

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK

C. Goian, L.E. Lavric, F.L. Vlaicu, D.S. Balauta

Carmen Stanciu

Cosmin GOIAN

Liliana Eufrosia LAVRIC

FlorinaLuiza VLAICU

Dănuț Sorin BĂLĂUȚĂ

West University of Timișoara, Romania

cosmin.goian@e-uvv.ro

carmen.stanciu@e-uvv.ro

Abstract: In social work, conflict is inevitably present in both public and private institutions, between professionals, both with colleagues and with beneficiaries. The paper aims to achieve, through a quantitative approach, the elements of perception regarding conflict in social work. The theoretical section includes information on conflict definition, interpersonal communication as a conflict element, conflict elements, prevention and resolution, but also the implications of conflict in social work. The research section includes the research methodology, namely the justification, purpose, hypothesis, design, instruments and research procedure. The research results include tables and interpretations. The conclusions and proposals section include conclusions and proposals on interpersonal conflict and its implications in social work.

Keywords: interpersonal conflict; social work; conflict in social work

Introduction

Conflict is a psychosocial phenomenon that has three components: affective conflicts (emotions), intellectual (on ways to analyze situations differently) and mixed conflicts (both causes) (Negruți, S. 2012, pp. 324-325). There are many types of conflict, but in each of them the true cause must be identified, to succeed in resolving and restoring the effectiveness of

communication.(Pânișoară, 2003, p.63)

At the root of any conflict there is a problem that causes real or desired conflict behaviors to those involved. Problem and behavior are two different and independent phenomena. Depending on the behavior, a result appears. (Van de Vliert 1997 *apud* Stoica Constantin, 2004, p.20).

A conflict situation has several stages: the latent conflict is related to the underlying sources of the organizational conflict, such as the competition for insufficient resources, which can be both in the absence and in the presence of the conflict, then the obvious conflict and in the end, the consequence of conflict.(Boteanu, 2010, p. 774)

Sources of conflict: poor communication, way of communication, needs, inadequate behaviors, differences and incompatibilities between people, harm to self-esteem, values, non-compliance to norms, aggression, social skills, external factors, status, prestige, “principles” (Stoica-Constantin, 2004, p. 23-39; Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2015)

In the interpersonal conflict depending on the dominance of a certain position of collaboration or authority, there are several reaction styles: the style of abstention involves a behavior lacking in authority and collaboration, the oppressive style involves authoritarian behavior without the will of cooperation, the conciliatory style, where there is a cooperative behavior but lacking authority, the cooperative style is marked by trust and the willingness to cooperate and the style based on the search for a compromise where half-cooperative and half-authoritarian behavior occurs. (Hellriegel et al., 1992, pp. 503-506 *apud* Păuș, 2006, p.263)

Interpersonal communication as a conflict element

Interpersonal communication is the most important form of psychological interaction among people with whom a message is exchanged (Stoica-Constantin, 2004, p. 72) and is carried out on three levels: 7% logically (of the words said), 38% paraverbal (volume, voice tone, speed of speaking) and 55% nonverbal (position, movement, mimic of the face) (Mehrabian, 1967 *apud* Goian, 2015).

According to (Pondy Steers,1988, p. 362 *apud* Pânișoară, 2003, p. 60) there are 4 perspectives for analyzing the source of conflict: previous conditions, affective states (emotions incompatible with those of others), cognitive states and cognitive styles of individuals (contradicting other ideas on a phenomenon), existence of conflict behavior (when someone does something unacceptable for others in the group). (Goodall . 1990, pp.115-118 *apud* Pânișoară, 2003, p.62) identifies 10 types that may lead to the occurrence of an interpersonal conflict, namely differences of opinion on the issue, differences in values, disagreements over the quality of evidence used, personal loyalty or friendship, lack of understanding regarding intent, goals or negotiated

objectives, perceiving rewards, those that originate in the ambition, motivation or leadership of some members that is seen as a threat, conflicts related to the physical aspect of a person and the benefits they can get, as well as those related to the personal style of a person.

Following a 10 year study (Brinkman & Kirshner, 1994, pp. 4-11 *apud* Stoica-Constantin, 2004, pp. 98-114) These are: the Tank, the Sniper, the Know it all, the Think they know it all, the Grenade, the Yes Person, the Maybe Person, the Nothing Person, the No Person and the Whiner.

The amicable settlement of disputes is done through three formulas: mediation, conciliation and arbitration. Taking into account the degree of satisfaction of both your own interests and the adverse group, (Thomas, 1976 *apud* Petric Epure, 2012, p.132) identifies five methods of conflict resolution: avoidance, compromise, competition, adaptation, collaboration.

