

The Significance of Fieldwork with Older Persons Placed in Institutions from the Perspective of Social Work Students

Ana Štambuk¹, Ivana Vertuš² and Lea Skokandić¹

¹University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law, Department of Social Work

²Home for the Aged Villa Brezovica

Abstract

Many national and international documents emphasise the need to prepare students to care for older persons. Social work students' knowledge about the ageing process, methods of working with older persons, as well as field practice, have an impact on their attitudes towards older persons as future social work clients. Students' perception of ageing and older persons has significant consequences for the quality of interventions. Therefore, our aim was to examine students' opinions on their experience of fieldwork with older persons in order to gain insight into the meaning it has for them. The research results show that fieldwork is important for the development of a positive attitude towards older persons as it increases gerontological knowledge among students, as well as their interest in future gerontological work. The presented results can be an incentive for further quantitative and qualitative research, which should aim at improving and developing fieldwork with older people as part of a basic education for future work in gerontology.

Key words: *fieldwork; gerontological education; older persons; social work students.*

Introduction

The United Nations Population Fund (2012) published a report entitled “Ageing in the Twenty-First Century: A Celebration and A Challenge” in which the authors point out that the 21st century world will face a large increase in the population of older persons, particularly over the 10 years following the publication of the report. The population of older persons (60+) will increase to over 2 billion by 2050, and the world will have to better prepare for demographic ageing. The European Union and

the United Nations also refer to the problem of accelerated ageing of the population and the resulting consequences, providing guidelines to countries to improve their citizens' sensibility towards older persons. The Republic of Croatia is among the ten countries in the world with the oldest population because it has a high proportion of older persons in the total population, i.e., 17.7 % according to the 2011 Census (Jedvaj et al., 2014). According to the 2021 Census, there were 3,888,529 inhabitants in the Republic of Croatia, of whom 868,638 were older persons (65+), i.e., 22.34 % of the population, which indicates an accelerated increase in the ageing of the population (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

The aforementioned demographic growth of the population older than 65 years of age leads to an increased demand for social workers specialising in gerontology, who will provide high-quality care for older persons and meet their complex social, economic and medical needs (Cummings et al., 2005). Already in 1987, the US Department of Health and Human Services published a report in which it was estimated that there will be a need for 60,000 to 70,000 educated social workers in 2020 (Scharlach et al., 2000). The oldest-old, persons over 85 years of age, who make up the fastest growing age group of older persons, need continuous help and healthcare from society (Cummings et al., 2003). Since older persons are increasingly clients in all areas of social work (in healthcare, the Social Welfare Centre, retirement homes, numerous non-governmental organisations), the need for social workers with knowledge of working with older persons is rising constantly (Olson, 2003). Scharlach et al. (2000) emphasise that there is a shortage of social workers who possess specialised knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population of older persons. Mali (2013) points out that gerontological social work has been neglected and that new demographic trends dictate that it is important for everyone who works with older persons in the field of social work to develop methods and skills to better recognise the specific needs of older persons.

Fieldwork within higher education

During higher education, the curriculum is most important, that is, the content that is being taught and providing fieldwork as part of study (Cummings et al., 2003). Fieldwork is an important element of higher education, especially for the helping professions, because it is an opportunity for students to learn about the application of theory in practice, to experience part of their future field of work, and to try and imagine themselves in the role of a worker in a helping profession (Ricijaš et al., 2006). It is also recognised as one of the educational methods for increasing students' exposure to work with older persons at the undergraduate level of the curriculum, whereby attempts are made to provide students with various field practice experiences related to gerontology (Cummings et al., 2003).

The importance of fieldwork in social workers' education has been highlighted in several domestic and international documents. The professional organisation of social

workers in the United States, the National Association of Social Workers, established the Aging Initiative Program to raise awareness of the importance of gerontological social work practice, as well as to increase the number of professionally trained and qualified social workers who work with this population (Lun, 2010). In Croatia, there are two documents that are important for the education of social workers at the national level, namely the Act on Social Work Activities (Official Gazette, 18/22) and the Code of Ethics of Social Workers of the Republic of Croatia (Croatian Association of Social Workers, 2015), because they emphasise the practical orientation of the profession. At the international level, we believe that it is important to highlight the document entitled “*Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training*”, which emphasises the importance of adapting field practice to professional reality (Urbanc et al., 2016), for which two conditions are important. First, it is necessary that fieldwork enables students to gain a clear picture of their future work and gain the appropriate skills and knowledge. In addition, it is also important to stimulate internalised processes of critical thinking, self-reflection and monitoring of one’s own work (Urbanc, 2003). Understanding the aforementioned legislative framework is important for contextualising field practice and its position in educational programmes for social workers.

The significance of fieldwork from the students’ perspective

Social work students’ knowledge about the ageing process and possible interventions with older persons, attitudes towards older persons as well as practice with this age group are the results of social work education (Olson, 2003). Previous research has confirmed that education related to the ageing process can have an effect on attitudes towards older persons and stimulate interest in working with older persons (Haber et al., 1997). Cummings and Galambos (2003) reached the conclusion that, during field practice, students attending gerontology courses emphasise the importance of rewarding their interaction with clients, systematic guidance and support provided by field instructors, the need to comply with agreed meetings with clients and with the agreed course schedule. For future work with older persons, it is important for students to recognise their own personal competencies for working with older persons during practice (Cummings and Galambos, 2003).

What kind of experience the students will gain during field practice with older persons partly depends on their attitudes towards older persons (Olson, 2003). It is believed that ageism, which is based on the fear of ageing, is one of the main reasons for avoiding this work. Furthermore, negative attitudes and stereotypes of older persons are considered significant obstacles to working with older persons (Cummings et al., 2005). The need for the development of student practice in the field of gerontology is emphasised by research results showing that social work graduate students’ judgments about older persons are often very subjective, and they are significantly influenced by personal factors and stereotypical attitudes (Berkman et al., 2000). Students emphasise that it is extremely important for them to develop positive experiences during

their field practice, that is, to develop a positive relationship with an older person. Establishing positive relationships leads to an increase in their interest in working with this client population (Mosher-Ashley, 2000). Practice involving direct work with clients at social welfare institutions has been identified as an important factor contributing to increased compassion for older people (Aday and Campbell, 1995). Angiullo et al. (1996) confirmed the aforementioned assumption in their research by establishing that students who had contact with older persons experienced positive shifts in their thinking toward older persons. Aday and Campbell (1995) point out that basic gerontological knowledge also has a positive effect on attitudes towards older persons among undergraduate students. Encouraging interest in work in the field of social gerontology and mitigating negative attitudes towards older persons can be achieved through the education of social workers, allowing them to engage in high-quality field practice (Cummings et al., 2005). Cummings et al. (2003) propose several strategies for improving the knowledge and skills of gerontology students: strengthening the connection between gerontological practice and theory in social work, shaping positive experiences for students in the field, and providing strong professional role models in field instructors.

Students state that there are several factors that influence the effectiveness of field practice:

- the degree to which they feel prepared for field practice (Brown et al., 2008);
- creating an environment that promotes learning in a professional and stimulating way (Vallant and Neville, 2006);
- effective, successful communication between the school and the organisation/institution where practice is carried out, and the degree to which students feel welcome in the organisation/institution (Brown et al., 2008);
- having a high-quality relationship between the student and a professional staff member, especially between the student and a field instructor (Dunn and Hansford, 1997);
- having field instructors who provide support and have a positive attitude towards students and their needs (Vallant and Neville, 2006); and
- having a high-quality relationship between the student and a client (Dunn and Hansford, 1997).

A global challenge for gerontology is the problem of recruiting and retaining social workers. The key question is how to attract students and future professionals to work with older persons, that is, how to adequately direct students to these careers (Greene et al., 1992). Brown et al. (2008) believe that high-quality field practice can be very effective in helping students find their professional path. Students believe that greater exposure to field practice is the best way to attract new social workers to gerontological work (Mason and Sanders, 2004). A positive field experience can determine the group of people a student will work with after graduation (Brown, 2005). For this reason, we

deem that identifying the factors that students associate with high-quality field practice is extremely important. Furthermore, in response to negative social attitudes and the increasing need for gerontological social services, we try to emphasise the importance of fieldwork as part of Social Gerontology in order for social work students to improve the skills relevant to working with older persons. Also, through this research we aim at sensitising other helping professions that provide care for older persons (nurses, physicians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists) so that they too can include fieldwork in their educational programmes.

