The relevance of social therapy in social work with individuals from refugee backgrounds

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to discuss social therapy as a means of resolving social issues in the context of humanity's shift to open social space and the personal need to feel safe in that space. Following a review of the pertinent literature, the author concludes that social therapy assists refugees in adapting to their new condition by giving assistance in all socially important areas. Additionally, when social therapy is connected to a larger societal objective, participants may aid refugees in developing their own potential. By discussing these concepts, this essay would contribute to the discourse on the critical nature of social therapy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social therapy refers to a variety of techniques used to influence people's social conduct in the aim of resolving specific issues or averting certain adverse circumstances and potential repercussions of contentious choices (Holzman & Mendez, 2003; Newman, 2010). "How important is social therapy for refugees and how should it be adapted to the present social context?" were not addressed in earlier scholarships, despite the fact that this is a crucial issue in light of the global situation. To address these concerns, the author has divided the essay into four sections: a brief conceptualization of social therapy is discussed first, followed by refugee issues in social therapy, the relationship between social therapy and other social interventions, and finally, the essay concludes with concluding remarks

2. SOCIAL THERAPY

The essay focuses on social therapy that is primarily existential and preventative in nature, with a particular emphasis on a variety of ethnic groups suffering dissatisfaction, unfulfilled needs, and even a proclivity for extreme behavior. It imparts meaning to people's lives via their perceptions, thoughts, and behavioral patterns, thus restraining negative attitudes and unpleasant feelings (LaCerva, 2005).

Social therapy is a concept that applies to therapy that is performed by and for society; it entails placing a person in social relationships that facilitate readaptation and resocialization, normalize dysfunctional connections, and promote the formation of quality relationships when a person's deepest spiritual needs in spiritual closeness with others, as well as his belonging to society in a circle of significance to him, are met (Holzman & Mendez, 2003; Newman, 2010). Social therapy is described as an intervention that attempts to

change the qualitative characteristics of an individual's or group's existence when they are in a state of partial self-realization and social identity loss. The reorientation process is possible through socio-psychological counseling and social therapy, which, in contrast to psychological counseling and psychotherapy, are concerned with modifying patterns of social activity and interaction with society in the context of human dignity, human rights, freedom, equality, and solidarity.

3. REFUGEE ISSUES IN SOCIAL THERAPY

While everyone is susceptible to varying degrees of environmental influence, the ability of individuals and social groups to adapt to or resist adverse external changes varies considerably. In terms of a variety of interconnected issues, refugees constitute one of the most difficult migration groups (Boccagni & Righard, 2020). These socially, culturally, and economically maladjusted people fall into an unintentional state of marginalization, in which many natural-anthropological ties are broken and rights to ethnic identity, domicile, and traditional way of life are lost. The family forced to move to a distant country has many challenges in rearranging their lives. Each member of the family experiences a similar process, but in his or her own unique way. As a result, the adaptation process is entirely unique for each family member. Children often adapt considerably more rapidly than adults to a new multiethnic environment, due to their capacity to learn communication skills as a consequence of their more mobile minds. Children get familiar with a new culture primarily via language learning, social contact, and attendance at school and kindergarten in new communication contexts. The task of establishing a culture of moral interethnic relations, liberty, and security can be accomplished only through the accumulation of knowledge about the culture, traditions, and customs of not only one's own people, but also of other ethnic groups, and knowledge of the language is necessary for understanding the culture of another language-speaking people. Language evolves into a vehicle not only for communication and thought expression, but also for the accumulation of cultural values, and the school plays a critical role in the socialization of the student, serving as a liaison between society and the child as they master cultural and historical experiences (Khalil, Helou, Flanagan, Pinkwart, & Ogata, 2019).

