

New Trends in the Field of Social Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities

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Abstract:

The present article draws on the results of research that explored the role of complex rehabilitation and its individual components; the effectiveness of social rehabilitation in the integration of people into society; feedback from clients on how they evaluate their cooperation with rehabilitation workers in selected facilities; as well as feedback from rehabilitation and social workers on how they evaluate their cooperation with clients. The research took place from May 2020 to March 2022. The first group of respondents comprised 360 clients of rehabilitation centers, social and occupational rehabilitation centers and physiotherapy-rehabilitation departments in Slovakia, specifically Bratislava and Trencin.

The second group of respondents consisted of 30 rehabilitation and social workers employed in these facilities. This research employed quantitative and qualitative research strategies. The

conducted research also highlighted the importance of the creation of complex theoretical and empirical bases concerning social rehabilitation and its role in the integration of people with disabilities into society. The results of the research have also shown the need to raise professional awareness of the importance of complex rehabilitation and its modern trends and, last but not least, the need to improve the level of professional education in the field of complex rehabilitation and social rehabilitation. The results obtained from the research can be used to develop analyses that will form the basis for additional relevant and helpful research in the field of trends in social rehabilitation and improvement of the possibilities of their application.

Introduction

Social rehabilitation refers to a series of activities aimed at achieving independence for people with disabilities. Its purpose is to help these people develop specific abilities by strengthening their habits when carrying out normal activities in the context of their full integration into society. Social rehabilitation depends on a large number of individual factors, abilities, needs, and motivation of the disabled person. Each client, therefore, requires an individual approach and action on the part of the social worker. Social rehabilitation plays an important role not only for people with disabilities but also for their family members and friends. It contributes to: maintaining self-sufficiency; gaining a sense of self-worth and dignity; greater life satisfaction; security and safety; and promotes privacy, stability, trust, confidence, communication, and interpersonal contacts. It also helps the disabled overcome psychological barriers that prevent the emergence of positive motivation to persevere and strive during the rehabilitation process and to integrate as fully as possible into society at all levels (8). These factors result in greater physical and psychological independence of disabled persons from their immediate environment. The conducted research aimed to map the extent to which social rehabilitation helps disabled persons integrate into society.

Methods

The present article examined the role of complex rehabilitation and its individual components, the effectiveness of social rehabilitation in regard to the integration of the disabled into society, the feedback of clients on how they evaluate the co-

operation with rehabilitation workers in selected facilities, and the subsequent determination of how rehabilitation and social workers evaluate the cooperation with clients. The research took place from May 2020 to March 2022 in rehabilitation centers, social and occupational rehabilitation centers and physiotherapy-rehabilitation departments in Slovakia, specifically in Bratislava and Trencin. Quantitative and qualitative research strategies were used in the presented research.

The first group of respondents comprised 360 clients of the aforementioned facilities. To participate in the research, participants had to have a musculoskeletal disorder, have spent at least 2 years rehabilitating in the aforementioned facilities, and be aged from 20 to 71 years.

The second group of respondents consisted of 30 rehabilitation and social workers working in these facilities. In order to participate in the research, they had to have been actively employed in the rehabilitation facilities for at least 2 years and be aged 20 years or older.

Clients, as well as rehabilitation and social workers, were approached based on their having met the aforementioned criteria. Both groups provided written consent to the processing of personal data for the purposes of the research and they were reminded that their participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous. The relevance of the research is confirmed by the research report, which records the aforementioned ethical requirements. Prior to the research, both groups of respondents were provided with information about its objectives and possible presentation.

The aim of the research was summed up by the following research question:

How are the benefits and effectiveness of social rehabilitation perceived by clients and rehabilitation and social workers?

For the first group, quantitative research was conducted using a 23-point standardized questionnaire with open-ended questions. Induction, deduction, comparison and also statistical processing were used in the processing.

For the second group, the research took place via a semi-structured interview that lasted an average of 45 minutes. The data was analyzed through content analysis under the supervision of the research administrator.

Results and Discussion

The research yielded the following results:

Respondents from both groups agreed in their assertions that it is important to remember that new data is acquired constantly during the research and in implementation of social rehabilitation trends for clients with disabilities or those who suffer from musculoskeletal injuries, both in the research and in the implementation of the social rehabilitation itself. This provides professionals with the opportunity to confront this data and then apply it in practice.

Health is of essential importance. It determines the quality of life and is the basis for physical and mental capacity. Defining the concept of health and the search for its essence is related to the relationship between the physical and spiritual nature of man. This essence must also be borne in mind in the context of major technological advances in society, such as artificial intelligence (AI) (2).