Research aim and question

The aim of the research is to gain insight into the experience of fieldwork in the course Social Gerontology from the perspective of social work students. In accordance with the aim of the research, the following research question was posed:

1. What significance did attending fieldwork with older persons have for the students?

Methodology

Data collection method

In order to achieve the research aim, a qualitative research approach was used. Secondary sources of data were analysed, i.e., archival material consisting of reports by students of the Social Work Study Centre after the end of fieldwork.

Research participants

The source of data for this research was written fieldwork reports by students who attended the Social Work Study Centre between 2015 and 2019, that is, their written reports after completing fieldwork. Students wrote critical reports on conducted fieldwork, describing their experiences at institutions for the social welfare of older persons. Written reports that provided information relevant to the research question were selected for analysis. The reports of students from two different graduating classes were selected in order to contribute to the diversity of the described experiences, which are not specific to one particular class of students. Out of 105 total written reports that constituted our population, we selected 86 written reports by social work students that constituted our sample by purposive sampling.

Procedure

The analysis of archival material enabled the interpretation of written/textual content through a systematic classification process of coding and identification of themes or patterns (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The analysis of archival material allows us to study empirical material in a more analytical way and in greater depth (Mason and Sanders, 2004). In the research, we analysed the field practice logs, that is, the students' final reports after completing the fieldwork, which lasted for three months. In this research, we analysed the part of the report that referred to the students' personal opinions on

the importance they ascribed to field practice. The students were instructed to record their opinions thoroughly so that they could be analysed for research and evaluation of the quality of fieldwork. The advantage of qualitative analysis of archival material is a relatively unbiased insight into the quality of fieldwork from the students' perspective because there was no reactivity in relation to the researcher. When analysing the material, we adhered to ethics standards. Only the principal researcher was aware of the identities of the participants (identity of the person who wrote the log or the institution where the fieldwork was conducted), which were removed during analysis to preserve anonymity and data confidentiality.

Data processing

To obtain answers to the research question, thematic analysis was used during data processing (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The way in which we analysed students' opinions in the final report was determined by the criteria for coding and categorising data at the very beginning of data processing, and we adhered to the principle of consistency during data processing, describing and analysing research results.

Familiarisation with the data is the first step of the method used, where we took written reports and read them several times, noting the original ideas. This was followed by the second step, organising the data. With open coding, we tried to organise the data in such a way that we wrote notes in the margins of the text while we were reading it. We obtained the codes based on the common characteristics of the text we wrote in the margins. Afterwards, we sorted the codes into categories, and the categories into themes according to certain common characteristics. Each category and theme was named according to the meaning of the content of the text they contained. After that, a revision of the categories/themes was conducted in order to check whether the categories and themes fit with the defined codes and the overall interpreted data (Milas, 2005). The purpose of creating codes and categories is to provide a way to abstract the content of the text in order to obtain an answer to the research question.

Results and discussion

To answer the research question: "What significance did attending fieldwork with older persons have for the students?", an analysis was performed and the following two general themes were the results: Gaining gerontological knowledge – the basis for a clearer view of the professional future and developing positive relationships with older persons (Table 1).

Table 1.
The significance of fieldwork for students

Theme	Category	Code:
Gaining gerontological knowledge - the basis for a clearer view of the professional future	Gaining knowledge about older persons as clients	Gaining knowledge about working with older persons Familiarisation with the way of life of older persons at a retirement home Familiarisation with working with special groups of clients at a retirement home Gaining insight into the needs of older persons as clients
	Gaining experience in the field of gerontological work	Familiarisation with the work of social workers in the field of gerontology Familiarisation with the administrative part of the work of a social worker in the field of gerontology Performing administrative tasks in gerontology
	The value of the influence of clients of retirement homes for the future of students	Practice as a complement to theory Improving communication skills in working with older persons Encouraging volunteer work Transfer of knowledge from the older to the younger generation
	Assessment of one's own gerontological vocation	Encouraging interest in work in the field of social gerontology Change of opinion about one's own work at a retirement home Gaining insight into personal obstacles in working with older persons
	Developing one's own perception of retirement homes	Coming to a retirement home for the first time Familiarisation with the functioning of the retirement home Awareness of the challenges of working at a retirement home
Developing positive relationships with older persons	Developing high-quality, empowering contact with older persons	Bonding with older persons Developing friendships with older persons
	Contribution to a different view of older persons	Awareness of the value of older persons Greater compassion towards older persons Greater awareness of the practical wisdom of older persons Eliminating prejudices Change of opinion about older persons

Gaining gerontological knowledge - the basis for a clearer view of the professional future

The first theme we elaborate on is **gaining gerontological knowledge** during fieldwork, which has proven to be extremely important because it helps students to have a clearer view of their professional future (*"After field practice...I can imagine myself working with older persons"* N50). This theme includes five categories: gaining knowledge about older persons as clients; gaining experience in the field of gerontological work; the value of the influence of clients of retirement homes for the future of students; assessment of one's own gerontological vocation and developing one's own perception of retirement homes.

The Social Work Study Centre and other social work schools throughout the world are the first stop for future professionals who will be assigned to different areas of social work after their graduation. The common goal of all social work faculties is to prepare students as well as possible for future work with clients. As we emphasised in the introduction, older people are increasingly present as clients in all areas of social workers' work (Olson, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to provide social work students with the best possible access to gerontological knowledge. Furthermore, professors at social work schools emphasise the need to improve students' knowledge of working with older persons, as the need to work with people living with chronic diseases and complex social and health-related problems is becoming more pronounced (Berkman et al., 2000). Social work education consistently acknowledges the importance of fieldwork as the primary method for students to apply theoretical knowledge gained in classrooms to the realities of social practice (Euster, 1999).

Fieldwork at retirement homes is a very important element in harmonising the student's perception of gerontological work, and it is an important element for obtaining the necessary gerontological knowledge (*"In lectures, we learn theory, but I am glad that I had the opportunity to see everything that we learned in lectures in practice"* N61). Connecting gerontology courses with the practical part of education allows students to improve their knowledge of multidimensional aspects of ageing, and it reduces students' fear of working with older persons, as well as their fear of ageing itself (Snyder et al., 2008). The importance of connecting practical and theoretical knowledge is emphasised by Walsh (2010, cited in Gentle-Genitty et al., 2014), stressing that students can very easily be influenced by their own attitudes and moods if they do not integrate theory and practice, and this can have negative consequences for clients themselves. For students to adopt theoretical knowledge, it is very important for them to have the firsthand experience of meeting and gaining knowledge about older persons, their habits, lifestyle and behaviour. Brody (1970) states that the best way to gain the aforementioned gerontological knowledge is to meet with older persons during fieldwork classes, that is, to gain knowledge firsthand. Students themselves mentioned the transfer of knowledge from the older to the younger generation as a valuable experience of fieldwork (*"I learned from clients... how people in old age think and look at the world"* N2). The practice of client involvement, which we mention at

the beginning of our paper, proved to be an important element of fieldwork as part of the Social Gerontology course, which was recognised by the students themselves. The maximum involvement of older persons in a fieldwork programme promotes an increase in students' motivation to work with older persons, calls into question the idea that young people have prejudices against older persons, and increases students' respect for older persons (Cummings et al., 2005). Robson et al. (2006, cited in Beresford et al., 2006) also state that it is best for students to gain experiential gerontological knowledge primarily through direct work with clients, that is, from the clients themselves who are experiential experts.

Gaining knowledge about working with older persons is important for future gerontological work. Lee and Waites (2006) found that 60 % of social workers claim that their knowledge of the ageing process and work with older persons is necessary for their practice. In our research, students became aware of an increase in their own knowledge about working with older persons (*"I gained insight into a lot of new information about working with older people"* N2). Perceived progress in knowledge about working with older persons and improvement of their skills (*"...because we practice communication skills, and I really see progress considering the beginning of practice"* N9) can play an important role when choosing a future professional path. Furthermore, gaining knowledge about working with special groups of clients of a retirement home proved to be significant for increasing students' interest in gerontological practice (*... for the first time I felt that I could really be a social worker and that I would like to work with this group of clients."* N81). Previous research shows that social work students who reported gaining more knowledge about Alzheimer's showed a greater willingness to work with older persons compared to students who had no contact with people with Alzheimer's dementia (Friday, 2014).

