



Review Article

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Conflict Management in Social Work

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Abstract

This study aims to determine conflict management principles to eliminate possible conflicts that may arise in the performance of social work functions. As a result of the study, the 2SIP (Socio-Psychological-Social-Implementation-Institutional-Political-Professional) principle was determined for the conflict management of social work. It is thought that this finding of the study will provide important insights for policymakers and practitioners.

Keywords: Social work, Conflict management, Social conflict, Political conflict, Professional conflict

Introduction

This study's starting point is the idea of applying conflict management to the field of social work. The fact that social work is a multidisciplinary field like health and social increases the importance of the study. Conflict management is important and necessary in the treatment of diseases, the solution of psychological and social problems, the problems arising in family relations, the integration of children dragged into crime into society, the fight against substance use, the treatment of behavioral disorders, and the well-being and life satisfaction of individuals with special needs [1]. Since conflict can occur individually and institutionally, it can directly affect the performance of functions such as treatment and rehabilitation.

Conflict management is now an important necessity in many areas such as hospitals, nursing homes, nursing, caregivers, doctor-patient relationships, psychological support, process management in the treatment of diseases, and treatment of palliative diseases [2]. Multifaceted factors such as cultural differences, differentiation of individual needs, and variability of human behavior are other factors that reveal the necessity of managing these conflicts. Many conflicts negatively affect the desired outcome. Especially in rehabilitation, treatment and counseling services, this result may cause the individual to reject medication, treatment and methods [3]. This situation also affects social welfare. Negative situations that may arise due to conflict may cause social work to deviate from

its goals and objectives. Therefore, it is important and necessary to determine the principles of conflict management in social work.

Political Conflict

Politics are activities related to the governance of the state, society, and groups on the basis of human and institutional relations [4]. These activities enable the determination of principles regarding status and power. Ensuring the effect of administrative power on the governed depends on the introduction of these principles. Social work plays an active role in the development of policy in the social field [5]. Directing status and power to perform social work functions requires responsibility, ethics, and discipline. Responsibility, ethics and discipline gaps that arise in policy development cause conflict. The rulers and administrators who hold the power must carry out the duty of fair distribution with the authority given by the state, with responsibility and ethical understanding. Social work has an important function in ensuring this distribution is equal and fair [6]. It ensures the development and sustainability of social work policy on issues concerning society-human relations such as social security, occupational health and safety, social problems, discrimination, violence and crime [7,8].

Political conflict causes a significant conflict between the client and the social worker in the execution of social work functions,

practices, and principles [9]. The government's level of sensitivity to social problems, its adoption of an aggressive policy, its failure to prioritize public health and social violence issues, and its weak policy on social work-related issues cause significant conflicts and social problems. These conflicts reduce social welfare by increasing violence, migration, and discrimination in society. Thus, quality of life, well-being, and future expectations decrease.

Social work should proactively revise its strategy according to political conflict by taking measures to reduce these conflicts. Reconciliation, peace, positive principles, bilateral negotiations to eliminate conflict, leader selection, and the development of corporate communication skills are important measures to reduce conflict. On the other hand, social work should be in close relationship with the public or private sector. In cases where public support decreases, the private sector provides significant benefits.

Institutional Conflict

Institutional conflict is the long-term emergence of incompatibility, opposing and argument situations about needs, ideas, feelings, thoughts, principles, interests, and opinions within the organization [10,11]. Organizational culture, climate, organization-employer relationship, leader-follower, employee-workplace, employee-job, profession, teams, project, management, administrative management, and inter-organ relations are the reasons for institutional conflict. All factors that hinder institutionalization cause institutional conflict. Social work is negatively affected by this conflict [12].

Hierarchical structuring problems in public institutions are one of the reasons for conflict. The procedures and principles regarding the establishment and operation of public social work centers, the services they will provide, and the duties, powers, and responsibilities of the personnel working in the center are determined by the ministry or official institution to which they are affiliated. Dependence on the central institution in determining duties, authorities, and responsibilities may negatively affect the sustainability and quality of the service. Especially in a vertical/ pyramidal hierarchical structure, delays in the approval of the higher institution in solving problems and bureaucratic obstacles damage the vision of social work [13].