Social work is, or ought to be, one of the sources of individual welfare in a state, but there is much to be solved, because we are going through a difficult period, a demanding crisis, some become alchemists for optimal social functioning. Thus, the number of people using specialized services is increasing.

Social workers have to follow their professional standards, meet the challenges and solve complex problems because in this area the focus is on categories of people who face needs and conflicts in day-to-day relationships. (Zamfir, E. 2011).

In the field of social work, where the diversity of issues and stress are high, it is important to look for supervision to manage it through various ways of relieving stress and avoiding burnout. (Gavrilă, 2008). It has been demonstrated that social support could reduce the effects of stressful events by reducing psychological stress, by improving the ability to cope with overwhelming events (Tudorel & Vintilă, 2018).

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to highlight some practical features of conflict in social work, both from the perspective of the social workers on the causes and the way of solving conflict, as well as from the perspective of the professional resources used by the social workers to solve the conflicts. Thus, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The social workers' perspective on the causes of conflicts at work revolves around the concept of "organizational justice" (salary calculation, promotion criteria, etc.).

H2: Supervision is an important resource in managing conflict situations (If they have been supervised, social workers manage to constructively resolve conflicting situations).

H3: Seniority in the field is an important resource in managing conflict situations (social workers with longer seniority in the field manage to better manage conflict situations).

H4: The workload interferes with the constructive resolution of workplace conflicts.

Participants and procedure

In the present research, two groups of participants were investigated, with a total of 61 participants (30 respondents who were on the verge of graduating in practice or volunteering and 31 respondents working in the field of social work, who have experience working with various categories of beneficiaries such as: delinquent persons, people with disabilities, etc. The method of selecting the participants was the snowball type, and the data collection was done through an online questionnaire.

Instruments

A questionnaire was used to collect data on the perception of interpersonal conflict and its implications for social work. The tool was created by the researcher, the questionnaire contains 15 questions.

Research results

The raw data obtained from this research was interpreted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows 20.

Hypothesis 1: The social workers' perspective on the causes of conflicts at work revolves around the concept of "organizational justice" (salary calculation, promotion criteria, etc.).

What do you think are the reasons for conflicts in social work?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Working with a large number of papers	44	72.1	72.1	72.1
Large number of beneficiaries	16	26.2	26.2	98.4
Overtime	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	61	100.0	100.0	

From the results analysis we note that 72.1% of the respondents consider that working with a large number of papers is a reason for conflict and 26.2% of

the respondents believe that the large number of beneficiaries is another reason and only 1,6% claim that overtime is another reason.

What do you think are the causes of conflicts among colleagues?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Wage differences	9	14.8	14.8	14.8
Failure to perform work tasks	50	82.0	82.0	96.7
Non-compliance with punctuality	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	61	100.0	100.0	

The results show that 82% of the respondents consider that the failure to perform the work tasks is a cause of conflict and that 14.8% of the respondents believe that the wage differences are another cause of conflict in social work and only 3.3% have checked not respecting punctuality.

Hypothesis 2: Supervision is an important resource in managing conflict situations (if they have been supervised, social workers manage to constructively resolve conflicting situations).

Do you have internal or external supervision?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	11	18.0	18.0	18.0
The manager is also a supervisor	13	21.3	21.3	39.3
No	19	31.1	31.1	70.5
Don't know / No opinion	18	29.5	29.5	100.0
Total	61	100.0	100.0	

The results of the study show that for 30 respondents, when they have a job conflict they turn to a mediator to help them solve the conflict, 13 openly discuss the situation with the person concerned, 18 avoid any discussion, and 24 people benefit from supervision (11 people are supervised, in 13 cases the manager is also a supervisor) but 37 do not have supervision (19 respondents do not, and 18 do not know or do not answer).

In the field of social work, where the diversity of issues and stress are high, it is important to turn to supervision for managing stress and avoiding burnout.

Hypothesis 3: Seniority in the field is an important resource in managing conflict situations (social workers with longer seniority in the field manage to better manage conflict situations).

What is your work experience in social work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor's degree, field placement and volunteering	30	49.2	49.2	49.2
	Seniority 1- 5 ani in the field	13	21.3	21.3	70.5
	Seniority of over 6 years in the field	18	29.5	29.5	100.0
	Total	61	100.0	100.0	

From the analysis of the results, we observe that 49.2% of the respondents graduated from the faculty, they also practiced volunteering, 29.5% work for 1-5 years and 21.3% of the respondents have over 6 years of experience in social work.