During fieldwork, students gain certain knowledge about the work of social workers at retirement homes (*"...because I realised what the job of a social worker in this area really is..."* N27). That is why it is important to enable students to be present at a retirement home, especially because in our research we found that some students experienced coming to a retirement home for the first time during fieldwork (*"...because I gained a general impression of the home, since I had never been at one until then"* N35). By studying the written reports, we learned that during fieldwork, students gain more knowledge about the work of social workers, such as knowledge about performing administrative tasks in the field of gerontology (*"...I learned a lot about the administration itself"* N20). Brody (1970) emphasises that this is very important because a superficial familiarisation with the work of social workers at retirement homes can only distort reality, that is, it can lead to unwanted consequences in the form of students feeling unprepared to provide care to older persons. Anderson and Wiscott (2003) point out that students who know that they are familiar with working with older persons, and that they have developed certain skills for this, are more willing to work with this group after graduation.

As we pointed out in the introduction, one of the tasks of fieldwork is to help students clarify their work preferences (Friday, 2014). The results of our research show that some students could see themselves performing the role of social workers at retirement homes in the future (“... *the desire to do that job one day awoke in me*” N72). Some of them could not see themselves performing this role (“*The bad things were only up to me...I couldn't see myself working with older persons...*” N49), citing their own insecurity, i.e., undeveloped skills of working with older persons as the reason for their unwillingness to work with them. In previous research, numerous challenges to increasing students' interest in working with older persons were identified. One of the main challenges was the reluctance of students to work in gerontology due to a lack of knowledge and preparation (Lee and Waites, 2006). Ensuring better preparation of students to work with older persons would improve the level of gerontological knowledge gained, which would consequently strengthen their work skills and help influence their perception of older persons (Friday, 2014).

Developing positive relationships with older persons

Developing positive relationships with older persons is the second theme we elaborate on. This theme includes two categories: developing high-quality, empowering contact with older persons and contribution to a different view of older persons.

During fieldwork, it is extremely important for students to develop positive experiences with older persons (Mosher-Ashley, 2000), which was also shown by the results of our research (“*We became very close...that was very important to me...*” N63, and “*I have made many friends among clients...*” N71). Developing high-quality, empowering contact with older persons has been shown to be important for students because bonding with older persons and making friends with them remains etched in students' memory, and it also improves their attitudes towards older persons (Mount, 1993, cited in Cummings and Galambos, 2003).

Contribution to a different view of older persons is the second category of this theme, which includes five codes: awareness of the value of older persons, greater compassion towards older persons, greater awareness of the practical wisdom of older persons, eliminating prejudices, and change of opinion about older persons. From the aforementioned codes, we can conclude that fieldwork was very significant in changing the students' view of older persons, i.e., in making them aware of how important older persons are for our society, as well as in changing their attitudes towards older persons, which is important since negative attitudes and stereotypes of older persons are considered significant obstacles to students' interest in further gerontological education and gerontological work (Cummings, et al., 2005). The results of previous research show that students who have a positive opinion about the ageing process more often plan to engage in specialisation for work with older persons (Anderson and Wiscott, 2003). For the future progress of gerontology, it is important to find ways to change the opinion of a specified number of students about the ageing process,

that is, to find ways to eliminate their fears of old age, and the results of our research show that fieldwork had a positive impact on students.

The fear of ageing is related to the fear of death, which can be the reason for negative attitudes of students towards older persons. Young and Gomez (1991, cited in Friday, 2014) confirmed that students contact with older persons encourages students' thinking about death, which stimulates their negative emotions. It is the fear of death, lack of understanding of older persons, and general emotional difficulties that occur when they are in contact with an older person (Aday and Campbell, 1995) that students cite as reasons for being opposed to working with older persons in the future. Ensuring high-quality fieldwork at retirement homes is one of the things we should work on (*"Practice is very useful because it helps us develop a different view of older persons"* N5). The fieldwork programme is extraordinarily important because it has been shown to significantly change preconceived notions about older persons (Aday and Campbell, 1995).

Since the Republic of Croatia is among the ten countries in the world with the oldest population (Jedvaj et al., 2014), and considering that older persons are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, increasing compassion towards them is very important. After fieldwork, students point out that they have more understanding for older persons, and have realised that older persons are warm and understanding (*"... I realised that they are actually very warm and kind people..."* N5). Furthermore, studying the written reports, the conclusion was that, during fieldwork, students' awareness of the value of older persons increased (*"...I consider older persons to be the most grateful group of clients..."* N26). In their research, Aday and Campbell (1995) also obtained results showing that students state that older persons are an age group that is more grateful than other age groups for the support and care they receive. The stated outcomes of fieldwork are in accordance with the recommendations of the European Union and the United Nations, which refer to the problem of accelerated ageing of the population and emphasise that states should work on increasing compassion towards older members of society (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2017).

Conclusion

Considering the rapid growth of the population of older persons and the lack of gerontological education in social work programmes, this research attempts to reduce this gap by examining the effectiveness of fieldwork with older persons. In order to meet the various needs of the population of older persons, who are becoming more and more numerous, social work education should prepare an increasing number of students with the competencies necessary for gerontological practice. Therefore, it is important to provide all students with basic skills and knowledge as a basis for future specialisation in work with different subgroups of older persons (e.g., those with hearing and/or vision impairment, dementia, people who live alone, the poor, those in a long-term care arrangement, or people who live in their own home).

In our results students cite the development of positive relationships with older persons and gaining gerontological knowledge as the most important features of fieldwork. The results also show that, during fieldwork, students develop high-quality, empowering contacts with older persons. Fieldwork also contributes to adopting a different view of older persons in a way that breaks down prejudice and changes the students' opinion of older persons. Gaining gerontological knowledge as a basis for a clearer view of the professional future includes five categories: gaining knowledge about older persons as clients, gaining experience in the field of gerontological work, the value of the influence of clients of retirement homes for the future of students, assessment of one's own gerontological vocation and developing one's own perception of retirement homes. Based on our results, we deem that it would be worthwhile to encourage students to develop more positive relationships with older persons during their studies and apply their theoretical knowledge, for example by volunteering or participating in projects in local communities that are aimed at providing help to older persons. We also believe that it would be advisable to tie the results of this work in with other education content during studies in order to integrate knowledge from gerontological practice with the overall knowledge that prepares future social workers for work with clients.

The aforementioned results can serve as a positive incentive and example of good practice for other experts who will be working with older persons in the future and introducing fieldwork in their educational programmes with the aim of developing positive attitudes towards this vulnerable population.

References

- Aday, R. H., & Campbell, M. J. (1995). Changes in nursing students' attitudes and work preferences after a gerontology curriculum. *Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly*, 21(3), 247-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0360127950210305>
- Anderson, D., & Wiscott, R. (2004). Comparing social work and non-social work students' attitudes about aging: Implications to promote work with elders. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 42(2), 21-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J083v42n02_03
- Angiullo, L., Whitbourne, S. K., & Powers, C. (1996). The effects of instruction and experience on college students' attitudes toward the elderly. *Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly*, 22(5), 483-495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0360127960220507>
- Beresford, P., Branfield, F., Taylor, J., Brennan, M., Sartori, A., Lalani, M., & Wise, G. (2006). Working together for better social work education. *Social Work Education*, 25(4), 326-331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615470600593493>

