



EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR FIELDWORK IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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Abstract : A fundamental component of social work education is fieldwork, which gives students the chance to apply their academic understanding to practical situations. This study looks into how crucial support and supervision are in determining the caliber and results of fieldwork training. It seeks to investigate how students' learning experiences, skill development, ethical behavior, and general field placement satisfaction are impacted by organized supervision and sufficient support networks. The study also highlights the difficulties that students have when they lack appropriate direction and institutional support. The results of the research highlight the vital role that supervision plays in helping social work students develop their professional identities, competence, and confidence all of which lead to more efficient and moral service delivery in the field. The study offers helpful suggestions for enhancing fieldwork support and supervision methods in social work education.

IndexTerms - Supervision, support, fieldwork, social work education.

INTRODUCTION

Social work is a practice-based profession that is essential for students to become professional social workers. Social work education is a structured academic program that includes fieldwork as a key component for preparing students for professional social work practice. Practical social work plays a crucial role in addressing psycho-social challenges at the individual, group, or community levels. The primary goal of social work education is to develop students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for effective practice. Fieldwork plays a crucial role in achieving this goal. Fieldwork provides real-world experiences rather than classroom theories. It gives the opportunity to apply the knowledge, values, and skills in real-world situations and prepares social work students to work with a community effectively and promote positive social changes. Fieldwork helps students to apply social work principles, values, and knowledge in real-life situations, and it focuses on social service and the welfare of individuals, groups, or communities. In social work education, there are mainly two types of fieldwork: block placement and concurrent fieldwork. Block placement refers to students working in an agency setting for a structured period of time under the supervision of a qualified professional in the agency. In this type of fieldwork, students mainly focus on their work in the agency and apply their knowledge, skills, and methods of social work. Concurrent fieldwork refers to the process of students simultaneously working in an agency. Which means it combines theoretical learning from the classrooms and the practical application in the agency setting. Both types of fieldwork are significant; they play a valuable role in shaping students as competent and skilled professional social workers. In fieldwork, supervision is also important; it is an essential component in social work education. Supervision provides guidance for the student social workers during the placement. Supervision includes structured meetings and quality of feedback given and provides knowledge and experiences and helps students with challenges. Supervision and support are very important because effective supervision ensures students receive proper guidance and structured feedback and practical exposure, which enhances student's confidence in handling real-world challenges. This study explores the significance of supervision and support in shaping student's learning outcomes and professional development in the social work field. Support mechanisms such as mentorship, peer discussions, and institutional support help students to reduce stress, improve decision-making, and practice ethics. This study highlights the impact of structured supervision on student's confidence for professional social work practice. It helps professional social workers, educators, policymakers, and institutions understand the importance of well-planned supervision and support in developing competent and skilled social workers. Many students struggle due to a lack of structured supervision and inadequate support during placements. It leads to anxiety, stress, lack of confidence, and difficulty in facing real-life challenges. By identifying the gaps, the study intends to develop more effective supervision techniques in making competent social workers

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study employed a descriptive research design to explore the role of supervision and support in fieldwork within social work education. It sought to determine the factors influencing student's perceptions on effective supervision, examine the relationship between student's learning outcomes and supervision quality, and understand student's satisfaction with field

placement and supervision. To improve the research instrument and guarantee the questionnaire's clarity, a pilot study was carried out. Second-year postgraduate social work students from colleges in Palakkad, Kerala made up the study's population. Since all qualified MSW students from the designated colleges were included in the study, 56 respondents in total were chosen using the census approach. Ten postgraduate students participated in a pretest to ensure the questionnaire's efficacy and comprehension. Both primary and secondary sources were used to gather data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze and interpret the data. In order to meaningfully interpret the results, the replies were coded, collated, and examined using descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, percentages, and graphical representations. The association between students' capacity to apply theoretical knowledge and the clarity of expectations and deadlines given during supervision was evaluated using a Pearson correlation analysis in order to test the hypothesis. A positive correlation ($r = 0.266$, $p = 0.047$) was found by the study, suggesting a statistically meaningful association. The alternative hypothesis, which holds that effective supervision improves fieldwork outcomes, was thus supported by the rejection of the null hypothesis, which claimed that there was no significant link between supervision and fieldwork efficacy.

