

The ecosystem approach in health social work

Nataliia Nazar

Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine

Extended abstract

Keywords

Mental health, ecosystem approach, health social work, integral ecology, health preservation and promotion.

Address for correspondence:

Nataliia Nazar, Ph.D student, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine., e-mail: natalyanazar1993@gmail.com

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).



©Copyright: Nazar, 2020

Licensee NDSAN (MFC- Coordinator of the NDSAN), Italy
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.32437/mhgci.v4i2.90>

Submitted for publication: 21
June 2020

Received: 21 June 2020

Accepted for publication: 13
October 2020

Introduction

Health is the greatest value in our lives. Analyzing the current approaches of the WHO (2014), we consider this concept not only from the standpoint of physical health and the absence of disease, but understand this phenomenon as a holistic state of complete well-being, which includes, in addition to physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, sexual, environmental and many other aspects. This is the so-called holistic model of health (Orzhekhovska, 2013).

Our reasoning suggests (given various aspects of health) that this value does not depend only on an individual's choice to be or not to be healthy, and cannot be governed solely by personal actions. Here are some examples. The lack of geographically close medical services and / or free medical services causes the inability to receive emergency medical care and / or to systematically monitor health. Negative relationships in the family, the absence of a father or mother in the family can lead to emotional rejection of the child (psycho-emotional disorders), the acquisition of undesirable behavior (child addictive behavior or delinquent behavior), lack of self-care skills (this can cause various infectious diseases), getting into institutional care, which usually do not contribute to the full development of personality, etc. Inadequate social policies and an imperfect

health care system in the country can cause outbreaks of socially dangerous diseases and provoke the spread of pandemics. Aggressive urbanization creates uncomfortable living conditions in cities due to traffic jams, pollution, noise, which causes other health risks from stress to cancer. As we can see, good health depends not only on the individual being healthy in the broad context of this word, but on the complex impact on us of a number of systems in which we are included. It is important to emphasize the role of social work in this context, the theory and practice of which aim, inter alia, to promote social development and well-being, as well as to improve the health care system and reduce social inequalities. Therefore, the task of social work in general and social workers together with other professionals in particular is to support the individual, family, community, society in the context of strengthening and maintaining the health of both individual and public. An ecosystem approach in social work helps us to understand the process of maintaining and strengthening health, which explains well the mutual influence of each element of the system.

Purpose

The aim of the article was to consider health social work according to ecosystem approach.

Methodology

The study used theoretical methods of research, in particular, analysis, comparison, synthesis and implementation of the results of the study of health social work based on the principles of integral ecology and ecosystem approach.

Results and Discussion

The ecosystem approach is used in various spheres of practical and scientific activity: public health, ecology, economy, legal and social spheres, church-religious sphere and even education (Forget, Lebel, 2001; Deinega, 2018; Veklych, 2017; Voronkin, 2017).

N. Kabanenko and T. Semigina (2004) write about the separation of the ecological approach in social work on the basis of systems theory (sociological group of social work theories). Within this approach, the authors consider the main models of work and tools that can be used by social workers in their practice: eco-maps, genograms, etc. Systems theory and environmental theory are mentioned in the manual "Introduction to Practical Social Work". In systems theory, "a whole is greater than the sum of its parts", so it is important to consider "the interaction of the client and the environment." Ecological theory considers a person in the context of his or her entourage, but not only the family, society, but also the environment (Klos, Mykytenko, 2005, 52-54). In contrast to the mentioned researchers, T. Sylva (2012) explores the problem of violence in the context of the ecosystem approach, she notes that this approach originates from the socio-ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner in psychology. So, no matter what theories the ecosystem approach is based on, the idea behind this concept is a wide range of interconnections. Every smaller object, such as a person, is part of a large range of interactions of larger systems: family, community, society, environment, and so on. Each element of the system affects the other, so solving a problem situation in one area can be an impetus for positive change in another.

A. Chaikovska and O. Hlavatska talk about the need to train social workers with a "high level of environmental culture" (2019). In scientific works on social work we find the concepts "ecosystem approach" and "ecological approach", which are virtually identical in content. This perspective has formed over time one of the modern concepts of social work: "environmental social work", or "eco-social work", or "green social work".

