

Impact Factor:

ISRA (India) = 4.971
ISI (Dubai, UAE) = 0.829
GIF (Australia) = 0.564
JIF = 1.500

SIS (USA) = 0.912
PIHHI (Russia) = 0.126
ESJI (KZ) = 8.716
SJIF (Morocco) = 5.667

ICV (Poland) = 6.630
PIF (India) = 1.940
IBI (India) = 4.260
OAJI (USA) = 0.350

SOI: [1.1/TAS](#) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](#)

International Scientific Journal Theoretical & Applied Science

p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) e-ISSN: 2409-0085 (online)

Year: 2020 Issue: 04 Volume: 84

Published: 30.04.2020 <http://T-Science.org>

QR – Issue



QR – Article



S. T. Nunev

Angel Kanchev University
Associate Professor, Doctor of Science of Social Work,
Ruse, Bulgaria
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3414-0733>

CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION AND VALUE DIMENSIONS OF THE SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN AT RISK IN THE MODERN CONDITIONS

Abstract: *This article analyses important theoretical and applied aspects of social work with children at risk, related to its conceptual orientation and value dimensions in contemporary conditions. Social work with children from different in type and level of risk groups forms its concept based on the position of considering the child as an active subject, which has the potential to change and develop and in accordance with age, level of development and competence to know itself and the surrounding social environment, to manage their behaviour and activities in a constructive and positive way. It is characterized by certain educational aspects, which are expressed in the creation of environment and conditions for the formation, development and stimulation of important qualities in the child. In synthesis, they contribute not only to its socialization, but also to increasing its responsibility and independence in dealing with difficulties and problems that have arisen. Important for the conceptual and technological justification of social work with children at risk is the presentation of value positions for the child, revealing opportunities for building a positive working relationship and realizing a supportive process with a high level of quality and efficiency.*

Key words: *child at risk; social work with children at risk; conceptual orientation of social work with children at risk; educational aspects of social work with children at risk; value positions for the child at risk.*

Language: English

Citation: Nunev, S. T. (2020). Conceptual orientation and value dimensions of the social work with children at risk in the modern conditions. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, 04 (84), 801-805.

Soi: <http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-04-84-140> **Doi:**  <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2020.04.84.140>

Scopus ASCC: 3312.

Introduction

Creating conditions that ensure the well-being and development of the child in accordance with his or her rights and needs and with the values of a humane and socially responsible democratic society is a problem that, in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, stands out for its importance and relevance in national, European and global plan. In this respect, the social work, as a professional, practical, theoretical and scientific field and an important element of the child protection system in Bulgaria, needs to focus its activity in two main areas:

- conceptual grounding, deriving of the value dimensions and technological provision of the social work with children from different types and levels of risk groups and development of a model for effective management of the social services for children and

their families, which contributes most to the ensuring and improving of their well-being;

- providing the necessary support and assistance for at-risk children and their families through a range of social services in various forms, which should also meet their needs and create environment and conditions in order for them to cope with difficulties and problems encountered, as well as to achieve change, growth and sustainable social functioning.

In the outlined context, there is increasing in the public, professional and scientific interest and activity towards the construction of a conceptually, value-based and technologically secured system of the social work with children at risk and based on it a range of social services, which together allow themselves to respond professionally and adequately to the

Impact Factor:

ISRA (India)	= 4.971	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 0.829	PIHHI (Russia)	= 0.126	PIF (India)	= 1.940
GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.716	IBI (India)	= 4.260
JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 5.667	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

difficulties and problems that arise, and to achieve a socially significant effect through effective organization and management of the resources and subsystems for child protection.