Artificial intelligence is currently used in medicine and the healthcare sector for many purposes, including diagnosis through non-invasive AI diagnostic systems (2). However, these systems do not absolve the relevant doctor of ultimate responsibility for patient care (2) and can help improve healthcare provision in relation to aspects of social as well as complex rehabilitation. "It is also important to highlight how AL/ML technologies can be used" (2) to provide a new perspective on the medical as well as the psychological state of social and complex rehabilitation clients, even in the event of pandemics similar to COVID-19 (2).

The issue of disability and associated social rehabilitation has been the subject of numerous

studies over the years, providing self-reported research findings regarding the rehabilitation of people with disabilities and their subsequent integration into society. The findings of these studies also show that the process of social rehabilitation can be experienced differently, either positively or negatively. For example, the hope of improved health, reintegration into the labor market, a sense of belonging and opportunities for active social participation in the workplace all contribute to a positive experience. On the contrary, a negative experience can be caused by, for instance, a lack of encouragement, support, guidance or counseling opportunities in the workplace as well as exclusion from the labor market (5).

Disabilities affect important aspects of life and their significant impact can also be seen in the ability to engage with other people; in the ability to enter the job market; in the feeling of being useful to society. In the aforementioned research, these aspects were clearly present in the answers of the first group of respondents. Clients reported that physically they suffer most from musculoskeletal disorders, then by injuries, post-traumatic conditions and, last but not least, disabilities. The most severe form of disability is the most common among the respondents.

Physical activity is a very important aspect of respondents' health. The importance of physical activity is also highlighted by several studies carried out directly in Slovakia, such as the 2021 study by the authors Paulik, Plskova, Kacmarikova, Ochaba. This study provided up-to-date information on the prevalence of insufficient physical activity among Slovaks by gender and age (7). It also highlighted the significant decline in performance and physical activity among Slovaks and emphasized the benefits of physical activity in some important national programs (7).

In relation to insufficient physical activity and performance, respondents often mentioned how affected they are by this lack of physical activity. For example, when visiting rehabilitation facilities, they sometimes have to be accompanied by a family member or friend. In the respondents' opinion, this contradicts the idea of post-rehabilitation self-sufficiency.

Clients also reported that they are restricted in other areas such as getting dressed, hygiene, shopping, and housework. Social ties are also very important to the respondents, especially

with the circle of friends who visit them. These social ties enable them to participate in social life, such as going to the theatre, concerts, galleries or traveling if their health permits.

Respondents also said that they had difficulty dealing with the three waves of the pandemic. The pandemic worsened their health and, in terms of social rehabilitation, has made their options to integrate into society more complicated. In relation to the previous waves and periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, as confirmed by experience and the research carried out so far, it is essential to highlight the importance of providing various options of professional support, including in the event of grief over losing one's loved ones due to the pandemic (10) "regardless of whether the grief from the mourning is complicated or not" (10). This also applies to this group of respondents.

Experience and research also show that "the most vulnerable group during the pandemic is the elderly" (1). "In terms of their age and health, they are the most vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic" (1). This also applies to this group of elderly respondents. Some of the respondents were experiencing rumination as a result of the pandemic. Many studies have also shown that "rumination can cause a variety of emotional disorders" (9). Therefore, it is also important to establish how respondents of this group perceive social support. As is generally known, "social support is associated with a positive self-image, self-acceptance, hope, love, and contentment, which reduce stress and generally provide individuals with opportunities for self-fulfillment and growth" (3). It is also "one of the strongest driving forces and is a precursor to successful and easy coping with confrontation during a period when people are struggling" with a certain type of adversity (3). "It reduces levels of depression, improves the quality of life, and is also the most effective and stable prerequisite to compliance with instructions" given by rehabilitation and social workers (3).

The research findings showed that the respondents need individual and anticipated social support the most. "The feeling of being socially supported as confirmed by this group of respondents also leads to a higher number of positive changes which is called post-traumatic growth (11). The importance of social support, feelings of self-ef-

ficacy, and dispositional optimism as potential predictors of post-traumatic growth which is confirmed by many kinds of research from other scientific fields, continue to be the subject of numerous studies, yielding different results (11). Practical experience shows people with disabilities continuously "need stronger social support from families, friends," (11), healthcare, rehabilitation, social workers and significant others (11).

Quality of life is one of the most commonly used terms in the medical field. Thus, the provision of healthcare in this context has a purpose to the extent to which it positively affects the patient's life. In the case of respondents participating in the aforementioned research, their quality of life revolves around mobility. The most frequently reported problems of the clients were related to mobility. These problems resulted from their disability, injury, or musculoskeletal pain. Therefore, assistive devices used to increase their mobility are an important part of their lives. They also reported that procedures such as exercise, massage, magnetotherapy, electrotherapy, gas injections, hydrotherapy, or physical training were beneficial in improving their mobility.