- Berkman, B., Silverstone, B., Simmons, W. J., Volland, P. J., & Howe, J. L. (2000). Social work gerontological practice: The need for faculty development in the new millennium. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 34(1), 5-23. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v34n01_02
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brody, E. M. (1970). Congregate care facilities and mental health of the elderly. *Aging and Human Development*, 1(4), 279-321.
- Brown, J. (2005). *Student nurses' experience of learning to care for older people in enriched environments: a constructivist inquiry*. [Unpublished PhD thesis]. University of Sheffield. <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/10336/1/509814.pdf>
- Brown, J., Nolan, M., Davies, S., Nolan, J., & Keady, J. (2008). Transforming students' views of gerontological nursing: Realising the potential of 'enriched' environments of learning and care: A multi-method longitudinal study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 45(8), 1214-1232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2007.07.002>
- Cummings, S. M., & Galambos, C. G. (2003). Predictors of graduate social work students' interest in aging-related work. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 39(3), 77-94. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v39n03_06
- Cummings, S. M., Galambos, C., & DeCoster, V. A. (2003). Predictors of MSW employment in gerontological practice. *Educational Gerontology*, 29(4), 295-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713844338>
- Cummings, S. M., Adler, G., & DeCoster, V. A. (2005). Factors influencing graduate-social-work students' interest in working with elders. *Educational Gerontology*, 31(8), 643-655. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03601270591003382>
- Državni zavod za statistiku (2022). Popis 2021. – prvi rezultati. [https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/Pokazateljji/Popis %202021-Prvi %20rezultati.xlsx](https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/Pokazateljji/Popis%202021-Prvi%20rezultati.xlsx)
- Dunn, S. V., & Hansford, B. (1997). Undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of their clinical learning environment. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 25(6), 1299-1306. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.19970251299.x>
- Euster, G. L. (1999). Gerontology field education experiences of graduate social work and gerontology certificate students. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 31(3-4), 29-47.
- Friday, V. E. (2014). *Exploring Nursing Students' Perceptions of Older Adults: The Impact of Gerontological Education*. [Unpublished PhD thesis]. College of Saint Mary. https://www.csm.edu/sites/default/files/Friday_Dissertation.pdf
- Gentle-Genitty, C., Chen, H., Karikari, I., & Barnett, C. (2014). Social work theory and application to practice: the students' perspectives. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 14(1), 36. <https://hdl.handle.net/1805/11953>
- Greene, R. R., Vourlekis, B. S., Gelfand, D. E., & Lewis, J. S. (1992). Current realities: Practice and education needs of social workers in nursing homes. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 18(3-4), 39-54. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1300/J083v18n01_03
- Haber, D., Hinman, M., Utsey, C., Babola, K., & Looney, C. (1997). Impact of a geriatric health promotion elective on occupational and physical therapy students. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 18(2), 65-76.

- Hrvatska udruga socijalnih radnika (2015). Etički kodeks socijalnih radnica i socijalnih radnika RH. Zagreb: Hrvatska udruga socijalnih radnika. <http://husr.hr/web/?p=460>
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15 (9), 1277-1288. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Jedvaj, S., Štambuk, A., & Rusac, S. (2014). Demografsko starenje stanovništva i skrb za starije osobe u Hrvatskoj. *Socijalne teme: Časopis za pitanja socijalnog rada i srodnih znanosti*, 1(1), 135-154. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/261747>
- Lee, E. K. O., & Waites, C. E. (2006). Infusing aging content across the curriculum: Innovations in baccalaureate social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 42(1), 49-66. <https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2006.042110002>
- Lun, M. W. A. (2010). Student knowledge and attitudes toward older people and their impact on pursuing aging careers. *Educational Gerontology*, 37(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03601270903534770>
- Mali, J. (2013) Social work with older people: The neglected field of social work. *Dialogue in Praxis*, 2(15)1-2 (24-25)), 23-40.
- Mason, S. E., & Sanders, G. R. (2004). Social work student attitudes on working with older clients. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 42(3-4), 61-75. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v42n03_05
- Milas, G. (2005). *Istraživačke metode u psihologiji i u drugim društvenim znanostima*. Jastrebarsko: Naklada Slap.
- Mosher-Ashley, R. R. P. M. (2000). Factors influencing college students to choose careers working with elderly persons. *Educational Gerontology*, 26(8), 725-736. <https://doi.org/10.1080/036012700300001386>
- Olson, C. J. (2003). A curriculum module enhances students' gerontological practice-related knowledge and attitudes. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 38(4), 85-102. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v38n04_08
- Ricijaš, N., Huić, A., & Branica, V. (2006). Zadovoljstvo studijem i samoprocjena kompetentnosti studenata nekih pomagačkih profesija. *Hrvatska revija za rehabilitacijska istraživanja*, 42(2), 51-68.
- Scharlach, A., Damron-Rodriguez, J., Robinson, B., & Feldman, R. (2000). Educating social workers for an aging society: A vision for the 21st century. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 36(3), 521-538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2000.10779026>
- Snyder, C. S., Wesley, S. C., Lin, M. B., & May, J. D. (2008). Bridging the gap: Gerontology and social work education. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 28(4), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960801962864>
- United Nations Population Fund. (2012). Ageing in the twenty-first century: A celebration and a challenge. <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Ageing%20report.pdf>
- Urbanc, K. (2003). Značaj terenske nastave za razvoj profesionalnog identiteta socijalnih radnika. *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 10(1), 61-70.
- Urbanc, K., Buljevac, M., & Vejmelka, L. (2016). Teorijski i iskustveni okviri za razvoj modela studentske terenske prakse u području socijalnih djelatnosti. *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 23(1), 5-38. <https://doi.org/10.3935/ljsr.v23i1.102>

Vallant, S., & Neville, S. (2006). The relationship between student nurse and nurse clinician: impact on student learning. *Nursing Praxis in New Zealand*, 22(3), 23-34.

Vlada Republike Hrvatske (2017). Strategija socijalne skrbi za starije osobe u Republici Hrvatskoj za razdoblje od 2017.-2020. [https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/MDOMSP %20dokumenti/Strategija %20socijalne %20skrbi %20za %20starije %20osobe %20u %20RH %20za %20razdoblje %20od %202017.-2020. %20g.pdf](https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/MDOMSP%20dokumenti/Strategija%20socijalne%20skrbi%20za%20starije%20osobe%20u%20RH%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202017.-2020.%20g.pdf)

Zakon o djelatnosti socijalnog rada. *Narodne novine*, br. 18/22.

Ana Štambuk

University of Zagreb
Faculty of Law
Department of Social Work
Nazorova 51, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
astambuk@pravo.hr

Ivana Vertuš

Home for the Aged Villa Brezovica,
Desprimska ulica 1a, 10257 Brezovica, Croatia
vertus.ivana@gmail.com

Lea Skokandić

University of Zagreb
Faculty of Law
Department of Social Work
Nazorova 51, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
lea.skokandic@gmail.com

Važnost terenske nastave u radu sa starijim osobama u institucionalnom smještaju iz perspektive studenata socijalnoga rada

Sažetak

U mnogim nacionalnim i međunarodnim dokumentima naglašava se potreba pripreme studenata za brigu o starijim osobama. Znanje studenata socijalnoga rada o procesu starenja, metodama rada s osobama starije životne dobi kao i praksa na terenu, imaju utjecaj na njihove stavove prema starijim osobama kao budućim korisnicima socijalnoga rada. Percepcija studenata o starenju i starijim osobama ima značajne posljedice na kvalitetu intervencija, stoga smo htjeli ispitati mišljenje studenata o iskustvu terenske nastave u radu sa starijim osobama kako bismo saznali kakvo značenje ima za njih. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da je terenska nastava važna za razvoj pozitivne percepcije prema starijim osobama, povećava gerontološka znanja studenata i njihov interes za budući gerontološki rad. Navedeni rezultati mogu biti poticaj daljnjim kvantitativnim i kvalitativnim istraživanjima koja trebaju imati za cilj unaprjeđenje i razvoj terenske nastave sa starijim osobama kao temeljnoga obrazovanja za budući gerontološki rad.

Ključne riječi: gerontološko obrazovanje; starije osobe; studenti socijalnoga rada; terenska nastava.

Uvod

Zaklada United Nations Population Fund (2012) objavila je izvješće naslovljeno *Ageing in the Twenty-First Century: A Celebration and A Challenge* u kojem se ističe da će se svijet u 21. stoljeću, a posebno u narednih 10 godina od objave izvješća, suočiti s velikim porastom starije populacije. Naime, brojka starijih osoba (60+) porast će do 2050. godina na preko 2 milijarde te će se svijet morati bolje pripremiti za demografsko starenje. Europska unija i Ujedinjeni narodi također upućuju na problem ubrzanoga starenja stanovništva te posljedica koje iz toga proizlaze dajući smjernice zemljama da povećaju senzibilitet građana prema osobama starije životne dobi. Republika Hrvatska nalazi se među deset zemalja u svijetu s najstarijim stanovništvom jer ima visok udio osoba starije životne dobi u ukupnoj populaciji, odnosno 17,7 % prema popisu 2011.

godine (Jedvaj i sur., 2014). Prema Popisu stanovništva 2021. godine u Republici Hrvatskoj živjelo je 3 888 529 stanovnika od kojih je 868 638 starijih osoba (65+), odnosno 22,34 % stanovništva što ukazuje na ubrzani porast starenja stanovništva (Državni zavod za statistiku, 2022).