RESULTS

The factors influencing students' perceptions of effective supervision.

The study's high mean score of 4.70, median and mode of 5.00, and low standard deviation of 0.46 all supported the findings that 100% of students felt regular supervisor feedback was essential to their growth. An same percentage stressed the significance of supervisors actively listening to their concerns, emphasizing communication as a crucial component of effective supervision, while the vast majority (96.4%) stated that supervisors' field experience had a significant impact on the quality of supervision. Furthermore, 82.1% of respondents said that being aware of deadlines and expectations helped them keep on track with their field objectives. With a standard deviation of 0.70 and a mean of 4.07, the statistical findings corroborated this. Another important factor was emotional support: 75% of respondents said they felt more at ease in trying times when their supervisors maintained their composure, and 87.5% said they believed that their supervisors assisted them in overcoming obstacles in their fieldwork. However, only 28.6% of respondents thought supervisors were available every day, and only 28.5% said supervision meetings were well-structured, suggesting that there are barriers to accessibility and organization. There is a need for greater professionalism since only 32.1% of respondents thought they were handled with respect. Nevertheless, 82.1% valued their supervisors' timeliness, and 66.1% felt at ease asking questions. The significance of supervisor competency is further supported by the noteworthy finding that 82.2% of respondents found it challenging when supervisors lacked area knowledge. Additionally, 71.4% of students reported that their supervisors improved their practical exposure by helping them interact with pertinent specialists. 75% of respondents said that their supervisor's attitude had an impact on them, and 75% said that they were encouraged to take control of their own education. These results imply that students' perceptions of the efficacy of supervision are strongly influenced by supervisory behavior, clarity, emotional support, and professional approach.

SI No	Fairness and Impartiality	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	1	1.8
2	Disagree	2	3.6
3	Neutral	23	41.1
4	Agree	20	35.7
5	Strongly agree	10	17.9
Total		56	100

The accompanying table, which also assessed the role of fairness and respect, reveals that, with a mean score of 3.64, 53.6% of respondents thought supervisors were fair while 41.1% were neutral.

The relationship between quality of supervision and student learning outcomes.

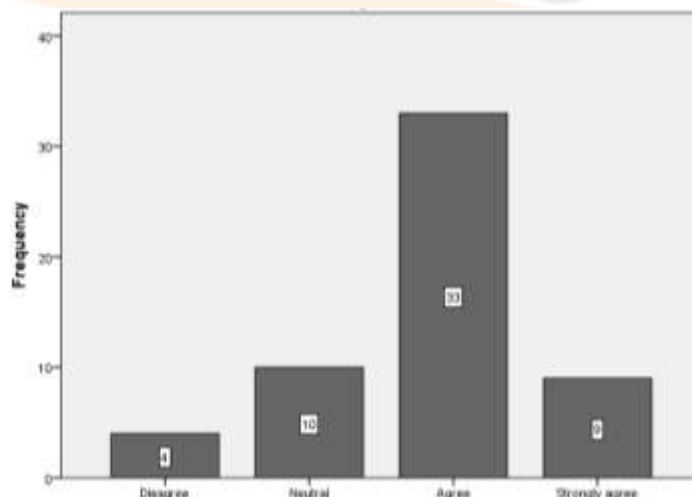
According to the study, 80.8% of participants said that applying their academic knowledge to real-world situations improved their comprehension. The importance of direct feedback is demonstrated by the high percentage of employees (85.7%) who thought their performance improved after being watched by supervisors. Furthermore, 52.7% of respondents said they had trouble making decisions when supervisors made all the decisions, suggesting that too much control could impede students' autonomy and ability to learn. Additional findings showed that 82.1% of respondents considered it easier to complete reports when provided with clear forms, however 71.4% found it difficult to write reports without supervisor guidance. According to 87.7% of pupils, real-world examples improved clarity. However, 82.2% of respondents agreed that these subjects were sufficiently covered. Critical thinking and communication abilities were also enhanced by supervision. Approximately 51.8% reported gains in their ability to present, and 79.2% said that supervision encouraged the growth of critical thinking. The importance of recognition is demonstrated by the noteworthy 89.3% who stated that they became demotivated when their efforts went unappreciated. In the meanwhile, 75% of respondents stated that their supervisor's availability facilitated prompt instruction, and 85.7% stated that participation in conversations improved their comprehension. These findings demonstrate a robust correlation between enhanced professional abilities, motivation, confidence, and ethical awareness and high quality supervision.