The latter in her current research is much covered by T. Semigina (2018). The researcher notes that "a healthy environment is seen as an inalienable human right, a component of human dignity and non-discrimination." However, today there is no research on health social work from the standpoint of an ecosystem approach.

The ecosystem approach resonates with another very important concept. It is an integrated ecology. This concept appeared in the church-religious sphere, and was covered in the Encyclical (papal document) "Laudato si" by the head of the Catholic Church Pope Francis (2015/2019). According to the vision of Francis, there can be no question of ensuring the common good, guaranteeing fundamental rights, social justice, if humanity understands nature as something separate and does not link environmental pollution with economic activity, behavior, etc.

Conclusion

Therefore, it is obvious that today, in the conditions of social transformations and globalization processes, the solution of any social problem should be considered from the standpoint of the ecosystem approach. Health issues in social work cannot be considered without taking into account changes in the environment. For such activities, it is necessary to train social workers in the context of the ecosystem approach, programs and projects should be developed to help overcome the problems of clients' health in a comprehensive way. Further research is needed to study existing and develop new forms and models of social work on the basis of strengthening and maintaining the health of clients, taking into account the ecosystem approach and the basics of integral ecology.

Conflict of interest

Author declares that she has no conflict of interests

References

- World Health Organization (2014). Basic documents (48th ed.). <https://apps.who.int/gb/bd/PDF/bd48/basic-documents-48th-edition-en.pdf>
- Orzhekhovska, O. (2013). Holistic concept of health in the British schools: prospects for Ukraine. *Studies in comparative education*, 1

- (15), 41-48.
<http://pps.udpu.edu.ua/article/view/18844>
- Voronkin, O. S. (2017). Theory and practice of using information technology in the educational process: materials of the All-Ukrainian scientific-practical. Kyiv: Drahomanov National Pedagogical University Publishing House, 55-59.
http://tdo.at.ua/publ/distance_education/ekosystem/1-1-0-77
- Deinega, M. A. (2018). Ecosystem approach to the use of natural resources: legal aspect. Scientific Bulletin of Public and Private Law, 2, 131-135
<http://www.nvppp.in.ua/vip/2018/2/27.pdf>
- Veklych, O. O. (2017). The essence and content of the concept of "ecosystem approach" in economics. Scientific Journal "Economy of Ukraine", 12 (673), 52-67.
http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/EkUk_2017_12_5
- Forget, G., Lebel, J. (2001). Ecosystem approach to human health. The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health, 7 (2).
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.470.5356&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Kabachenko, N., Semigina T. (2004). Peculiarities of using the ecological approach in social work practice. Scientific notes of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 73-79.
<http://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/handle/123456789/8160>
- Klos, L., Mykytenko, N. (2005). Introduction to practical social work (on the example of studying the experience of Ukraine and Canada): Training manual for students majoring in «Social Work» in higher education. Lviv: Lviv Polytechnic National University Publishing House, 139 pp.
- Syla, T. I. (2012). The problem of violence in the context of the ecosystem approach. Social Work Problems, 1 (1), 72-78. http://www.irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/cgi-bin/irbis_nbuv/cgiirbis_64.exe?C21COM=2&I21DBN=UJRN&P21DBN=UJRN&IMAGE_FILE_DOWNLOAD=1&Image_file_name=PDF/prcr_2012_1_12.pdf
- Chaikovska, A. B., Hlavatska, O. L. (2019). Ecological approach in professional preparation of specialists from social work. Pedagogical almanac, 41, 261-266.
<http://dspace.tnpu.edu.ua/handle/123456789/13393>
- Semigina T. (2018). Why does social work turn green? Bulletin of the Academy of Labor, Social Relations and Tourism, 2, 11-27.
https://www.socosvita.kiev.ua/sites/default/files/Visnyk_2_2018.pdf
- Francis (2019). On various aspects of integrated ecology: from the encyclical of the Holy Father Francis «Laudato si». (O. Braslavets, Trans.).
<https://www.verbum.com.ua/05/2019/ecotheology/laudato-si/> (Original work published 2015)
- Francis (2019). Encyclical «Laudato Si» of the Holy Father Francis on caring for our common home. (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church Bureau for Ecology, Trans.). Kolo Publishing House, 184 pp.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_uk.pdf (Original work published 2015)