Navedeni demografski rast populacije starije od 65 godina dovodi do povećane potražnje za gerontološkim socijalnim radnicima koji će pružiti kvalitetnu brigu o starijim osobama te zadovoljiti njihove složene socijalne, ekonomske i medicinske potrebe (Cummings i sur., 2005). Već je 1987. godine Ministarstvo zdravlja i socijalne skrbi SAD-a objavilo izvješće u kojem je procijenilo da će 2020. godine biti potrebno 60 000 do 70 000 educiranih socijalnih radnika (Scharlach i sur., 2000). Najstarijim osobama starije životne dobi, odnosno osobama starijim od 85 godina, koji čine najbrže rastuću dobnu skupinu starijih osoba, potrebna je kontinuirana pomoć i zdravstvena zaštita koju mogu primiti od društva (Cummings i sur., 2003). Budući da su starije osobe sve prisutniji korisnici u svim područjima rada socijalnih radnika (u zdravstvu, Centru za socijalnu skrb, domovima za starije osobe, brojnim nevladinim udrugama), potreba za socijalnim radnicima sa znanjem o radu sa starijim osobama u stalnom je porastu (Olson, 2003). Scharlach i suradnici (2000) naglašavaju da je manjak socijalnih radnika koji imaju specijalizirana znanja i vještine koje su potrebne za zadovoljavanje potreba brzo rastućega starijeg stanovništva. Mali (2013) ističe da je gerontološki socijalni rad bio zapostavljen te da novi demografski trendovi nalažu da je pred svima koji se bave starijim osobama u području socijalnoga rada važno razvijati metode i vještine kako bismo što bolje prepoznali specifične potrebe starijih osoba.

Terenska nastava u okviru visokoškolskoga obrazovanja

Tijekom visokoškolskoga obrazovanja najvažniji je kurikulum, odnosno nastavni sadržaj te omogućavanje terenske nastave (Cummings i sur., 2003). Terenska nastava je važan element visokoškolskoga obrazovanja, a posebno za profesije usmjerene na pomaganje drugima jer je to prilika da se studenti upoznaju s primjenom teorije u praksi, dožive dio budućega rada te da probaju sebe zamisliti u ulozi budućih radnika profesije usmjerene na pomaganje drugima profesije (Ricijaš i sur., 2006). Također je prepoznata kao jedna od obrazovnih metoda za povećanje izloženosti studenata radu sa starijim osobama na preddiplomskoj razini nastavnoga plana pri čemu se pokušavaju studentima pružiti različita iskustva terenske prakse s gerontološkim sadržajem (Cummings i sur., 2003).

Važnost terenske nastave u obrazovanju socijalnih radnika istaknuta je u nekoliko domaćih i međunarodnih dokumenata. Profesionalna organizacija socijalnih radnika u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama *National Association of Social Workers* uspostavila je *Aging Initiative Program* kako bi podigla svijest o važnosti gerontološke prakse socijalnoga rada kao i povećala broj profesionalno osposobljenih i kvalificiranih socijalnih radnika koji rade s ovom populacijom (Lun, 2010). Dva su važna dokumenta za obrazovanje socijalnih radnika na nacionalnoj razini, a to su Zakon o djelatnosti

socijalnoga rada (NN, 18/22) i Etički kodeks socijalnih radnika Republike Hrvatske (Hrvatska udruga socijalnih radnika, 2015) jer naglašavaju praktičnu orijentiranost profesije. Na međunarodnoj razini smatramo da je važno istaknuti dokument *Globalni standardi za obrazovanje i obuku u socijalnom radu* u kojem se ističe važnost prilagodbe terenske prakse profesionalnoj realnosti (Urbanc i sur., 2016), a za to su važna dva uvjeta. Prvo, potrebno je da terenska nastava omogući studentu stjecanje jasne slike njegova budućega rada te usvajanje odgovarajućih vještina i znanja. Osim navedenoga zadatka, također je važno kod studenta potaknuti internalizirani proces kritičkoga razmišljanja, samorefleksije i praćenja vlastitoga rada (Urbanc, 2003). Razumijevanje navedenoga zakonodavnog okvira važno je za kontekstualiziranje terenske prakse i njezine pozicije u programima za obrazovanje socijalnih radnika.

Važnost terenske nastave iz perspektive studenata

Znanje studenata socijalnoga rada o procesu starenja i o mogućim intervencijama sa starijim osobama, stavovi prema starijim osobama kao i praksa s ovom dobnom skupinom - posljedica su obrazovanja u socijalnom radu (Olson, 2003). Dosadašnja istraživanja potvrdila su da obrazovanje koje je povezano s procesom starenja može imati učinak na stavove o starijima te potaknuti interes za rad sa starijim osobama (Haber i sur., 1997). Cummings i Galambos (2003) došli su do zaključka da studenti tijekom terenske prakse iz kolegija Gerontologija najviše naglašavaju važnost nagrađivanja njihove interakcije s korisnicima, sustavno vođenje i podršku koju studentima daje terenski nastavnik, potrebu da se poštuju dogovoreni susreti s korisnicima te dogovorena satnica kolegija. Za budući rad sa starijim osobama studentima je tijekom prakse važno da prepoznaju osobne kompetencije za rad sa starijim osobama (Cummings i Galambos, 2003).

Kakvo će iskustvo studenti imati tijekom prakse sa starijim osobama jednim dijelom ovisi o njihovim stavovima prema starijim osobama (Olson, 2003). Smatra se da je *ageism*, u čijoj je podlozi strah od starenja, jedan od glavnih razloga izbjegavanja rada sa starijim osobama. Također, negativni stavovi i stereotipi prema osobama starije životne dobi smatraju se značajnim preprekama za rad s osobama starije životne dobi (Cummings i sur., 2005). Potreba za razvojem studentske prakse u području gerontologije naglašena je i rezultatima istraživanja koji pokazuju da su prosudbe diplomiranih studenata socijalnoga rada o starijim osobama često vrlo subjektivne, a na njih značajno djeluju osobni čimbenici te stereotipni stavovi (Berkman i sur., 2000). Studenti naglašavaju da im je za vrijeme terenske prakse iznimno važno razviti pozitivna iskustva, odnosno razviti pozitivne odnose s osobom starije životne dobi. Uspostavljanje pozitivnih odnosa dovodi do povećanja njihova interesa za rad s navedenom populacijom korisnika (Mosher-Ashley, 2000). Praksa koja uključuje izravan rad s korisnicima u ustanovama socijalne skrbi identificirana je kao važan čimbenik koji doprinosi povećanju suosjećajnosti prema osobama starije životne dobi (Aday i Campbell, 1995). Angiullo i suradnici (1996) u svojoj studiji potvrdili

su navedenu pretpostavku otkrivši da su se dogodili pozitivni pomaci prema starijim osobama kod studenata koji su imali kontakte sa starijim osobama. Aday i Campbell (1995) naglašavaju da osnovno gerontološko znanje pozitivno djeluje na stavove prema osobama starije životne dobi kod studenata preddiplomskoga studija. Poticanje interesa za rad u području socijalne gerontologije te otklanjanje negativnih stavova prema osobama starije životne dobi, moguće je napraviti kroz obrazovanje socijalnih radnika, omogućujući im kvalitetnu terensku praksu (Cummings i sur., 2005). Cummings i sur. (2003) predlažu nekoliko strategija za unaprjeđenje znanja i vještina studenata u području gerontologije: jačanje povezanosti gerontološke prakse i teorije u socijalnom radu, oblikovanje pozitivnih iskustava studenata na terenu te pružanje snažnih profesionalnih uzora u terenskim nastavnicima.

Studenti navode da postoji nekoliko čimbenika koji djeluju na učinkovitost terenske prakse:

- stupanj u kojem se osjećaju pripremljenima za terensku praksu (Brown i sur., 2008)
- stvaranje okružja koje potiče učenje na profesionalan i stimulirajući način (Vallant i Neville, 2006)
- djelotvorna, uspješna komunikacija između studija i organizacije/ustanove u kojoj se obavlja praksa te stupanj koliko se studenti osjećaju dobrodošlima u organizaciju/ustanovu (Brown i sur., 2008)
- kvalitetan odnos između studenta i stručnoga osoblja, osobito između studenta i terenskoga nastavnika (Dunn i Hansford, 1997)
- terenski nastavnik koji pruža podršku i ima pozitivan stav prema studentima i njihovim potrebama (Vallant i Neville, 2006) te
- kvalitetan odnos između studenta i korisnika (Dunn i Hansford, 1997).