Conceptual orientation of the social work with children at risk

The social work with children at risk sets at the heart of its concept the vision of the child as being able to change and develop, to constantly know itself and the world around it, to steer in a constructive and positive direction its behaviour, which absolutely must be trusted. The psychosocial development of the child goes through certain stages and crisis moments, and when this movement and its inherent characteristics are in the norm, it reaches a higher level of maturity. In this regard, it is emphasized that the assisting social professional must show extraordinary patience and unwavering faith in the child's ability to find its way and to cope with the difficulties of life, a belief in the child's power enabling it to listen to his/her inner self voice and make that choice that contributes to the strengthening of one's Self [9, 18]. Leading characteristic of every child's life is for them to be active. From social work point of view, it is seen as manifesting not only in the everyday life of the child, but also in situations of difficulty and frustration when he or she uses all his/her knowledge, skills, abilities and acquired experience and by managing the emerging problems (alone or with the support of others) the child is reaching a new level, enabling it to make progress and develop. It should be noted that this process is not smooth and straightforward, and in the situations of normative and non-normative crises and problems of another nature, the child needs to be supported in its efforts by a social worker and other assisting professionals. However, despite obstacles, turmoil and uncertain steps, it continues to move forward at its own pace. As a result of this continuous pursuit of progress, greater autonomy and responsibility in his/her behaviour, the child achieves a higher level of satisfaction and formation of self-concept, enriches his/her social experience and assimilates knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable him/her to – successfully deal with the difficulties. The movement of the child towards autonomy and self-management and towards self-realization in the environment and conditions created by the elderly with a cognitive and helping character does not diminish its achievements. This leads us to point out that at the heart of the individual's behaviour throughout all stages of its development there is a constant desire for self-realization, and the dynamics in him/her show that the child satisfies this need by struggling openly with the difficulties to establish its Self-concept in the reality or by substitution in one's inner world, where he/she can do it with the least efforts [4].

In the outlined context, the desire for self-realization and the affirmation of the value of one's own existence are some of the basic needs of the child, and the child does strive to satisfy them depending on the conditions, opportunities, age and level of development, the experience acquired and the level of social competence. The multiple aspects and differences in the influences of these factors stimulate or limit the child's adaptive capacities and determine the extent to which the child's behaviour approaches or deviates from the generally accepted norms and the significant from social point of view behaviour models and, at the same time, favours or impedes the self-realization.

Educational aspects of the social work with children at risk and formation of values and qualities in the child

The social work with children from different by type and level of risk groups has also educational aspects, which represent one of its important functional role-playing sides and its humanistic orientation, used to create conditions for establishment, development and stimulation of values and qualities in the child, such as:

- persistence and belief in one's own strengths and ability to cope with difficulties and problems that have arisen, striving to absorb positive social experience in order to overcome the disadvantages and slip-ups;
- responsibility, which is expressed in the ability to accept mistakes and failures and to use this as a starting point and a driving force both to take steps to achieve change, growth and development, as well as to be aware of the fact that the choice you made and the actions you performed affect your life not only in the present, but also in the future;
- positively oriented interaction and constructive cooperation with wide range of social systems that are important for life and development in the emergence of problematic situations, and on the basis of mutual agreement it seeks effective ways of overcoming difficulties;
- understanding of one's own feelings and thoughts and their unconditional acceptance while taking into account and respects what sets us apart from others and what is different in others, i.e. development of self-esteem, sense of self-dignity (without neglecting the importance and uniqueness of others) and humanity;
- appropriate to the age, development and competence, social commitment and awareness, resulting in the aspiration of not only solving his/her personal problems on order to achieve personal development, but also to positively influence the development of the surroundings and the society. In this sense, it is necessary for the child to look at itself not as a “victim of the situation” but to accept the

Impact Factor:

ISRA (India)	= 4.971	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 0.829	PIHHI (Russia)	= 0.126	PIF (India)	= 1.940
GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.716	IBI (India)	= 4.260
JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 5.667	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

perspective of “creator of its own future through the works of the present” [10].

The formation, development and stimulation of these qualities in the child in the process of the helping activity reveals that the social worker has focused on such educational aspects of the social work that contribute to: positive behaviour; increasing responsibility and autonomy in decision-making and taking action to resolve any difficulties encountered; self-esteem and respect for others. Together, they illustrate the contribution to the change and development of the child in personal and social terms.