Clients also reported that they appreciated the empathetic approach of the rehabilitation workers and their willingness to explain the procedure. Clients also positively evaluated the erudite approach of the rehabilitation workers and the fact that their work fulfills them. They also reported that the motivating approach of the rehabilitation and social workers was very important to them. According to the clients' statements, they noticed the motivating approach of the rehabilitation and social workers, for example, by: helping them be able to help themselves first and not depend on other people; building the feeling that this will make them self-sufficient or at least partially self-sufficient; praising them; smiling; saying nice things, appreciating them; encouraging and giving them the confidence and the courage to believe that their condition will improve with regular and diligent rehabilitation; encouraging them to aspire to be as independent as possible; reinforcing the feeling that they are undergoing rehabilitation to feel better; encouraging them not to get worse. As a result of this motivation, clients' overall perception of the rehabilitation process with workers was positive.

In terms of the effectiveness of social reha-

bilitation in integrating people with disabilities into society, clients reported that their current health significantly improved compared to a year earlier. They attributed this improvement to the comprehensive rehabilitation that helped them better integrate into society and increase their independence.

The clients reported that an important factor in the integration of persons with disabilities into society proved to be training in self-care housekeeping, the use of assistive devices, spatial orientation and independent movement they underwent as part of social rehabilitation. They also received training in communication skills, financial literacy, and legal issues. The respondents had the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities that increased their self-efficacy which significantly helped improve their independence.

An interesting finding reported by clients was the connection between the benefits of social rehabilitation and difficult periods in their lives. This also included relationships established during the first year of social rehabilitation. The thwarting of the most important periods in life, not managing to get better in life due to pointless investments in open-ended relationships, and the associated increasing problems are also highlighted in the 2021 study by Maryam Sobhani Nia, Simin Hosseiniyan, Ruhollah Zaboli (6). The motivation clients received from the rehabilitation and social workers in the selected rehabilitation facilities helped the clients significantly during these challenging periods as well as in their integration into society. It is important to ensure that judgements of all kinds are removed during this process. As in many other cases, education plays an important role in this regard (4).

In the case of the second group of respondents, as part of the evaluation of the worker-client collaboration by the rehabilitation and social workers, the rehabilitation and social workers of the selected rehabilitation facilities reported that it is necessary to have a motivational approach towards the clients. In this case, statements of this group of respondents coincided with those of the first group of respondents. According to the rehabilitation and social workers, a motivational approach can be obtained through education, communication, and individual client care. They consider it very important to have active cooperation from the client during rehabili-

tation. This group of respondents believe that only such cooperation between the client and the rehabilitation or social worker can contribute to the improvement of the client's health.

In this context, the respondents also stated that it is necessary to follow the educational process that the worker sets up with the client, and that cooperation with the client's family plays an important role in this process. It is also important, in their opinion, to eliminate the deterioration of the client's health and psychological condition. Rehabilitation and social workers also agreed that clients have shown interest in canister therapy, occupational therapy, art therapy, and aromatherapy combined with music during complex rehabilitation. Rehabilitation and social workers would like rehabilitation facilities to organize social events for clients, such as social or trivia quizzes. The research has shown the importance of elaborating comprehensive theoretical and empirical bases concerning social rehabilitation and its role in the integration of disabled persons into society. The research findings showed the need to increase professional awareness of the importance of complex rehabilitation and its modern trends and, last but not least, the need to improve the level of professional education in the field of complex rehabilitation and social rehabilitation.

Conclusion

Social rehabilitation helps people conduct themselves in everyday situations to ensure conditions for independent life. However, each person has certain limits which result from his or her abilities and what he or she wishes to achieve. Persons with disabilities must therefore be seen as individual human beings and the degree or type of their disability must be taken into account. They must not be denied the comprehensive specialist medical and psychosocial support they need, as this is the only way to achieve their inclusion. It is necessary to make it possible for them to lead an independent life, i.e. to provide them with services that give them access to the same social, political, economic, and cultural opportunities presented to the rest of the population. Social rehabilitation is instrumental in ensuring a life of dignity and quality for people with disabilities. It helps them meet their goals and achieve the fullest possible integration into soci-

ety. Social rehabilitation programs are also essential for people who are in a close relationship with a disabled person.

It is important to recognize that social rehabilitation is multidisciplinary. It is, therefore, necessary to implement social rehabilitation in facilities that are able to use multiple sources of funding to provide effective services. Social services are one of the key factors in social rehabilitation. In this context, it is also important to be aware of the possibilities of financial and organizational support for high-quality social services within municipalities, departments, and institutions.

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