Globalni izazov za gerontologiju predstavlja problem zapošljavanja i zadržavanja socijalnih radnika u području rada sa starijim osobama. Ključno je pitanje kako privući studente, buduće profesionalce za rad sa starijim osobama, odnosno kako adekvatno usmjeriti studente na te karijere (Greene i sur., 1992). Brown i sur. (2008) smatraju da kvalitetna terenska praksa može biti vrlo djelotvorna u pomaganju studentima da pronađu svoj profesionalni put. Studenti smatraju da je veća izloženost terenskim praksama najbolji način za privlačenje novih socijalnih radnika u gerontološki rad (Mason i Sanders, 2004). Pozitivno iskustvo terenske prakse može odrediti skupinu osoba s kojima će student raditi nakon završetka diplomskoga obrazovanja (Brown, 2005). Zbog toga smatramo da je identificiranje čimbenika koje studenti povezuju s kvalitetnom terenskom praksom iznimno važno. Također, kao odgovor na negativne društvene stavove i sve veću potrebu za gerontološkim socijalnim uslugama nastojimo naglasiti važnost terenske nastave iz kolegija Socijalna gerontologija kako bismo unaprijedili vještine rada sa starijim osobama kod studenata socijalnoga rada. Također, ovim istraživanjem želimo senzibilizirati i druge pomažuće profesije koje pružaju skrb starijim osobama (medicinske sestre, liječnike, fizioterapeute, radne terapeute,

psihologe) kako bi i oni mogli u svojim programima stjecanja obrazovanja uvrstiti terensku nastavu.

Cilj i istraživačko pitanje

Cilj je istraživanja dobiti uvid u iskustvo terenske nastave iz kolegija Socijalna gerontologija iz perspektive studenata socijalnoga rada. U skladu s ciljem istraživanja postavljeno je istraživačko pitanje:

1. Kakvo je značenje za studente imalo pohađanje terenske nastave sa starijim osobama?

Metodologija ***Metoda prikupljanja podataka***

Kako bi se ispitao postavljeni cilj istraživanja, korišten je kvalitativni istraživački pristup. Analizirani su sekundarni izvori podataka, odnosno arhivska građa koju su činili izvještaji studenata Studijskog centra socijalnoga rada nakon završetka terenske nastave.

Sudionici istraživanja

Izvor podataka u ovom istraživanju bili su pisani izvještaji o provedenoj terenskoj nastavi sa starijim osobama koju su studenti Studijskog centra socijalnog rada pohađali 2015. i 2019. godine, odnosno njihovi pisani osvrti nakon završetka terenske nastave. Studenti pišu kritičke osvрте na provedenu terensku nastavu, opisujući svoja iskustva i doživljaje na terenskoj nastavi u ustanovama za socijalnu skrb starijih osoba. Za analizu odabrani su oni pisani osvrti koji su pružali informacije relevantne za postavljeno istraživačko pitanje. Prigodno su odabrani osvrti studenata iz dvije generacije kako bi se doprinijelo raznolikosti u opisanim iskustvima, koji nisu specifični za jednu određenu generaciju. Od ukupno 105 pisanih osvrtu koji su činili našu populaciju, namjernim uzorkovanjem odabrali smo 86 pisanih osvrtu studenata socijalnoga rada koji su činili naš uzorak.

Postupak

Metoda prikupljanja podataka jest analiza arhivske građe koja služi interpretaciji pisanoga/tekstualnoga sadržaja kroz sustavan klasifikacijski proces kodiranja i identifikacije tema ili obrazaca (Hsieh i Shannon, 2005). Analiza arhivske građe omogućuje nam proučavanje empirijske građe uz veću analitičnost i veću dubinu (Mason i Sanders, 2004). U istraživanju smo analizirali dnevnikе prakse, odnosno završni izvještaj studenata nakon završetku terenske nastave koja je trajala tri mjeseca. U ovom istraživanju analizirali smo dio izvještaja koji se odnosio na osobni osvrt studenata o važnosti koju su pridavali terenskoj praksi. Studenti su bili upućeni da svoje osvрте temeljito evidentiraju kako bi se mogli naknadno analizirati u svrhu istraživanja evaluacije kvalitete terenske nastave. Prednost kvalitativne analize sadržaja arhivske građe jest mogućnost stjecanja relativno nepristranoga uvida u kvalitetu provedbe terenske nastave u sklopu kolegija Socijalna gerontologija iz perspektive studenata,

jer nije bilo reaktivnosti u odnosu na istraživača. Prilikom analize građe držali smo se etičkih standarda. Samo je glavni istraživač bio upoznat s identitetom sudionika (identitetom osobe koja je pisala dnevnik ili ustanove u kojoj je provođena terenska nastava) koji su uklonjeni prilikom daljnje analize kako bi se očuvala anonimnost i povjerljivost podataka.

Obrada podataka

Kako bismo dobili odgovore na postavljeno istraživačko pitanje, pri obradi podataka korištena je tematska analiza (Braun i Clarke, 2006). Način na koji smo analizirali osvrte studenata u završnom izvještaju određen je kriterijima kodiranja i kategoriziranja podataka na samom početku obrade podataka te smo se držali načela dosljednosti tijekom obrade podataka, opisivanja i analiziranja rezultata istraživanja.

Upoznavanje s podacima prvi je korak korištene metode, kada smo uzeli pisane osvrte i iščitavali ih više puta bilježeći prvotne ideje. Zatim je slijedio drugi korak, odnosno organiziranje podataka. Otvorenim kodiranjem pokušali smo organizirati iščitane podatke tako da smo pisali bilješke u tekstu dok smo ga čitali, odnosno na marginama teksta. Kodove smo dobili na temelju zajedničkih karakteristika teksta koji smo napisali na marginama. Zatim smo kodove razvrstali u kategorije, a kategorije u teme prema određenim zajedničkim karakteristikama. Svaka kategorija i tema dobila je naziv prema značenju sadržaja teksta koji sadrže. Poslije toga, uslijedilo je revidiranje kategorija/tema tako da se provjerava jesu li kategorije i teme prikladne u odnosu na definirane kodove i cjelokupne interpretirane podatke (Milas, 2005). Svrha kreiranja kodova i kategorija jest apstrahiranje sadržaja teksta kako bi se dobio odgovor na postavljeno istraživačko pitanje.

Rezultati i rasprava

Kako bismo odgovorili na istraživačko pitanje: *Kakvo je značenje za studente imalo pohađanje terenske nastave u radu sa starijim osobama?* učinjena je analiza koja je rezultirala s dvije opće teme: Stjecanje gerontološkog znanja – temelj jasnijeg pogleda na profesionalnu budućnost i Razvijanje pozitivnih odnosa s osobama starije životne dobi (Tablica 1).

Tablica 1.