Value dimensions of the aspects of the child in the social work with children at risk

The social work with children substantiates its conceptual orientation, nature, activity, procedural and technological specifics by bringing to light in a value plan the vision of the child, presented through the following main positions [11]:

The child as a human individual and person has sufficient potential and ability to change his behaviour in a constructive way [3; 14]. In this regard, the opportunity to freely make choices and take responsibility to manage its own actions and behaviour may be presented to him/her. In the context of continuous interaction with various factors, subjects and systems of the social environment, the child gradually realizes the fact that as a person with its traits and qualities he exists and develops into a system of multifaceted relations, with their inherent diversity and specificity of the individual. From this perspective, the child can assume responsibility for his or her own change along the way, both of self-discovery, self-management and modification of non-adaptive behaviour, as well as the interaction and support of social systems important for its life and development. The social worker focuses its attention and professional activity on the difficulties and problems of the child in the outlined two aspects and creates the necessary “internal” and “external” conditions and prerequisites for overcoming them.

The child as a human being and individual is capable of deep emotional experiences (pain, fear, sadness, joy, etc.). Throughout the supporting activity of the social worker, he/she must dig into and understand the inner world and the experiences of the child not only with the necessary understanding, empathy and respect for their importance, but also with the necessary patience, attention, kindness and tenderness. Every child’s daily life should have moments of success and joy that bring calm, protection and satisfaction from the accomplished, and at the same time, enable him or her to more fully explore, discover and utilize their inner resources. Creating such conditions brings to the child optimism and self-belief.

Every child is a unique person who, with his or her merits and disadvantages, deserves recognition

and respect. This uniqueness is not solely determined by the position of the social worker and the elderly community. The child actively participates in its expression and affirmation. The value and uniqueness of a child’s personality should not be bound solely by its behaviour (prosocial or social) and to be seen as his/her function. In this sense, every child deserves recognition and respect, since it is important not only as a whole individual, but also as having the dignity of a person.

The child endures hardships and possesses the strength and power to overcome obstacles and adverse circumstances in life on their own. In this respect, his or her right to choose to accept the role and status of a client and the ability to change its lifestyle should be respected. The social worker must reject the authoritarian and evaluative approach and seek not only to understand the child’s needs and problems, but also to offer productive cooperation that the child can use to restore its lost balance and well-being.

The child has a natural desire for progress, growth and development. Its social functioning can be seen as a continuous and dynamic process of interaction with important from the environment systems for life and development, thus creating conditions for change and progress in affective, cognitive, behavioural and social terms. In the outlined context, the perspective of the child is related not to his or her determination as an object of research and impact, but to the view of an active subject and autonomous personality whose dynamics of growth and development the social worker knows and accepts. Therefore, in the working relationship, the child participates not as a “problem” but as a complete individual who is in a dynamic process of change and development, and who must be respected, valued and understood. The social worker does not focus his professional view solely on past experience, but creates conditions in which the child relatively independently seeks out and paves the way to overcoming difficulties and exits this process with new and richer experience.

The child has the potential and ability to manage his or her actions and behaviour in a positive direction. Vitality, resilience, optimism and belief in the good are some of the dominant things in a child’s life that, in their synthesis, enable him/her despite the obstacles and difficulties to strive for positive in personal, interpersonal and behavioural terms. The social worker builds, in an emotional and rational plan, a working relationship that fosters the realization of this potential, maintaining high self-esteem, positive self-concept and self-confidence. Each successful step on the way to solving the problem contributes to the formation of a positive attitude towards the child itself and others, and accumulates strengths for the next steps and stages of the assisting process.