The teacher has the ability to have a major impact on students' formation of a tolerant, multicultural personality capable of thriving in an interethnic and interfaith system (Khalil, Helou, Flanagan, Pinkwart, & Ogata, 2019). However, teachers sometimes assign national characteristics to their students of other nationalities, thus demonstrating their "understanding" of a foreign culture, social roles, and everyday life in general (Jaskułowski & Surmiak, 2015). In other words, teachers recognize the existence of another culture, religion, but are certain that it is less significant and "cultural" than the one in which they were reared. They just reflect and reproduce racial biases already prevalent in society, which is inevitable as long as society sees the world through ethnic glasses. Is this to say that schools, as multiethnic educational environments, are intrinsically racist? Under such conditions, refugees face not only personal hostility, but also cultural loss.

Thus, social insecurity, characterized by a lack of social protection and parental care, results in social failure and self-restraint (self-alienation) in the student with refugee background; teaching insecurity, characterized by the teacher's neglect of the student's difficulties, unwillingness or inability to create for him a situation of success. This identity crisis often results in alienation from one's ethnic roots and may inadvertently result in a negative affiliation with people of different ethnic backgrounds. This is because adaptation to a new culture occurs only after "cultural shock" has been overcome. When engaging with other children, a student who is culturally separated at school feels like a "foreigner". Students may lose interest in upholding their people's traditions and may no longer feel obligated to maintain the ideals that characterize their unique selves under certain circumstances. Cultural deprivation "absorbs" a range of external influences, impeding the child's complete development as a representative of his people. A favorable cultural environment and a varied ethnosocial milieu have a significant impact on not just academic performance and child behavior, but also on the whole development of the personality. Simultaneously, self-destruction may be seen as the most pernicious deprivation setback a person can encounter, since it has been connected to an increase in crime, drug addiction, and suicide (Holzman & Mendez, 2003).

4. SOCIAL THERAPY AS AN APPROACH OF SOCIAL INTERVENTION

Social intervention refers to a set of professional methods that may aid individuals in developing and altering their qualitative characteristics. It makes recommendations for strategies, one of which is social therapy (Newman, 2010). Individual and group work are the two types of social therapy methods. Individual interaction, followed by group work, results in the development of a unique technology of social therapy with an individual (Newman, 2010). The group acts as a link between social institutions, structures, and individuals. Group sociotherapeutic interaction creates all of the necessary conditions for positive change to

occur in individuals' and organizations' social problems, and involves social advertising and training. Social advertising is a kind of macro-social therapy in that it engages large groups of people in positive social action in order to increase the participation of members of society and solve urgent, generally significant problems (Helde, 2015). Social advertising incorporates an incentive to engage in the desired action, and therefore serves as an effective tool for society's self-organization and coordination in order to address pressing problems... At the intermediate level, social therapy is delivered via self-help groups and territorial organizations of individuals who share similar concerns. The sociotherapeutic skills of a group are defined by its ability to provide social support and participate in problem solving. Social therapy is given to an individual via his or her network of social connections, which includes family and local surroundings (Newman, 2010). When social advertising conveys a message in favor of a positive event, it has an impact on the public. Social advertising's objective is to change the public's view of any problem and, over time, to create new societal standards. Social advertising is about an idea, a collection of images, or messages with a social purpose (Helde, 2015). Through social advertising, it is possible to achieve social therapy results by informing about successfully functioning structures and organizations that showcase equal opportunities to achieve goals in new circumstances; demonstrating alternative ways of behaving and resolving problems for individuals and groups, as well as their advantages over conventional methods; and showing behaving differently.

