate or alleviate

psychological, social, economic, and cultural distress by providing professional help to the client in discovering his resources and potential, as well as by looking for sources of help outside of his personality (Levická et al., 2007). We believe that to achieve the given goal of social work as a practical activity, the most effective "tool" is the influence of social workers on clients through a helping relationship. Our position coincides with the statement of author Biestek (1957), who claims that the relationship represents the most essential component in working with the client and perceives the helping alliance as "a dynamic interaction of attitudes and emotions between the social worker and the client to help achieve a better adjustment between him and his environment" (Biestek, 1957 In: Brnula, 2013). The mentioned author also proposes the principles of the relationship between the social worker and the client: individualization; expressing feelings (purposeful expression of feelings); controlled emotional involvement; acceptance (acceptance); non-critical non-evaluative attitude; self-determination and discretion (Biestek, 1957 In: Brnula, 2013). Social workers should let clients know that they observe all the mentioned principles of the helping alliance and that they are also internally identified with the given principles, because thanks to such a way of professional behavior, the probability of building a high-quality and trust-based helping relationship with clients increases, which will subsequently be reflected in more effective provision of professional help. A helping relationship must contain two components, namely help and power. Without these elements, it could not fall into the category of a professional relationship.

Author Úlehla (2007) defines help as an agreed method of joint work that the client wishes (Úlehla, 2007). In the process of helping, it helps that one person provides help to another person or a group of people, and it can be financial, material, or psychological help. It follows that the process of helping is a certain type of social intervention that has its subjects, content, and goals. Social intervention, as a dynamic process of exchanging information or providing and receiving help, takes place inside the interaction of the helping worker with the client, but also outside it. There are defined rules for the roles of expert and service user. In addition, the social context in which the helping process takes place shapes its entire course (Buryová, Krakowczyková, 2017). Author Hangoni (2009) considers helping to be a characteristic feature of the relationship between a social worker and a client, and thus their relationship should also have elements of a helping relationship characterized by advice (counseling), guidance, accompaniment, and therapy. The mentioned author further writes that offering help to social workers should be carried out in the form of cooperation within the framework of an equal relationship with the client (Hangoni, 2009 In: Ondrušová et al., 2009).

Power as a necessary component of a helping alliance is characterized by author Matoušek (2003) as the exercise of direct influence on people's behavior, or on their beliefs (Matoušek, 2003, In: Balogová, Žiaková, 2017). Author Kopřiva (2000) considers power to be very important even in helping and claims that the client is to a certain extent powerless by the fact that he needs something, and the worker is to a certain extent powerful by helping (or at least promising to help) so that the less powerful the client was a bit more powerful. In addition, the power of the worker can be defined by legal regulations, organizational rules, and unwritten customs of the institution, unwritten norms valid throughout the company, or it can arise within the individual worker-client relationship, either on the initiative of the helper or rather on the initiative of the client (Kopřiva, 2000). In our opinion, the unequal position of the social worker and the client is beneficial, because the nature of helping relationships requires the professional to have a wider range of powers. This allows him to manage the process of assistance, and determine the rules of the relationship, but also to control the client, which, in the case of an adequately chosen approach, facilitates the achievement of the goals of the helping alliance.

Power is associated with the authority of an expert. Author Borská et al. (2019) in this context state that through the authority attributed to the social worker by the client, it is possible to achieve a high-quality relationship between them, which is subsequently reflected in more effective intervention and makes it possible to support the client's abilities, pursue his own goals, but can also limit him (Borská et al., 2019). This statement is supported by a quote from author Hutyrová (2013), who writes that "the power position of the worker strongly influences the possibilities and method of assisting. The greater the authority the helper has, the greater the tendency of his counterpart to distance and mistrust" (Hutyrová, 2013).

"The power we are dealing with is applied within a relationship and is directed towards a certain goal. Social workers exercising power try to achieve power goals in certain ways, for which they use various means. It is essential that they can justify such behavior to themselves and their surroundings, and therefore it is necessary to legitimize it" (Mitas, Vasilenko, 2019). The legitimization of certain behaviors of helping professionals contributes to its application in practice and prevents its sanctioning, so it is a socially approved "consent" to behavior meeting certain conditions that explain such behavior as ethically correct.