Impact Factor:

ISRA (India)	= 4.971	SIS (USA)	= 0.912	ICV (Poland)	= 6.630
ISI (Dubai, UAE)	= 0.829	PIHHI (Russia)	= 0.126	PIF (India)	= 1.940
GIF (Australia)	= 0.564	ESJI (KZ)	= 8.716	IBI (India)	= 4.260
JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 5.667	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

The child has the right to remain silent. A child's silence in a work relationship can be an indicator of ambivalence, deep experiences, passive anger or resentment by abstaining from a conversation, wrong reaction or step by a social worker, reflection on an important point in the conversation or a related to it problem, etc. It may also be dictated by certain cultural norms of behaviour that must be taken into account when interacting with a child from another cultural community. The social worker should not only respect and acknowledge the child's desire not to talk, but also be able to adequately analyse the meaning of its silence, to get acquainted with and better understand the child's thoughts and feelings at that moment, because behind them may be different causes. Insight of the silence, unravelling the message contained in it, and verbalizing the possible thoughts and experiences by the social worker, not only stimulates the child's attempts to understand the meaning of his or her own feelings and behaviour, but also helps him/her to manage them more successfully. The desire of the child not to talk should not be considered by the social worker as unnecessary stubbornness or confrontation of a will.

The child uses various verbal and non-verbal ways and means to express itself and to reveal its interaction with the environment in which is located. The social worker must not only know them well, but also use a professionally grounded approach, tools and methodology for analysis and interpretation.

Each child has his own individual pace of development and drive for change. The social worker must not only recognize, accept and get to know them, but also choose and use appropriate work methods and approaches. The social worker views the child's development as a sequence or configuration of qualitative and quantitative changes in and between the biological, behavioural, psychological and socializing (family, society, culture) systems and processes which are in continuous and dynamic interaction [7; 8]. In carrying out the supporting process, the social worker is guided not so much by the one-line deterministic approach, but above all by the view of the emergence of the risk situation and the related difficulties and problems in the social functioning and development as a result of the multidirectional and complex interaction between different variables and factors. Determines the specifics of the support strategy in the context of the established situation and depending on the focus of the influence of variables and factors is possible through different paths to reach non-adaptability. The difficulties and failures in resolving regulatory crises together with those of the above factors have different effects, determined by the so-called "resilience" of the child, i.e. stability and resistance to the negative impact of various risk factors towards better adaptation and development [6; 7; 12; 13; 15]. In this respect, the social worker is well aware that, in the

context of dynamic interactions between different systems in the social environment, factors are included which, depending on their nature and specificity (frequency, duration, sustainability, etc.) and on the effectiveness of the compensatory mechanisms, reduce or increase the risk for the child's social functioning and development. The outlined dynamics, suggesting a wide range of non-adaptive behaviours and dysfunctions, require the social worker to make a careful and well-grounded assessment of the adequacy of the techniques, methods and approaches used (for example, psychodynamic, crisis intervention, cognitive-behavioural, system-ecological, etc.) in the family or institutional setting and the need of preventive activities. This way of structuring and organizing the social work provides opportunities for more adequate and individually oriented fulfilment of the main groups of the child's needs. In the outlined context, the social work with children is guided by the requirements for referencing to the different stages of the child's life and to take into account his or her level of development (for example, professional interaction relying solely on the verbal communication will not be effective enough for children who have impaired or underdeveloped ability to perceive information and to express feelings related to it verbally, as it may create frustration and inappropriateness).

The child cannot be considered separately from his or her family, from the persons and institutions with guardianship functions, as well as from significant for the child individuals from its environment. The main idea of the attachment theory is that the good and systematic care and early childhood education creates the conditions for attachment to the parents and other significant persons and institutions, and the atmosphere of trust and respect determines the sense of security [1; 2; 5]. In most cases, children from different risk groups have had or have unsatisfactory relationships with their parents or with legal carers and institutions. By adopting such style of interaction and education, they build a negatively oriented model of interpreting and responding to the behaviour of others in the realization of new relationships in different life situations, and they are more likely to project this model on the social worker with whom they interact. These patterns of non-adaptive behaviour may be modified (although they are of considerable persistence and durability and reactivate in critical situations) through the establishment of appropriate and positively oriented conditions and environments. In this respect, the social worker actualizes a supportive process, which underlies the child's basic trust in the people around him, his ability and skills to create close, sustainable and positively oriented relationships with them. In its synthesis, when difficulties and problems arise they allow him or her to turn without difficulty for help, to receive and rely on it. On the other hand, in the context

