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# **Social Vulnerability, Inclusion, and Intervention in Contemporary Social Work**

## **Rezumat în limba engleză**

### **Abstract**

The habilitation thesis entitled “Social Vulnerability, Inclusion, and Intervention in Contemporary Social Work” systematizes the author’s postdoctoral scientific and professional contributions, focusing on contemporary forms of social vulnerability, mechanisms of social inclusion, and the architecture of social work intervention, with specific attention to services, quality, and community development. The thesis is designed as an argumentative and critical synthesis of a body of research, interventions, projects, and scientific outputs, integrated into a coherent framework that demonstrates scholarly leadership and provides a solid basis for doctoral supervision.

Conceptually, the thesis starts from the assumption that social vulnerability cannot be reduced to administrative categories or to an individual condition; instead, it should be understood as a multidimensional, dynamic, and context-dependent process, produced at the intersection of individual factors (resources, capabilities, health status, life-course trajectories), relational factors (support networks, family dynamics, social capital), institutional factors (access to services, quality and continuity of interventions, organizational governance), and structural factors (inequalities, labour market constraints, housing

conditions, social norms, demographic change). This integrated approach enables nuanced analyses of how vulnerability accumulates, is reproduced, or can be reduced through appropriate social interventions.

The thesis develops a critical discussion of the major theoretical frameworks relevant to contemporary social work, clarifying how notions such as social risk, exclusion, marginalization, dependency, resilience, functioning/capabilities, and social rights can be integrated into a unified interpretive framework. The implications of these paradigms for service design, professional practice, and the definition of quality standards are examined, with particular emphasis on the need for standards that are sensitive to heterogeneous needs and complex life situations.

A central component of the thesis addresses social inclusion as a transversal objective of social work intervention and as a key indicator of intervention effectiveness. Inclusion is analysed both at the individual level (effective access to resources, rights, services, and social participation) and at the community level (social cohesion, stigma reduction, civic participation, and community capacity for support and self-organization). The thesis also explores the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder inclusion, including administrative and institutional barriers, service discontinuities, fragmented interventions, limited intersectoral coordination, and emerging vulnerabilities linked to socio-demographic and technological transformations.

The applied dimension of the thesis conceptualizes social work intervention as a coherent set of professional practices and social services that must be designed, implemented, and evaluated through explicit quality criteria. The discussion covers intervention models and operational tools related to needs assessment, intervention planning, case management, community-based intervention, and progress monitoring. A key contribution is the articulation of the relationship between individual-level and community-level intervention, ensuring that responses to vulnerability move beyond isolated remedial actions and produce

sustained effects on social inclusion and on communities' capacity to address recurring problems.

The thesis provides a distinct focus on the quality of social services, treated both as a normative requirement and as a methodological dimension of intervention. It discusses the rationale of quality standards (safety, accessibility, continuity, effectiveness, person-centredness, professional ethics, and institutional accountability) and how such standards can be operationalized into procedures, indicators, and evaluative practices. The thesis argues that "quality" should not be interpreted merely as formal compliance, but must be linked to meaningful social outcomes: vulnerability reduction, increased autonomy, improved social functioning, strengthened support networks, and sustainable community integration.

Furthermore, community development is conceptualized as an integrative strategy connecting social diagnosis, participatory planning, and the mobilization of local resources with service design and intervention delivery. The thesis highlights the role of participatory approaches, inter-institutional partnerships, and community-based models in reducing persistent vulnerabilities and preventing exclusion. It outlines pathways for strengthening community interventions through participatory methodologies, action research, impact-oriented evaluation, and social innovation.

Overall, the thesis argues that responding to social vulnerability in contemporary social work requires an approach that is simultaneously (1) theoretically grounded, (2) methodologically rigorous, (3) quality-oriented, and (4) community-anchored. The concluding section proposes advanced directions for research and development (theoretical, methodological, and applied) relevant to the field's agenda and doctoral supervision: the refinement of integrated assessment and intervention models, multidimensional operationalization of vulnerability, evaluation of service and intervention impact on inclusion, and the design of sustainable community-based interventions in rapidly changing social contexts.

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