In the framework of the comparison of help and power, author Musil (2004) emphasizes that help is associated with care, support, dialogue, and a symmetrical relationship between the social worker and the client, while their opposite related to power is control, authority, monologue and unilateral

influencing of the client by social workers (Musil, 2004 In: Mitas, Vasilenko, 2019). Social workers should apply help and power based on the client's personality and social situation so that social work clients perceive their participation in a helping relationship as justified. An indicator of considered "handling" of help and power can be the willingness of users of social services to continue cooperating with the expert and at the same time not feeling an excessive amount of help or power.

2 METHODS

Considering the focus of our qualitative research, we chose a phenomenological research design, the goal of which was to identify factors that stimulate clients to solve their social problems within the framework of a helping relationship with a social worker in the conditions of territorial self-government. Based on the research goal formulated in this way, it was possible to find out what motives motivate clients to cooperate with a social worker operating in the conditions of territorial self-government.

Based on the attributes mentioned in the research, we set the research question as follows: "What factors of the helping relationship between the social worker and the client in the conditions of territorial self-government most influence the motivation of clients to cooperate with the social worker?"

For data collection, we used an in-depth semi-structured interview, which was carried out in the form of an individual interview, and at the same time, it was a direct interview. The research interview was attended by three female participants working as social workers in the conditions of territorial self-government, specifically, they were employed at the city office, where they had the opportunity to create a helping relationship with a diverse clientele of social workers to provide professional assistance.

Following the verbatim transcription, we performed an open coding technique, in which we assigned the created codes to individual categories according to their common features but also based on the differences between the codes.

3 RESULTS

In this part, we present research findings focused on the topic of factors stimulating clients to solve their social problems within the framework of helping relationships with a social worker in the conditions of territorial self-government.

3.1 Factors stimulating clients to solve their social problems within the framework of helping relationships with a social worker in the conditions of territorial self-government

This subchapter consists of three categories related to the motivation of clients to solve their social problems with a social worker through a helping relationship. We established the given categories based on whether the clients' motivation to cooperate with a social worker in a helping relationship is based on the individual needs of users of social services, whether it results from the process of providing help to social workers, or whether it stems from the client's social environment.

3.1.1 Clients' motivation to solve their social problems within a helpful relationship with a social worker results from the individual needs of users of social services

This area of motivation of clients to cooperate with a social worker was strengthened by the clients' motivation to solve their social problems within a helping relationship with a social worker resulting from the individual needs of users of social services awareness of the need for long-term cooperation with a social worker, as clients needed to understand that a one-time meeting will not solve their problems because it is a long-term process of providing help. Another individual motivating factor stimulating the cooperation of clients with a social worker was the clients' right to self-determination, as stated by Participant 2: "...we don't even specify what we will specifically help them with, it is rather up to them in which area of life they would like to help, whether in the area of housing, health, social security." It is clear from the statement that the participants understood the client's right to self-determination as the authority of users of social services to decide on what they want the help of a social worker. The clients' right to self-determination is also related to the client's ability to decide on the degree of cooperation with the social worker and the client's ability to decide on the degree of their openness towards the social worker, as pointed out by Participant 2: "...it is actually up to them, to what extent they will let us in cooperation, as open as they are." We concluded that the most frequent personal motivation of users of social services to cooperate with a social worker was the clients' inability to solve their problematic situation, the clients' lack of self-confidence to cooperate with institutions, and the clients' low level of expressive skills. Participant 2 described these aspects: "Well, their motivation actually stems from some of the problems that they need to solve, and they don't actually know the way, or maybe they know the way, but they don't know the possibilities of solving that