Značaj terenske nastave za studente

Tema	Kategorija	Kod
Stjecanje gerontološkog znanja – temelj jasnijeg pogleda na profesionalnu budućnost	Stjecanje znanja o osobama starije životne dobi kao korisnicima	Stjecanje znanja o radu s osobama starije životne dobi Upoznavanje načina života osoba starije životne dobi u domu za starije osobe Upoznavanje rada s posebnim skupinama korisnika doma za starije osobe Stjecanje uvida u potrebe starijih osoba kao korisnika

Tema	Kategorija	Kod
Stjecanje gerontološkog znanja – temelj jasnijeg pogleda na profesionalnu budućnost	Stjecanje iskustva u području gerontološkoga rada	Upoznavanje rada socijalnih radnika u području gerontologije Upoznavanje s administrativnim dijelom posla socijalnoga radnika u području gerontologije Obavljanje administrativnih poslova u gerontologiji
	Vrijednost djelovanja korisnika domova za starije osobe na budućnost studenata	Praksa kao nadopuna teoriji Unaprjeđenje komunikacijskih vještina u radu sa starijim osobama Poticanje na volonterski rad Prijenos znanja sa starije na mlađu generaciju
	Procjena vlastitoga gerontološkog poziva	Poticanje interesa za rad u području socijalne gerontologije Promjena mišljenja o vlastitom radu u domu za starije osobe Spoznaja osobnih prepreka u radu sa starijim osobama
	Razvijanje vlastite slike o domu za starije osobe	Prvi dolazak u dom za starije osobe Upoznavanje s načinom funkcioniranja doma za starije osobe Osvještavanje izazova rada u domu za starije osobe
Razvijanje pozitivnih odnosa s osobama starije životne dobi	Razvijanje kvalitetnoga osnažujućega kontakta sa starijim osobama	Zbližavanje s osobama starije životne dobi Razvijanje prijateljstva s osobama starije životne dobi
	Doprinos drugačijem pogledu na starije osobe	Svijest o vrijednosti starijih osoba Povećanje suosjećajnosti prema osobama starije životne dobi Povećanje svijesti o životnoj mudrosti starijih osoba Otklanjanje predrasuda Promjena mišljenja o starijim osobama

Stjecanje gerontološkog znanja – temelj jasnijeg pogleda na profesionalnu budućnost

Prva tema koju prikazujemo jest **stjecanje gerontološkoga znanja** tijekom terenske nastave koje se pokazalo iznimno važnim jer pomaže studentima u jasnijem pogledu na njihovu profesionalnu budućnost („*Nakon prakse...mogu se zamisliti da radim sa starijim*

osobama" N50). Navedena tema obuhvaća pet kategorija: stjecanje znanja o osobama starije životne dobi kao korisnicima; stjecanje iskustva u području gerontološkoga rada; vrijednost djelovanja korisnika domova za starije osobe na budućnost studenata; procjena vlastitoga gerontološkog poziva te razvijanje vlastite slike o domu za starije osobe.

Studijski centar socijalnoga rada i druge škole socijalnoga rada u svijetu prvo su stajalište budućih profesionalaca koji će nakon njihova završetka biti raspoređeni u različita područja socijalnoga rada. Zajednički je cilj svih škola za socijalni rad što bolje pripremiti studente za budući rad s korisnicima. Kao što je naglašeno u uvodu, starije osobe su sve prisutniji korisnici u svim područjima rada socijalnih radnika (Olson, 2003) te je zbog toga potrebno studentima socijalnoga rada omogućiti što kvalitetniji pristup gerontološkom znanju. Također, profesori u školama za socijalni rad naglašavaju potrebu poboljšanja znanja studenata o radu sa starijim osobama jer je sve izraženija potreba rada s osobama koje žive s kroničnim bolestima te imaju složene društvene i zdravstvene probleme (Berkman i sur., 2000). Obrazovanje za socijalni rad dosljedno prihvaća važnost terenske nastave kao primarne metode za studente da primijene teorijsko znanje stečeno u učionicama na stvarnost društvene prakse (Euster, 1999).

Terenska nastava u domovima za starije osobe jako je važan element u slaganju studentove percepcije o gerontološkom radu i važan element za dobivanje potrebnoga gerontološkog znanja (*„Na predavanjima učimo teoriju, ali drago mi je što sam imala priliku sve to što smo na predavanjima učili vidjeti i u praksi”* N61). Povezivanje kolegija gerontologije s praktičnim dijelom nastave omogućuje studentima poboljšanje znanja o višedimenzionalnim aspektima starenja, smanjuje strah studenata od rada sa starijim ljudima kao i od samoga starenja (Snyder i sur., 2008). Važnost povezivanja praktičnoga s teorijskim znanjem ističe i Walsh (2010, prema Gentle-Genitty i sur., 2014) naglašavajući da se studenti mogu vrlo lako naći pod utjecajem vlastitih stavova i raspoloženja ako ne integriraju teoriju i praksu, a navedeno može imati pogubne posljedice za same korisnike. Kako bi studenti usvojili teorijsko znanje, jako im je važno imati iskustvo susreta sa starijim osobama te neposredno saznati i steći znanje o starijim osobama, njihovim navikama, načinu života i ponašanju. Brody (1970) navodi da je najbolji način stjecanja navedenoga gerontološkog znanja susret s osobama starije životne dobi tijekom terenke nastave, odnosno stjecanje neposrednoga znanja. I sami studenti kao jedno vrijedno iskustvo terenske nastave naveli su prijenos znanja sa starije na mlađu generaciju (*„Od korisnika sam naučio... kako razmišljaju i gledaju na svijet osobe u dubokoj starosti”* N2). Praksa uključivanja korisnika koju navodimo na početku našega rada pokazala se kao važan element terenske nastave u sklopu kolegija Socijalna gerontologija, što su prepoznali sami studenti. Maksimalna uključenost starijih osoba u program terenske nastave promiče povećanje motivacije studenata za rad sa starijim osobama, dovodi u pitanje tezu da mlade osobe imaju predrasude prema starijima te povećava poštovanje studenata prema osobama starije životne dobi (Cummings i sur., 2005). Robson i sur. (2006 prema Beresford i sur., 2006) također navode da je najbolje

da studenti iskustveno gerontološko znanje prvenstveno steknu u izravnom radu s korisnicima, odnosno od samih korisnika koji su iskustveni eksperti.

Stjecanje znanja o radu s osobama starije životne dobi važno je za budući gerontološki rad. Lee i Waites (2006) istraživanjem su došli do rezultata da 60 % socijalnih radnika tvrdi da im je znanje o procesu starenja i radu s osobama starije životne dobi neophodno za njihovu praksu. Istraživanjem smo došli do rezultata da su studenti uvidjeli povećanje vlastitoga znanja o radu s osobama starije životne dobi („*Dobio sam uvid u mnogo novih informacija o radu sa starijim osobama*„N2). Uočeni napredak u znanju o radu sa starijim osobama i unaprjeđenju njihovih vještina („*...jer vježbamo komunikacijske vještine i zaista vidim napredak s obzirom na početak prakse*” N9) može igrati važnu ulogu prilikom odabira budućega profesionalnog puta. Također, stjecanje znanja o radu s posebnim skupinama korisnika doma za starije osobe, pokazalo se značajnim za povećanje interesa studenata za gerontološku praksu („*prvi put osjetila sam da ja stvarno mogu biti socijalna radnica i da bih voljela raditi s ovom grupom korisnika*„ N81). Prethodna istraživanja pokazuju da su studenti socijalnoga rada koji su izvijestili o stjecanju većega znanja o Alzheimerovoj bolesti pokazali veću spremnost za rad sa starijim osobama u odnosu na studente koji nisu bili u kontaktu s osobama oboljelim od Alzheimerove demencije (Friday, 2014).

Tijekom terenske nastave studenti steknu određeno znanje o radu socijalnih radnika u domovima za starije osobe („*...jer sam shvatila koji je zapravo posao socijalnog radnika u ovom području*„ N27) te je zbog toga važno omogućiti studentima dolazak u dom za starije osobe, posebno jer smo istraživanjem ustanovili da su pojedini studenti prvi put tijekom terenske nastave imali iskustvo dolaska u dom za starije osobe („*...jer sam time dobila okvirnu sliku o domu, pošto do tada nikad nisam bila ni u jednom*” N35). Proučavajući pisane osvrte došli smo do rezultata da studenti tijekom terenske nastave steknu veće znanje o radu socijalnih radnika, kao što je znanje o obavljanju administrativnih poslova u području gerontologije („*puno toga sam naučila o samoj administraciji*„ N20). Brody (1970) naglašava da je to jako važno jer površno upoznavanje studenata s radom socijalnih radnika u domu za starije osobe može samo iskriviti stvarnost, odnosno dovesti do neželjenih posljedica da se studenti osjećaju nespremnima pružati skrb osobama starije životne dobi u budućnosti. Anderson i Wiscott (2003) ističu da su studenti koji znaju da su upoznati s radom sa starijim osobama i da su unaprijedili određene vještine za rad sa starijim osobama, spremniji su raditi s ovom grupom nakon diplome.