The first training group, called T-group (training group), were formed by students of American psychologist Kurt Lewin in order to study interpersonal interactions and improve communication skills (Crosby, 2021). The main achievement of T-groups was their effectiveness in changing people's personal attitudes and actions in a group environment rather than an individual one. Its members learned to overcome their authenticity and see themselves through the eyes of others. The successful involvement of Kurt Lewin's students in T-groups resulted in the creation of the United States of America's National Training Laboratory in 1947. Social and life skills training started to be planned and implemented in the 1960s, mostly on the basis of American scientist Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology concept (Schacter, Gilbert, & Wegner, 2009). In the 1970s, German philosophers and psychologists pioneered the concept of socio-psychological training (Schacter, Gilbert, & Wegner, 2009). The new method is based on role-playing games with dramatic elements, over the course of which conditions for the development of effective communication skills and an increase in interpersonal competence of training participants in communication are created. The training technique was originally proposed in the field of intercultural relations by American professor Harry Charalambos Triandis, who believes that by simulating events that occur differently in various cultures, participants may acquire an awareness of intercultural variations in interpersonal relationships (Triandis, 1972). The scientist explains that training entails developing a knowledge of a foreign culture via emotionally charged activities, repetition, and evaluation. As a result, such acquired knowledge may be applied to new situations (Funke, 1989). These literatures discussed various approaches to intercultural communication training, including self-awareness training, in which participants learn about their own cultural foundations; cognitive training, in which participants learn about other cultures; and attribution training, in which participants learn to provide causal explanations for their partners' situations and actions. The purpose of the training is to establish a realistic sense of personal and interpersonal accountability. One of the examples of the guiding principle in this sense is: "I am responsible for just what I am able to manage". This notion may be stated more exactly as follows: "I am completely responsible for the feelings and emotions I experience, for my thoughts, beliefs, and judgements, and for my actions". Concerning responsibility for the other, it is stated as follows: "I am fully responsible for the actions I have undertaken to promote my own and my partner's development, to guarantee constructive conversation and agreement; I am not responsible for my partner's feelings, emotions, ideas, or behaviors". Consciousness of one's degree of responsibility for another during the communicative process drives the cognitive, analytical process, the ultimate goal of which is to correct one's behavior in order to achieve the communication's objectives. In this scenario, one must distinguish between guilt and accountability. This capability entails not just unconditional acceptance and respect for another person, but also an appreciation for the other's expressions. Individuals do not disdain or reject these pronouncements; rather, they see them favorably and as new ideals. As a result, the person interacts effectively and efficiently with the partner. While students may gain the capacity to do the task at the conclusion of the training session, true learning happens when students apply what they have learned in the training environment to the real world and show a sustained change in their behavior.

5. CONCLUSION

The use of social therapy in addressing the complex socio-psychological problems of a refugee person raises it to a universal approach within the intervention complexity. The study of social therapy's concepts allows us

to characterize it as a complex long-term impact on an individual or a group of people in order to ensure social adaptation and integration into the local community.

On the one hand, social therapy is designed to address the problems of people who find themselves in tough living situations, and on the other, to act as a tool for state social policy. This is particularly true of the common European idea that all individuals are equal on an individual level and that all related issues, feelings, and emotions are shared by representatives of all ethnic groups. Family, friendship, opportunity equality, and mutual assistance are all examples of non-ethnic imagery that might be used to represent this approach.

It has become apparent that when refugees are isolated – whether via negative media coverage, political hostility, a precarious legal status, a lack of educational and employment opportunities, and/or hostility from the local population – their chances of integration are reduced. Individuals who feel threatened or alienated by the host group may try to emphasize their differences by isolating themselves within their groups, making them more susceptible to radicalism. In contrast to other types of migrants, refugees' forced migration and subsequent challenges are often distinctive. This should be taken into account to provide the possible integration. As a social group, refugees are both vulnerable and resourceful. However, it is essential that the social policies and practices of integration adopted as part of the larger policy of integrating refugees into society's social and economic life recognize these special needs of refugees, particularly those of specific groups of refugees, such as children. No arbitrarily constructed obstacles should prevent people from achieving a position in society that is consistent with their abilities and aligned with their own beliefs. Opportunities should be determined only on the basis of an individual's abilities, not on the basis of his or her origin, nation, skin color, religion, or gender, or any other irrelevant factor. In this view, social therapy's resources have not been completely appreciated and used, preventing it from developing into a reliable tool for changing an individual's ability to live in harmony with himself and with society in the future.

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