problem." Or maybe they lack the courage to visit the institution, maybe they feel that they don't know how to express themselves and need a third party, someone who would communicate it for them or who might find out more options and be able to advise them on what would be best, it's so individual for everyone, that what leads them to it." By the clients' inability to solve their problematic situation, the participant meant ignorance of ways or alternatives to solve the clients' social events. In the context of the lack of self-confidence of clients for cooperation with institutions and the low level of expressive abilities of clients, there was an obvious need for users of social services to interest a social worker as a mediator of communication with institutions. The need for clients to be informed related to the lack of awareness of their entitlements was another aspect and primarily concerned the clients' efforts to find out whether they are authorized to acquire finance due to belonging to some target group, for example, in benefit increases. According to Participant 2, the clients' fear of sanctions resulting from not solving their problem situation was the factor most influencing the clients' motivation to cooperate with a social worker, when it concerned fear of fines, misdemeanors, or debts and executions, but also of starting to serve a prison sentence. This is how Participant 2 reported about it: "...preventing any sanctions that would result if they don't solve the situation that needs to be solved at the moment, so probably the same, the same fear of fines or some offenses, some debts, executions or the beginning of serving the sentence, simply to prevent a situation and try to solve it this way." In addition, participant 3 noted that clients tend to expect cooperation with a social worker that the social worker will solve everything and that the clients thus get rid of their responsibility. Based on the participant's statement, we determined the other individual factors motivating clients to cooperate with a social worker, a wrong idea of clients about solving their problem situation by a social worker, as well as unrealistic expectations of clients about transferring responsibility to a social worker.

3.1.2 Clients' motivation to solve their social problems within a helping relationship with a social worker resulting from the process of assisting the social workers

To ensure the effectiveness of the process of assisting, the social worker should have the ability to set achievable goals for clients, therefore he was required to correctly estimate the abilities and possibilities of clients to achieve the goals, as indicated by Participant 1: "...be able to estimate that according to their abilities, the possibility of not giving such a plan or such procedures that the client is not capable of, hey, for example, enabling or working, simply setting such goals that can be realized according to what the

person is like." At the same time, the social worker should have the ability to correctly evaluate the client's problem and, with the help of this data, can select the most serious one that requires primary attention when several problems occur. Another important factor in motivating clients to cooperate with a social worker was the correct timing of obtaining information from clients within the process of providing professional help, as the sequence of individual steps was essential in obtaining data, while the social worker cannot force users of social services to provide information against their will. Participant 1 explained it this way: "...we are trying to get the medical history and the information as much as possible, but not immediately, I say, because again we cannot force the client, so we do it step by step." No less important was the correct choice of methods in the process of providing help to social workers. In this connection, the participant preferred the interview method, through which she reveals the essence of the client's problems and what form of help the clients need. Participant 3 considered the social workers' focus on finding out the causes of the clients' problems to be the aspect of the helping alliance that most influences the clients' motivation to cooperate with the social worker, and in this context, she stated: "...understanding why, that's where it's important, why it happened that way." Participant 2 perceived the optimism of the social worker as a factor related to the way the social worker behaves, which through his positive influence on the client "stimulates" his faith in the resolution of the social event: "...maybe even so optimistic that being so optimistic that they still believed in the fact that it could be fixed somehow."

3.1.3 Clients' motivation to solve their social problems within a helping relationship with a social worker resulting from the clients' social environment

We found out that the social environment of the clients meant for the users of social services the motivation to cooperate with the social worker, from two perspectives. The first aspect of motivation was the positive opinion of the social environment on the help provided by the social worker, and the second factor was the stimulation of the clients by the social environment to seek the professional help of the social worker, as a result of which the social environment addressed recommendations to the clients to visit the social worker with a request for professional help. as participant 1 summed it up: "...for example, we have recommendations, I think they will receive from those in the neighborhood that they will go, they will help you there to provide help, those recommendations I think are also important."

4 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we analyze and scientifically interpret the research findings, which we confront with the professional literature, and at the same time present our own evaluation opinions.

Clients' awareness of the need for long-term cooperation with a social worker constituted a motivation for cooperation with a social worker, which resulted from the individual needs of users of social services. This awareness of the clients played a significant role in the continuation of the helping relationship because the users of social work services realized that they needed the help of a social worker for their intentions. Clients who were aware of the necessity of long-term cooperation with a social worker possessed certain positive qualities, such as persistence, determination, motivation, and awareness. Such clients were able to correctly evaluate their situation in the sense that they were aware of their limits and the overall seriousness of the social situation, as they sought out a social worker for help.

