

The Impact of Covid-19 on the Different Types of Services in the Social Sphere

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Abstract:- The rapid dissemination of SARS-CoV-2 is only comparable to the huge impact of Covid-19 with respect to healthcare, social and economic consequences. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the pandemic on certain social services in Bulgaria. This paper presents the results from a survey conducted through an online questionnaire and interviews both with people at risk in need of social services and with heads of institutions providing social services to people at risk. The results obtained after an analysis of the social services provided during the pandemic show that there are huge differences with respect to the restriction of the socio-economic impact of the new social reality. The services provided to people at risk at their homes are most affected from this impact. The routes for overcoming the adverse impact are related to the provision and introduction of new practices, as well as the search for new pathways for change in the method of work related to the provision of social services with a view to rationalising the new normality and the future development of the social work in the context of this crisis. This electronic document is a “live” template and already defines the components of your paper [title, text, heads, etc.] in its style sheet.

Keywords:- Social Services, Market Segmentation, Covid-19.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid dissemination of SARS-CoV-2 is only comparable to the huge impact of Covid-19 with respect to healthcare, social and economic consequences [1, 2, 3].

The pandemic rapidly covered the entire world and all countries were affected, albeit to a different extent [4, 5]. Despite its rapid dissemination, there were huge differences in the public resources (which also include social resources of any kind) ability to respond when it comes to restricting the socio-economic impact of this novel disease [6, 7, 8].

The majority of the socio-economic activities in Bulgaria were suspended, with the exception of some major activities related to the basic and necessary services [9, 10].

The introduction of new social distancing and isolation measures had a great impact on the entire population by significantly increasing the unemployment rate, shrinking the economic activity and worsening the living conditions for people at risk.

The most significant impact of the restrictions was the shrinking supply of hourly services provided in social centres. Group therapies offered in social centres were banned and the services offered to consumers at risk at their homes were suspended, since the method of their provision is related to contact that is inconsistent with social distancing.

Consultations and psychological support offered by social assistance centres, which needed to match the needs of people at risk and their families, lost its main source of funding from the state and was suspended.

These factors have created the need to study the impact of the pandemic on certain social services in Bulgaria, which is also the main objective of this paper.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper presents the results from a study on the challenges faced by social work with adult people at risk during the state of emergency declared by the government as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This survey was conducted through an online questionnaire and interviews both with people at risk in need of social services and with heads of institutions providing social services to people at risk. The methodology has been developed by an expert team. Special attention is given to the emerging relationships between the users of social services and the specialists providing them as a result of the crisis and its impact on their work. The study reflects the different methods for overcoming the adverse impact by the provision and introduction of new practices, as well as the search for new pathways for change in the method of work related to the provision of social services with a view to rationalising the new normality and the future development of the social work in the context of this crisis.

The evaluation of the consequences from this impact after the announcement of the pandemic is related to the magnitude of difficulties and restricted possibilities and/or the lack of possibility to perform:

- everyday activities;
- activities related to independent living;
- activities related to meeting the educational needs of people at risk, etc.;
- activities related to realising a limited access opportunity.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was concluded that the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have adversely affected the users of social services. The imposed social isolation restricted the provision of services of different scale and application. The results from the survey among expert providing services and users of such services are presented in figures 1 through 3. The main services that lead to an improvement in the physical, mental and emotional condition of people at risk have been negatively influenced by the imposed social restrictions as a result of the

pandemic. These processes have not had such a great impact on the services related to healthcare activities and social skills, which people at risk previously used at their home, albeit at an elementary level. There has been a positive impact on services related to sanitary and household activities, probably owing to the fact that working people remained at their homes and thus were able to support their relatives who were at risk. The specific results from the study by types of services provided to people at risk in their family environment are shown on Table 1.

TABLE I. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SERVICES PROVIDED IN FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

Types of services	Expert evaluation		
	Positive	No impact	Negative
Support for maintaining personal hygiene	50%	20%	30%
Taking medicine and performing activities for maintaining the health status	10%	50%	40%
Maintaining hygiene at home	50%	10%	40%
Accompanying outside the home	5%	45%	50%
Physiotherapy	10%	20%	70%
Art therapy	10%	50%	40%
Ergo therapy	20%	10%	70%
Development of social skills	30%	20%	50%
Career consultations	5%	5%	90%
Educational services	5%	5%	90%
Total:	20%	24%	57%

Source: Own research

Among the studied group of adult users of residential type of social services certain clearly defined unmet needs were distinguished, which used to be satisfied by the social daycare centres (Table 2). The main activities related to improving the living and health status remained unmet, which resulted in negative consequences on the status of the users

and their ability to live independently. A positive evaluation was given to activities related to covering the needs at household level. There was no impact on services related to adaptation to the place of residence and ensuring safe and secure environment, which, however, are hardly sufficient for leading a fulfilling life.

TABLE II. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SERVICES PROVIDED IN SOCIAL CENTRES IN AN ENVIRONMENT CLOSE TO THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT.

Types of services	Expert evaluation		
	Positive	No impact	Negative
Satisfying basic necessities of life (food, place to live)	50%	10%	40%
Ensuring safe and secure living environment	20%	60%	20%
Art therapy	60%	10%	30%
Adaptation services	25%	50%	25%
Medical services	5%	5%	90%
Psychological support	30%	20%	30%
Career consultations	10%	10%	80%
Social consultations	20%	20%	60%
Educational services	20%	20%	60%
Physiotherapy services	5%	5%	90%
Total:	29%	23%	49%

Source: Own research

Based on the study on users of services in specialised institutions it was concluded that the negative consequences of Covid-19, the lack of social contacts and the full involvement in public life are clearly marked. The positive aspects pointed by the surveyed people are in the services related to the satisfaction of household and basic necessities related to the

minimum living conditions. A distinct characteristic was the psychological support they received while attempting to neutralise the adverse impact of isolation. The needs related to therapies conducted at their homes by service providers are evaluated as being not influenced (see Table 3).

TABLE III. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SERVICES PROVIDED IN SPECIALISED INSTITUTIONS (BOARDING HOUSE TYPE ESTABLISHMENTS).

Types of services	Expert evaluation		
	Positive	No impact	Negative
Covering household needs	50%	10%	40%
Medical services	20%	70%	10%
Satisfying the need of food	60%	10%	30%
Occupational therapy	25%	50%	25%
Physiotherapy services	15%	45%	40%
Art therapy	30%	40%	30%
Contacts with family and relatives	10%	10%	80%
Psychological services	60%	20%	20%
Logopaedic services	10%	60%	30%
Attending cultural events	10%	0%	90%
Total:	29%	32%	40%

Source: Own research

The imperative restrictions imposed by the government for maintaining distance because of the rapid dissemination of Covid-19 had a negative reflection on the social services offered. After imposing these restrictions, the government failed to provide for new methodologies for the provision of those services during the period of restrictions. The state has not yet indicated any guidelines for reorganisation of the work of daycare centres and specialised institutions developed in boarding house type establishments to prevent any adverse consequences from the introduced restrictive measures for maintaining social distance for people at risk using these services.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the results and the analysis of the survey among the target group of adult people at risk who use social services, we can summarise that there is a clear negative impact of Covid-19 on the quality of life of people at risk. The restriction in the possibilities for people at risk to develop skills related to living independently, to be actively involved in public life, to have social contacts, to work and make money for living has resulted in worsening of the quality and sufficiency of the services provided, which, in turn, leads to disturbance of their mental and emotional condition and exacerbation of their sense of inferiority.

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