Social work centers ensure that the needs of the individual, family and society are met. It detects the problems and grievances of the clients and carries out activities to solve the problems and reduce the risks. Communicates field work experiences to higher units in determining social work policies. Social work centers analyze the social, economic and cultural risks and conditions of the region where the service is provided [14]. These centers provide preventive, educational, developmental, guidance and consultancy services to increase the individual and family's problem-solving capacity and social well-being. Social work cooperates with stakeholders in the planning, execution, and sustainability of the services to be provided to clients through these centers. Some problems may arise in cooperation with stakeholders and in the provision of services due

to the superior-subordinate relationship with the affiliated institution or ministry. These problems arise due to conflicts of authority and duty posed by hierarchical responsibility.

Professional conflict related to social work is the incompatibility and disputes regarding duties, authority, and practice that arise in the consultancy, rehabilitation, education, and care services required by the profession. These incompatibilities negatively impact service-related performance and efficiency. Professional conflict negatively affects the social worker-client relationship and reduces communication and interaction [15]. Additionally, the resulting conflict also affects relationships with stakeholders [16]. Therefore, a strategy should be developed to eliminate professional conflict. Additionally, vocational training should be provided to eliminate conflict.

Social Conflict

Conflict within society occurs when the balance of interests of individuals is disrupted [17]. Benefits provided for the disabled, women, children, patients, and individuals in need of care trigger conflict. Distribution of social work functions such as counseling, rehabilitation, care, and education to those in need through positive discrimination may cause some problems regarding justice. For example, positive discrimination towards the elderly can cause ageism [18]. On the other hand, the punishments given to children who are dragged into crime due to the crimes they commit may increase violence against children in society [19]. Protecting women who have been subjected to violence and discrimination may lead to hate speech by men against women. All these situations can eliminate the idea of justice and equality aimed at society.

Social conflicts depend on balance in the opportunity-need-benefit triangle. This balance of conflict is necessary for the well-being of society. Individuals' sense of justice in society depends on their perception of the balance in this conflict trio. For this reason, social workers should identify the balance factors that cause social conflict to arise in positive discrimination. Unforeseen balance factors cause social conflicts, violence, and hate speech. When clients' needs are presented as an opportunity, the idea of justice is replaced by a feeling of inequality. For this reason, the perception of the services provided to clients in society should be empirically investigated by social work.

Professional Conflict

Social workers are professionals who know the fields of child development, psychological counseling, psychology, sociology, and social work [20]. In the context of professional development, qualification and training, social workers may encounter some conflicts. These services conflict with each other when performing the maintenance service and the training service is performed by the same social worker. This situation frequently occurs in the education of children with autism spectrum disorder [21].

Significant conflicts may occur in the context of the nature, efficiency and quality of the service provided by nurses and social

workers together at home care services [22]. Home care services require multi-element services such as health, support, consultancy, control and ergonomic services for the elderly and disabled. The health component of these services is carried out by nurses and doctors. However, control, consultancy, support and ergonomic elements can be carried out together. There are conflicts of authority and duty in the execution of these services together. Duties and authority conflicts may arise depending on the planning of professional tasks and authority distributions and cooperation elements. Planning should be done in accordance with the interests and needs of the applicant.

Implementation Conflict

Social work intervention and follow-up are provided, and social work focus on protective, preventive, supportive, developmental, guidance and consultancy are provided to children, youth, women, men, disabled and elderly individuals, and their families. Access to the service is provided in cooperation with local governments, public institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations, volunteers and universities. Collaboration represents the public sphere of social work. For this reason, the service outputs of cooperation organizations provide important insight and perception about the public sphere. Social work carried out through municipalities, non-governmental organizations, universities and volunteer individuals may cause implementation problems in the context of service quality. Supervising the execution of the service creates conflict in relations with cooperation organizations.

