

Social Work Tools - The Interview

What is an interview in social work?

Engels argues that an interview is a directed conversation between one individual and another to elicit certain types of information for use in scientific research or for use in counselling, diagnosis and treatment. Mustafa Soueif highlights two main elements in his definition of the interview:

A- Verbal elements that may be questions, declarative sentences, or single words.

B- Confrontational situations, because an interview is nothing but a set of questions or units of speech, directed by one party (individual or group) to another party (individual or group) in a confrontational situation, according to a certain plan to obtain information about the latter's behaviour or personality traits or to influence this behaviour.

There is another concept of the interview: It is the first and most important means of obtaining case information. It is a directed and reciprocal conversation between the social worker and the case or any other source related to the issue that the case is suffering from, in a professional atmosphere, at a specific time and place agreed upon by both parties within a framework and technical professional rules organised to achieve assistance.

Characteristics of the interview

1 - Social interaction between the parties to the interview, which is associated with verbal conversation and the accompanying changes, gestures and behaviours.

2 - It aims to delve deeper into things with the intention of scientific research.

3. It includes confrontational situations as a necessary prelude to the interaction between the researcher and the respondent. It should be noted that there are types of interviews that do not take place through direct confrontation, as in the case of the telephone interview, which, despite its superficiality and specificity, is considered an interview.

Therefore, the interview is an intentional social process to obtain data or achieve scientific or therapeutic purposes through a social interaction based on confrontation between two parties, one of which is the initiator and the other is the respondent. It does not stop at the surface of the facts, but goes deeper than other tools and combines some of the characteristics of a questionnaire, asking questions and observing behaviour, actions and reactions.

The interview goals:

The objectives of the interview are to:

1. To make the case feel the social worker's attention and focus on it. This helps to give the case the opportunity to present its issue and enable the social worker to know the issue and study its causes.
2. It helps to form a professional relationship and give the case adequate security and respect.
3. It gives the opportunity to clarify the psychological reasons she suffers from, such as: shyness, stuttering, despair, and hopelessness: Shyness, stuttering, despair, anxiety ...
- 4) The process of guiding the case to become self-reliant by encouraging them to contribute to what can be done through school activities as a method of treatment.
5. The interview is a means of modifying the attitudes of individuals surrounding the case, who have a role in influencing it.
- 6 - The interview is also a way to provide direct assistance such as: Financial aid.
- 7 - Obtaining information from its primary sources. It is a quick way to research customer issues in the introductory meeting to save time and effort.
- 8 - Personalisation of the client as the cornerstone of the assistance process: The interview is the environment in which the various influential processes of the counsellor towards the client take place. It removes or alleviates the factors of anxiety or despair that some clients feel when they are transferred to other institutions because they do not meet the institution's conditions.

The principles of the interview:

We mention the most important ones:

- 1 - Good listening based on thinking and analysing, and not being preoccupied with peripheral matters such as answering the phone or recording information about the case.
- 2 - Using the organisational rules of the interview, which is based on a beginning, middle and end.
- 3 - Set a mutually agreed upon time and place for the interview.

4 - The necessity of psychological pre-preparation of the specialist to conduct the interview.

5 - Commitment to the available possibilities and services, while not making promises that cannot be fulfilled.

6 - Questions should be purposeful and far from condemnation, so that the discussion can be objective without bias or prejudice.

7 - Accurate observation of the general form, whether physical in terms of clothing, physical impairment or involuntary movements.

8 - Not relying solely on memory, but rather on recording.

9 - Good reception in meeting the case, initiating the greeting and giving her full attention and the opportunity to express what she wants.

How to conduct the interview:

1 - Interview date: It is essential that the social worker sets an appointment to meet with the client, because it is the impression that the client will have of the social worker and the extent of their interest in the client, their willingness to discuss their concerns, and their commitment and sincerity at work. Time commitment also provides the client with a behavioural model that we may need as a therapeutic aspect, especially with students who find it difficult to manage their time.