Another individual motivational factor stimulating clients to cooperate with a social worker was the clients' right to self-determination. As author Barker (2003) states, the right to self-determination recognizes the needs of users of social services to freely make their own decisions and choices (Barker, 2003 In: Mátel, 2015). In the opinion of author Mališková (2013), social workers should respect and support the human right to make their own choices and decisions independently of their values and life decisions, if this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others (Mališková, 2013). Respecting the right to self-determination and client autonomy is an ethical principle of social work (Matulayová, 2011 In: Aadland, Matulayová, 2011). "However, the right to self-determination is not absolute in practice. There are cases when it is limited by the client's reduced ability to make rational decisions (e.g. in cases of certain mental illnesses, in the case of drug addicts), in cases of violation of the rights of others or legal regulations, further in the case of self-harm, in cases of people deprived of legal capacity, in minor children and the like. Even in such cases, however, it is necessary to strive for the greatest possible degree of client autonomy within realistic possibilities" (Mátel, 2010). The clients' right to self-determination also refers to the clients' possibility to decide on the degree of cooperation with the social worker and the clients' possibility to decide on the degree of their openness towards the social worker, which users of social services may consider a certain "privilege," which will allow them to determine an adequate degree of cooperation from their point of view and openness in the helping relationship so that in the helping alliance they do not have to worry about being sanctioned by the social worker for "non-cooperation" or for not providing certain data.

Within their individual needs, service users are motivated to cooperate with a social worker due to their inability to solve their problematic situation. As author Levická (2002) writes, it is characteristic of the client that he is not able to solve the conflict situation in which he found himself by his forces and means, that is, in addition to the existence of a socially problematic situation, the inability or current inability to solve this situation by his forces must also be obvious (Levická, 2002). "The cause of "failure," or the inability to find a solution to a problem situation, is usually a sudden, unexpected change in social reality (unemployment, epidemic, natural disaster, etc.), which the individual does not expect, therefore he is not prepared for it" (Levická, 2003).

The lack of self-confidence of clients in cooperation with institutions was an individual motivation for using the services of a social worker. The low self-confidence of service users could create a "block" for the implementation of independent cooperation with competent institutions, therefore clients turned into social workers, assuming that they would mediate help from institutions. This was related to the low level of the clients' expressive abilities, i.e. their subjective feelings about their insufficient ability to express themselves, based on which the clients needed a social worker as a "third side" who would communicate various issues for them, find out more options for help and be able to advise them on the best alternative solution. It follows from the data that clients who had low self-confidence in cooperation with institutions and who, according to their belief, did not reach the desired level of communication skills perceived the social worker as an intermediary of help and as someone who, if necessary, would involve various sources of help (for example, institutions). By the fact that the social worker cooperates with various institutions and experts from other helping professions, the interest and motivation of clients to be a part of the helping relationship also increases, as they realize the fact that more subjects are involved in the process of providing help, the more effective the help will be.

The need for clients to be informed related to insufficient awareness of their rights as a factor significantly influencing the motivation of service users to cooperate with a social worker, manifested itself in the form of clients' efforts to find out whether they are entitled to claim their rights, for example when receiving social benefits or as part of social assistance. Lack of awareness of one's claims causes uncertainty in clients and the need to learn more true information on the given issue. This motivates them to contact a social worker, who in the helping alliance, among other things, will also provide them with relevant information about their claims. The authority of the social worker given by his affiliation to the organization causes the clients to perceive the information provided by the social worker as more credible and more in line with the current legislative provisions.