What is your work experience in social work * Once a conflict has ceased, do you feel better and can you continue to work more efficiently in a team

		Once a conflict has ceased, do you feel better and can you continue to work more efficiently in a team?			Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	
What is your work experience in social work	Bachelor's degree, field placement and volunteering	15	12	3	30

Seniority 1- 5 ani in the field	2	9	2	13
Seniority of over 6 years in the field	7	11	0	18
Total	24	32	5	61

It is not significant that once a conflict has ceased, teamwork can continue to function more efficiently. There was a growing trend. Young people easily cross conflicts, 15 agree strongly, 12 agree and only 3 are neutral, of the 13 with seniority between 1 and 5 there are 2 strong respondents, 11 with agreement, and 2 are neutral. Of the 18 with more seniority, 7 respondents strongly agreed and 11 agreed.

Do you think that work experience in the field of social work helps you constructively resolve your conflicts?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	50	82.0	82.0	82.0
No	4	6.6	6.6	88.5
Valid Don't know / No opinion	7	11.5	11.5	100.0
Total	61	100.0	100.0	

From the analysis of the results we observe that 82% of the respondents consider that the work experience in the field of social work helps them to resolve their conflicts constructively and 11.5% of the respondents answered with do't know / no opinion, while only 6,6 responded negatively.

Hypothesis 4: The workload interferes with the constructive resolution of workplace conflicts.

Do you think that the high volume of work in the field of social work prevents you from constructively solving your conflicts?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Definitely true	7	11.5	11.5	11.5

Definitely false	7	11.5	11.5	23.0
Basically true	27	44.3	44.3	67.2
Basically false	20	32.8	32.8	100.0
Total	61	100.0	100.0	

From the analysis of the results we observe that 44.3% of the respondents believe in principle that the high volume of work in the field of work prevents them from constructively solving their conflicts, 32.8% answered basically false and for 11.5% respondents it is categorically true and definitely false (equally). Due to the high workload, social workers remain with little available time for an open and constructive communication with colleagues or supervisors. The great amount of time devoted to performing the necessary administrative tasks for each case can lead in time to the accumulation of frustrations and isolation of the person, which is a fertile ground for a conflicting attitude.

Conclusions

Regarding the perception of social workers about the causes of conflicts in the professional environment, 72.1% of the respondents consider that working with a large number of papers is a reason for conflict and 26.2% of the respondents believe that the large number of beneficiaries is a another reason for conflict in social work, and only 1.6% claim that overtime is another reason, and from the analysis of the results we note that 82% of the respondents consider that the failure to perform the work tasks is a cause of conflict and 14.8% of the respondents believe that wage differences are another cause of conflict in social work and only 3.3% have checked for non-compliance with punctuality.

Regarding the professional resources used by social workers to resolve conflicts, the results of the study show that 30 respondents, when they have a job conflict, they call for a mediator to help them solve the conflict, 13 are openly discussing the situation with the person concerned, 18 avoid any discussion and 24 people are supervised (11 people have supervision, in 13 cases the manager is a supervisor), but 37 do not have any supervision (19 respondents do not have and 18 do not know or do not answer).

Regarding the professional resources used by the social workers to solve the conflict situations, we can see from the survey results that 49.2% of the respondents graduated from the faculty, they also volunteered, 29.5% work for 1-5 years and 21.3% respondents have over 6 years of seniority in social work. It is not significant that once a conflict has ceased, teamwork can continue to function more efficiently. There was a growing trend. Young people easily

overcome conflicts, 15 agree strongly, and 12 agree and only 3 are neutral, of the 13 with seniority between 1 and 5 are 2 strong respondents, 11 with agreement, and 2 are neutral. Of the 18 respondents with larger seniority, 7 strongly agreed and 11 agreed. From the analysis of the results we observe that 82% of the respondents consider that the work experience in the field of social work helps them to resolve their conflicts constructively and 11.5% of the respondents answered with don't know / no opinion while only 6,6 responded negatively.

Regarding the evaluation of the social workers's perspective on how to solve social work conflicts, the survey results show that 44.3% of the respondents basically believe that the high volume of work in the field of social work prevents them from constructively resolving their conflicts, 32.8% answered basically false, and at the same level as 11.5% the respondents are definitely true and definitely false.

Due to the high workload, social workers remain with short available time for opportunities to have open and constructive communication with colleagues or supervisors. It is also necessary to use a professional language that does not become a barrier to communication, language being appropriately chosen according to situations (Goian, 2010). The great amount of time devoted to performing the necessary administrative tasks for each case can lead in time to the accumulation of frustrations and isolation of the person, which is a fertile ground for a conflicting attitude.

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