Auditing is concerned with the authenticity, quality, sustainability, fairness, equity, efficiency and performance of social work functions. The scope of public audit is determined by criteria for compliance with institutional principles and policies. Audit restrictions regarding projects and services supported by cooperation organizations or stakeholders on a voluntary basis may prevent the implementation of social work-related functions and practices. In this case, a public-private implementation conflict arises. Technological, technical, digital, social and legal developments are effective in implementation conflict. Problems experienced in adapting to these developments cause high resistance conflicts in social workers' acceptance of technology. The fact that social workers do not benefit from technological, technical and digital opportunities in social work practices regarding clients creates implementation problems. Lack of knowledge in technological and technical matters causes weaknesses and failures in the task.

Socio-Psychological Conflict

Individuals' emotions, behaviors, and thoughts are affected by social factors [23]. Social factors have multiple elements such as culture, people, groups, classes, and social media. These factors affect people psychologically through norms, ethics, values, and culture. Thus, individuals reveal their behaviors under the influence of social factors, they are prevented and their psychological states are shaped. Individuals have social expectations such as being included in a social group or class, being accepted by society, and

experiencing the adopted culture. These expectations determine social needs. Failure to meet social needs such as making friends, social acceptance, and social support may cause the individual to psychologically decline. On the other hand, improving these declines through counseling, rehabilitation, and education may cause some conflicts. Particularly in children who are dragged into crime, forensic control and training aimed at reducing crime tendencies create important conflicts regarding role modeling. Many actors such as the court, witnesses, judge, lawyer, family members and social workers are important actors in the child's tendency towards crime. In the context of social adaptation, the guidance of these actors may cause psychological conflicts and problems.

The fact that the judge is a decision-maker who imposes punishment affects the child's perception of ensuring social justice [24]. The child may perceive the dialogues between the defense lawyer, the judge and the prosecutor as a conflict. On the other hand, the social worker's efforts and education regarding the child's personal development and tendency to crime may be perceived as an oppressive attitude. In both cases, the effects of the activities that important actors of the society try to carry out in favor of the child on the child may cause a psychological conflict. In this process, the child faces an important dilemma about whom to take as a role model. On the other hand, blaming the child for crimes for which he has no idea about the social and psychological consequences causes adaptation problems in society. Emphasizing the guilt in the behavior of the child by the victim of the crime and their relatives, neighbors, and friends may reduce psychological resilience and cause psychological trauma. This situation causes long-term social adaptation problems and social isolation. Feelings of loneliness can result in personality disorders.

Social and psychological declines in old age create significant conflicts. On the one hand, individuals try to adapt to society and new generations, and on the other hand, they struggle with social isolation and declines due to aging and ageism. Elderly tendencies regarding digital development and technology use affect adaptation to society and interpersonal relationships [25]. Ageism and social isolation that occur in the use of smartphone applications and social media cause the elderly to be exposed to sociopsychological conflict. Conflicts of interest between the relationships of the elderly with their families and the outcomes of the care and consultancy functions that social work provides to the elderly reveal socio-psychological conflict. There may be differences between the expectations of families from elderly individuals and social workers and the expectations of the elderly. This difference causes conflicts.

Women who are exposed to violence and discrimination experience social adaptation problems when they start living in domestic violence shelters [26]. Some conflicts may occur while women who are exposed to violence from their spouses confront their psychological problems. Providing services to women who experience male violence by male social workers may have negative psychological effects. The social worker may encounter unexpected reactions while trying to provide psychological therapy to the wo-

man. For the woman to return to her normal life, the moral and psychological damage she suffered must be restored. In social work support to be given to women, the reactive perception of the source of psychological trauma should be taken into consideration. Conflicts between social and psychological factors harm the functionality of social work and eliminate the expected benefit in target outcomes. Conflicts caused by the social and psychological effects of social work for the disabled, the elderly, women and children must be eliminated. These conflicts are important for ensuring social adaptation and well-being.

Conclusion

Social work is a field where conflict can occur at a significant level. It is possible for significant conflicts to occur between the client, social worker, family, state, and society. Elimination of these conflicts depends on the successful implementation of conflict management in social work. When determining conflict management principles, political, institutional, social, professional, implementation, and socio-psychological factors should be taken into account. It is important for policymakers and practitioners to take these factors into account in solving individual and social problems. I define this principle that I have determined for the conflict management of social work as the 2SIP (Socio-Psychological-Social-Implementation-Institutional-Political-Professional) principle.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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