When it comes to clients' fear of sanctions resulting from not solving their problem situation, as an individual motivational aspect, it was mainly fear of financial sanctions, such as fines and executions, but it also included sanctions in the form of imprisonment. The clients cooperated with the social workers to avoid any sanctions that would threaten them due to not solving their socially problematic situation. In connection with this fact, author Ondrejkovič (2001) states that, from a sociological point of view, sanctions can only have the meaning that an individual who has deviated from the norm will not commit such actions in the future. The essential function of sanctioning therefore lies in its signaling, warning, and preventive effect. From the point of view of the nature of social control, it is important what the actual behavior of the individual will be in the future. Sociologically, non-compliance with behavioral norms is most often justified by insufficient socialization (Ondrejkovič, 2001). Users of social work services, who were afraid of sanctions for not solving their problem situation, tended to behave in a compliant manner. At the same time, they had a certain degree of self-control. According to the sociological dictionary (2007), self-control refers to the observance of social norms, patterns of behavior, and recognition of social values even without coercion (Sociologický slovník, 2007).

The motivation for cooperation with a social worker, resulting from the individual needs of service users, was the clients' wrong idea of the social worker solving their problem situation, as well as the clients' unrealistic expectations about the transfer of responsibility to the social worker. It was a distorted understanding of the goal of social work as a profession and the work of a social worker on the part of clients, because a social worker should not "solve" the social situation for the users of social work services, nor "take" responsibility for the clients' problems. Instead, in the interest of preventing these phenomena, according to author Levická (2020), to identify the client's idea of future cooperation, the social worker can use various communication techniques and contractual agreements, thereby contributing to building an effective helping relationship, as it is beneficial if already at the initial stage to clarify the roles that both play and when the social worker carries out a negotiation process focused on mutual expectations from future cooperation, based on which the to build a cooperation agreement, or agreement on services (Levická, 2020). As authors Ballew and Mink (1996) write, the service agreement is a formal expression of understanding about the nature of joint work, explaining that some problems between the client and the social worker can be classified as role problems, that is, as misunderstandings in role expectations, which can arise with the client and with the social worker. The mentioned authors further state that this type of misunderstanding can be prevented if both are involved in the process of clarifying the tasks at the very

beginning (Ballew, Mink, 1996 In: Levická, 2020).

The clients' motivation to cooperate with the social worker could also result from the process of providing help to the social worker due to their ability to set achievable goals for the clients. If the social worker is not able to set realistic goals for service users in terms of their capabilities, clients would lose motivation to strive for their fulfillment in the case of very demanding goals and could subsequently end the helping relationship with the social worker. According to our opinion, it is appropriate to determine several sub-goals together with the clients, by which it is possible to work towards the desired result. It is about "decomposing" the main goal into smaller goals, the achievement of which strengthens clients' self-confidence in their abilities to solve their problems independently. Through this, the client's cooperation with the social worker in a helping alliance leads to the fulfillment of the goal of social work as a practical activity, which is help for self-help. „In the 70s of the last century, alongside the term social functioning, the term help for self-help appeared again, which was considered one of the goals of modern social work for a relatively long time. The term was used to denote the process of empowering the client, based on understanding and correct evaluation of the situation in which the client finds himself. It also includes the search and discovery of individual reserves and social resources, based on which it is possible to reach the desired goals. Help for self-help is based on the learning process, through which the individual acquires the necessary social skills" (Levická et al., 2016).

The ability to correctly evaluate the client's problem was an important part of the social worker's professional "equipment" and enabled him to identify the client's main problem, which was necessary to solve first in the current situation. The ability to properly assess the client's problem is thus related to the correct assessment of the "urgency" of individual problems of the user of social services and the determination of the "order" in which the client will work together with the social worker to eliminate the problems, or to eliminate their negative effects on the client and his social environment.

The correct timing of obtaining information from clients was related to choosing a favorable opportunity to ask service users for data necessary for the process of providing professional assistance to social workers. The social worker should respect the principle of the clients' free decision not to provide certain information.

According to author Jusko (2010), the correct choice of methods in the process of providing help to the social worker can be influenced by different input characteristics of clients, which includes age as one of the basic differentiating features of social work in general, but also the state of health and the social environment in which the social worker's clients they find. The

given author further states that if the goal of social work as a profession is to help the client solve an existing social problem, then the choice of social work methods should significantly correspond to the target state of a positive solution to the social problem (if, for example, the client's social problem is poverty and a positive shift in the solution his material need, the applied methods of social work should aim at measurably achieving this goal) (Jusko, 2010 In: Hudecová et al., 2010).