2 - Location of the interview: The place of the interview plays a big role in its success, so that the place of the interview, which is mainly the social worker's office, is characterised by warmth, friendliness and a sense of security and reassurance. There should be no interruption during the interview by people entering the room. The distance between the counsellor and the client is important, as it should not be so large as to make the client feel distant. It is also preferable that the interview room does not give a formal image that gives the client a sense of intimidation when entering the room, but rather a relaxed one.

3) Preparing for the interview: It is very important to set an objective for each interview. The objectives of the first interview are often the same as those mentioned earlier, while the objectives of subsequent interviews are determined according to the circumstances of the case. It is also necessary for the social worker to familiarise himself with the client's data from the case file before the

first interview to prepare himself for the interview, as it helps save the social worker's time.

4 - Greeting the client: When greeting the client, it is important to use familiar friendly phrases and then extend a handshake and introduce yourself. The handshake leaves the client with an impression of friendliness, but the social worker has to assess its appropriateness. Friendly phrases may be unnecessary for young students, while with middle and high school students it is an important element. The social worker should be free of distractions, meet the client with a smile and interest, invite them to sit in the designated area, and sit directly in front of them or facing them.

After that, the social worker begins with introductory phrases such as: - What would you like to talk about today? -What can I offer you? It is better for the social worker to start talking with the client on a side topic for about five minutes to reduce his tension, and the social worker can determine where to start based on his judgement of the situation.

5. Duration of the interview: The duration of the interview depends on a number of considerations such as age: for children under seven years old, the interview lasts about 20 minutes and increases as the age increases to about an hour. For those over the age of twelve and for students, it is advisable to limit the interview to one session, and not to coincide with school hours.

6) Ending the first interview: At the end of the first interview, the social worker and the client should reach a decision about the continuation of their relationship. If they agree to continue the relationship, they should agree on the date of the next session. The social worker should hint to the client that the session is coming to an end and can use the skill of summarisation such as:

1. Let's review what we did in this interview.

2: We can summarise what we have done in this interview.

3 We now have ten minutes in which we can discuss what you would like to discuss.

7. Recording the interview: The social worker should not record during the interview, as he/she will be too busy. It is better to record small points that only take up a small part of his/her time and to get the raw data such as age, number of family members and socio-economic status from the client's file and write it down after the end of the interview. It is necessary to record in order to refer to what is

recorded, analyse it and use it later. It is necessary to inform the client of the importance of recording and ask for permission to do so, but writing during the interview should be limited to what is necessary, and all information collected during the interview should be organised and kept in the client's file.

8: Post-interview: The social worker critically evaluates his/her actions, the extent to which the interview achieved the objectives of the interview, and whether the objectives of the programmed plan were achieved. He/she also records the interview accurately immediately after the end of the interview.

Disadvantages of the interview:

- It is difficult to interview a relatively large number of individuals because interviewing one individual takes a great deal of the researcher's time.

- It is affected by the client's concern for himself, his desire to appear positive and his reluctance to give information independently of himself.

- It requires trained interviewers to conduct the interview. If the interviewer is not skilled and trained, he/she cannot create a favourable atmosphere for the interview. The respondent may falsify his answer and the interviewer may be biased in such a way as to skew the answer.

- Difficulty in recording answers or adopting recording tools at the interview location, which is often determined by the respondent.

- Subjectivity in interpreting the results of the interview, as the interviewer may be influenced by his previous opinions and may exaggerate them according to his own experiences, attitudes and biases, or the client may try to satisfy the interviewer through answers that he believes are satisfactory to him.

- It is considered a costly means of time, effort and money.

Interview difficulties:

We mention the most important ones:

- 1 - Some clients are reluctant to attend the interview or request to postpone it or the client may rely on being late for the scheduled date.

- 2 - Clients' fear of someone knowing their secrets (conscious or subconscious resistance).

- 3 - Some clients experience negative emotions such as: Anxiety, fear, stress and shyness.

- 4 - Clients' refusal and resistance to conduct the interview due to certain reasons such as marital conflicts.
- 5 - The lack of experience of the novice specialist.
- 6 - The client feels that the social worker may fail to find a solution.
- 7 - The organisation itself may be an obstacle to the success of the interview.

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