Kao što smo istaknuli u uvodu, jedan od zadataka terenske nastave jest pomoći studentima u rasvjetljavanju njihovih radnih sklonosti (Friday, 2014). Rezultati našega istraživanja pokazuju da su se pojedini studenti pronašli u ulozi budućih socijalnih radnika u domovima za starije osobe („*...probudila se u meni želju da se jednog dana bavim tim poslom*” N72). Neki se nisu pronašli u navedenoj ulozi („*Ono što je bilo loše je isključivo do mene...nisam se pronašla u radu sa starijim osobama*„ N49) navodeći vlastitu nesigurnost, odnosno nerazvijene vještine rada sa starijim osobama kao

razlog njihove nesprijetnosti za rad sa starijim osobama. U prethodnim istraživanjima identificirani su brojni izazovi povećanju interesa studenata za rad sa starijim osobama. Kao jedan od glavnih izazova pojavila se nevoljkost studenata da rade u gerontologiji zbog nedostatka znanja i priprema (Lee i Waites, 2006). Osiguravanje bolje pripreme studenata za rad sa starijim osobama poboljšalo bi razinu stečenoga gerontološkog znanja, a to bi posljedično ojačalo njihove vještine rada i pomoglo djelovati na njihovu percepciju starijih osoba (Friday, 2014).

Razvijanje pozitivnih odnosa s osobama starije životne dobi

Druga tema koju prikazujemo je **razvijanje pozitivnih odnosa s osobama starije životne dobi**. Navedena tema obuhvaća dvije kategorije: razvijanje kvalitetnoga osnažujućeg kontakta sa starijim osobama i doprinos drugačijem pogledu na starije osobe.

Studentima je za vrijeme terenske nastave iznimno važno razviti pozitivna iskustva sa starijim osobama (Mosher-Ashley, 2000), što su pokazali rezultati i našega istraživanja („Zbližile smo se jako...to mi je bilo jako važno...” N63 i „Stekla sam brojne prijatelje među korisnicima...” N71). Razvijanje kvalitetnoga osnažujućeg kontakta sa starijim osobama pokazalo se važnim za studente jer zbližavanje s osobama starije životne dobi i stjecanje prijateljstva s njima studentima ostaje urezano u pamćenje, a također poboljšava njihove stavove prema starijim osobama (Mount, 1993., prema Cummings i Galambos, 2003).

Doprinos drugačijem pogledu na starije osobe druga je kategorija navedene teme koja obuhvaća pet kodova: svijest o vrijednosti starijih osoba, povećanje suosjećajnosti prema osobama starije životne dobi, povećanje svijesti o životnoj mudrosti starijih osoba, otklanjanje predrasuda i promjena mišljenja o starijim osobama. Iz navedenoga broja kodova možemo zaključiti da je terenska nastava imala veliko značenje u promjeni pogleda studenata na starije osobe, odnosno u njihovom osvještavanju koliko su starije osobe važne za naše društvo i u promjeni njihovih stavova prema starijim osobama što je važno zbog činjenice da se negativni stavovi i stereotipi prema starijim osobama smatraju značajnim preprekama studentovim interesima za daljnje gerontološko obrazovanje i gerontološki rad (Cummings i sur., 2005). Rezultati prethodnih studija pokazuju da studenti koji imaju pozitivno mišljenje o procesu starenja češće planiraju specijalizaciju za rad sa starijim osobama (Anderson i Wiscott, 2003). Za buduću napredak gerontologije važno je pronaći načine kako promijeniti mišljenje određenoga broja studenata o procesu starenja, odnosno kako otkloniti njihove strahove od starosti, a rezultati našega istraživanja pokazuju da je terenska nastava imala pozitivan utjecaj na studente.

Strah od starenja povezan je sa strahom od smrti koji može biti razlog negativnih stavova studenata prema starijim osobama. Young i Gomez (1991, prema Friday, 2014) potvrdili su da viđenje starijih ljudi kod studenata potiče razmišljanje o smrti što posljedično pobuđuje negativne emocije. Upravo strah od smrti, nerazumijevanje osoba starije životne dobi te opće emocionalne poteškoće koje se javljaju kada su u

kontakta s osobom starije životne dobi (Aday i Campbell, 1995) studenti navode kao razloge protivljenja budućem radu sa starijim osobama. Osiguravanje kvalitetne terenske nastave u domovima za starije osobe jedan je od načina na kojima trebamo raditi („Praksa je vrlo korisna jer nam pomaže da razvijemo drugu sliku o starijim ljudima” N5). Program terenske nastave iznimno je važan jer se pokazao njegov učinak na značajnu promjenu unaprijed stvorenih predodžbi o starijim osobama (Aday i Campbell, 1995).

Budući da se Republika Hrvatska nalazi među deset zemalja u svijetu s najstarijim stanovništvom (Jedvaj i sur., 2014), a starije osobe čine jednu od najosjetljivijih skupina u društvu, povećanje suosjećajnosti prema njima od iznimne je važnosti. Studenti nakon provedene terenske nastave ističu da imaju više razumijevanja, osjećaja za starije osobe te su shvatili da su osobe starije životne dobi tople osobe i pune razumijevanja za druge („... shvatila sam da su oni zapravo vrlo tople i drage osobe...” N5). Također, proučavajući pisane osvrte došli smo do zaključka da su tijekom terenske nastave studenti povećali svoju svijest o vrijednosti starijih osoba („...smatram da su starije osobe najzahvalnija skupina korisnika...” N26). Aday i Campbell (1995) u svojem istraživanju također su dobili rezultate da studenti navode kako su starije osobe dobna skupina koja je zahvalnija od ostalih dobnih skupina na podršci i njezi koju dobivaju. Navedeni ishodi terenske nastave u skladu su s preporukama Europske unije i Ujedinjenih naroda koji upućuju na problem ubrzanoga starenja stanovništva ističući da države trebaju raditi na povećanju suosjećajnosti prema starijim članovima društva (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2017).

Zaključak

S obzirom na dosadašnji ubrzani rast starije populacije i nedostatak gerontološkoga obrazovanja u programima socijalnoga rada, ovo istraživanje pokušava smanjiti navedeni jaz na tako da se nastoji ispitati učinkovitost terenske nastave sa starijim osobama. Kako bi se zadovoljile različite potrebe starije populacije koja postaje sve brojnija, obrazovanje za socijalni rad treba pripremati sve veći broj studenata s kompetencijama potrebnim za gerontološku praksu. Stoga je važno osigurati svim studentima osnovne vještine i znanja kao temelj budućim specijaliziranim usmjerenjima za rad s različitim podskupinama starijih osoba (npr. osobama oštećena sluha i/ili vida, osobama s demencijom, osobama koje su osamljene, siromašne, osobe u dugotrajnoj skrbi ili one koje žive u vlastitom domu).

Detaljnim proučavanjem pisanih osvrta studenata nakon provedene terenske nastave došli smo do rezultata da studenti navode razvijanje pozitivnih odnosa sa starijim osobama i stjecanje gerontološkoga znanja kao najvažnije značajke terenske nastave. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da studenti tijekom terenske nastave razvijaju kvalitetan osnažujući kontakt sa starijim osobama te da terenska nastava doprinosi njihovom drugačijem pogledu na starije osobe tako da ruši predrasude i mijenja mišljenje studenata prema starijim osobama. Stjecanje gerontološkoga znanja kao temelja za jasniji pogled na profesionalnu budućnost obuhvaća pet kategorija: stjecanje znanja o osobama

starije životne dobi kao korisnicima, stjecanje iskustva u području gerontološkoga rada, vrijednost djelovanja korisnika domova za starije osobe na budućnost studenata, procjena vlastitoga gerontološkog poziva te razvijanje vlastite slike o domu za starije osobe. Temeljem dobivenih rezultata smatramo da bi bilo dobro poticati studente da tijekom studija više razvijaju pozitivne odnose sa starijim osobama i primjenjuju stečena teorijska znanja, primjerice volontiranjem ili sudjelovanjem u projektima u lokalnim zajednicama, koje su usmjerene na pomoć starijim osobama. Također, smatramo da bi bilo uputno povezivati dobivene rezultate i s drugim nastavnim sadržajima tijekom studiranja kako bi se spoznaje iz gerontološke prakse integrirale u cjelokupno znanje koje priprema buduće socijalne radnike za rad s korisnicima.

Navedeni rezultati mogu poslužiti kao pozitivan poticaj i primjer dobre prakse drugim budućim stručnjacima koji će raditi sa starijim osobama da u svoje edukacijske programe uvedu terensku nastavu s ciljem razvijanja pozitivnih stavova prema ovoj ranjivoj populaciji.