The social worker's focus on finding out the causes of the clients' problems manifested itself as the social worker's effort to penetrate the "core" of the clients' social events and "reveal" those facts that are fundamentally involved in the creation and persistence of the social situation. The social worker's concentration on finding out the causes of service users' problems was a positive element of the helping relationship, which signals the social worker's efforts to eliminate the social event, that is, not only to mitigate its undesirable effects. This approach of the social worker makes it possible not to prolong the client's "dependence" on the provision of professional help.

The social worker's optimism supported the clients' motivation to cooperate by strengthening their belief in the possibility of solving the social problem. According to author Levická (2007), the optimism of a social worker means that, despite the realistic perception of the situation, the social worker has enough faith in the client's potential and the possibility of positive change (Levická et al., 2007). As part of research that emphasizes the importance of social worker optimism in helping relationships with clients, we present a longitudinal study by authors Kirk and Koeske (1995), in which it was found that social workers working with users of social work services in the field of mental health had better access to their work if they were optimistic rather than "realistic" (Kirk, Koeske, 1995 In: Collins, 2008). On the other hand, social workers may direct their efforts towards unattainable goals due to "excessive" optimism (Collins, 2008).

The motivation of users of social services to cooperate with a social worker resulting from the social environment consisted in the positive opinion of the social environment on the help provided by the social worker and in the stimulation of the clients by the social environment to seek the professional help of the social worker. With the factor of positive opinion of the social environment on the help provided by social workers, we consider it important to distinguish between the term social environment and the social environment. Author Payne (2005) understands the environment as a narrower environment, i.e. the environment directly surrounding the client, while he defines the environment as wider, i.e. the one in which he lives, but which is not affected by his personal and direct ties (Payne, 2005 In: Brnula, 2019a). The social environment and its positive opinion of the social workers'

services can "fix" the client in seeking the help of a helping professional. In addition, the positive attitude of the social environment meant the absence of stigmatization of the client due to his need for professional help. The aspect of stimulating clients from the social environment to seek the professional help of a social worker can be understood as a direct encouragement of clients to start using the services of a social worker to solve a problem situation. For both factors, it was about motivating the clients to cooperate with the social workers through external factors.

CONCLUSION

The goal of our research was to identify factors that stimulate clients to solve their social problems within the framework of helping relationships with a social worker in the conditions of territorial self-government. We divided the findings into three categories according to whether the clients' motivation to cooperate in a helping relationship with a social worker is based on the individual needs of users of social services, whether it results from the process of providing help to social workers, or whether it stems from the client's social environment.

Client's motivation to cooperate within a helping relationship with a social worker resulting from the individual needs of users of social services was related to the client's awareness of the need for long-term cooperation with a social worker, to the client's right to self-determination, to the client's inability to solve their problematic situation, to the lack of self-confidence of the clients to cooperation with institutions, to the low level of clients' expressive abilities, to the need for client information related to insufficient awareness of their claims and to client's fear of sanctions resulting from not solving their problem situation.

Clients' motivation to cooperate within a helping relationship with a social worker results from the process of assisting social workers as another category consists of the social worker's ability to set achievable goals for clients and the ability to correctly evaluate the client's problem, in the correct choice of methods in the process of assisting social workers, in the social worker's focus on identifying the causes of client's problems and the social worker's optimism.

The last category consisted of the clients' motivation to cooperate with the social worker resulting from the clients' social environment, which was related to the positive opinion of the social environment on the help provided by the social worker and to the stimulation of the clients by the social environment to seek the professional help of the social worker.

Social workers should "stimulate" clients' interest in being part

of a helping alliance and actively participate in solving their own socially problematic situation so that users of social work services perceive themselves as the "most important" actors in eliminating their social events or mitigating their negative impacts. Such action of social workers on clients supports not only the correct approach of members of local communities to the solution of current or potential social problems but also leads to the fulfillment of the main idea of the social work profession, which is "help for self-help." We believe that through the mentioned method of action of the helping experts, it is possible to significantly reduce the risk of accumulation of social problems of the residents of the territorial self-government

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