Impact Factor:

ISRA (India) = 4.971
ISI (Dubai, UAE) = 0.829
GIF (Australia) = 0.564
JIF = 1.500

SIS (USA) = 0.912
PIHIQ (Russia) = 0.126
ESJI (KZ) = 8.716
SJIF (Morocco) = 5.667

ICV (Poland) = 6.630
PIF (India) = 1.940
IBI (India) = 4.260
OAJI (USA) = 0.350

of the systematically and ecologically oriented social work, families and other important persons and institutes with guardianship functions are regarded as systems whose optimal and socially acceptable functioning is linked to the responsibility for the well-being of the child. The outlined approach does not exclude the educational aspects of interaction with these systems based on humanism, freedom, autonomy, activity, happiness and joy, complexity, sensitivity, permanence and sustainability.

Conclusion

The presented conceptual orientation, educational aspects and values of the social work with children at risk allows it to be considered as a carrier of change in personal and social plan. With its holistic and humanistic character, the social work with

children at risk is focused on timely and adequate meeting the needs, respecting the rights and interests of the children from all risk groups and investing in resources that are committed to achieving individually and socially significant result. In synthesis, they are oriented towards building a working relationship, which is a function of the competence and professional-personal qualities of the social worker, who strives to get to know the child and help it to cope with the difficulties and problems that arise and at the same time to know him or her in the context of evolving interactions and partnerships. In the context of the philosophy of the child's well-being in a democratic society, the reviewed conceptual orientation, behavioural aspects and value dimensions of the social work with children at risk reveal its reflexive orientation.

References:

1. Ainsworth, M. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, 44(4), 709–716. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.4.709>
2. Ainsworth, M. S., & Bowlby, J. (1991). An ethological approach to personality development. *American Psychologist*, 46(4), 333–341. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.46.4.333>
3. Allen, F. (1934). Therapeutic work with children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 4(2), 193–202.
4. Axline, V. M. (1989). *Play therapy*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.
5. Bowlby, J. (1988/2005). *A Secure Base: Clinical applications of attachment theory*. London, New York: Routledge Classics.
6. Cicchetti, D., & Olsen, K. (1990). The developmental psychopathology of child maltreatment. In M. Lewis & S. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of developmental psychopathology* (pp. 261-279).
7. Cicchetti, D., & Rogosch, F. A. (1994). The roll child maltreatment on the developing child. *Child and adolescent psychiatric clinics of North America*, 3, 759-776.
8. Cicchetti, D., & Rizley, R. (1981). Developmental perspectives on the etiology, intergenerational transmission, and sequelae of child maltreatment. *New Directions for Child Development*, 11, 31-35. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.232198.11104>
9. Moustakas, C. (1981). *Rhythms, rituals and relationship*. Detroit, MI: Harlow Press.
10. Nelsen, J., & Lott, L. (2012). *Positive discipline for teenagers: Empowering your teens and yourself through kind and firm parenting*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press. New York: Plenum Press.
11. Nunev, S. (2003). *Theoretical and applied aspects of social work with children at risk*. Shumen, Antos Publishing House.
12. Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 147(6), 589-611. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.147.6.598>
13. Rutter, M. (1993). Resilience: Some conceptual considerations. *Journal of adolescent health*, 14(8), 626-631. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/1054-139X\(93\)90196-V](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/1054-139X(93)90196-V)
14. Taft, J. (1993). *The dynamics of therapy in a controlled relationship*. New York: Macmillan.
15. Werner, E. E. (1989). High-risk children in young adulthood: A longitudinal study from birth to 32 years. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59(1), 72–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1989.tb01636.x>