SI No	Ethics and Conduct Discussion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Disagree	3	5.4
2	Neutral	7	12.5
3	Agree	31	55.4
4	Strongly agree	15	26.8
Total		56	100

Students' opinions about whether professional behavior and ethical issues were sufficiently covered during supervision are shown in this table. With 82.2% of students agreeing and 26.8% strongly agreeing, the majority of students gave favorable answers. Just 5.4% of respondents disagreed, while a smaller percentage (12.5%) stayed neutral. According to the findings, the majority of students believed that professional and ethical issues were suitably covered in supervision sessions.

Students' satisfaction with field placement and supervision.

Placement and institutional support satisfaction varied. Just 37.5% of students reported that their placement experience had lived up to their expectations, while 26.8% were unhappy and 35.7% were ambivalent. In spite of this, 62.5% of respondents said they would suggest their fieldwork experience to others. Placement organizations provided modest support, with 60.7% of respondents saying they were satisfied and 32.1% saying they were neutral. Although many people remained neutral, 52.7% of respondents thought they had enough autonomy in terms of independence. Just 33.9% of respondents thought the workload and logistics were appropriate, while 44.6% were undecided. But according to 73.2% of respondents, they had enough time to finish duties. 82.1% of students said that fieldwork was beneficial for preparing for a job. The degree of comfort in various field conditions differed greatly. Only 45.5% of respondents said they felt at ease in community placements, compared to 82.1% who said they felt at ease in psychiatric and medical settings. Additionally, 92.8% of respondents reported significant opportunities to hone their cooperation abilities, and 82.1% claimed fieldwork assisted them in applying theoretical concepts in practical settings.



Students' opinions regarding whether they had the tools and resources needed to successfully finish their fieldwork assignments are depicted in this figure. With 33 students saying "agree" and 8 saying "strongly agree," or 73.2% of the total, the majority of students gave positive answers. This implies that the majority of students believed they had the tools and resources they needed. Ten students (17.9%) expressed some uncertainty by remaining neutral. Just 5 pupils (8.9%) didn't agree. All things considered, the data shows that students' capacity to successfully finish their fieldwork assignments was greatly impacted by the availability of the tools and resources they needed.

Correlations

		Q47 theoretical knowledge to real world situations	Q5 expectations and deadlines
Q47 theoretical knowledge to real world situations	Pearson Correlation	1	.266*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.047
	N	56	56
Q5 expectations and deadlines	Pearson Correlation	.266*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	
	N	56	56

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The association between applying theoretical knowledge to practical settings and being clear about deadlines and expectations was investigated using a Pearson correlation analysis. The findings revealed a positive association ($r = 0.266$), suggesting that students are marginally more likely to relate theory to practice when they perceive clearer expectations and deadlines. Despite having a weak to moderate strength, this association is statistically significant ($p = 0.047$), which indicates that it is improbable that the outcome happened by accident. 56 individuals' responses served as the basis for the analysis.

DISCUSSION

This study was done to understand how supervision and support affect the fieldwork experiences of social work students. According to the findings, the majority of students believed that monitoring was crucial to their confidence and learning. Numerous students stated that the supervisor's experience, regular comments, and assistance with field issues significantly influenced their development as future professionals. This demonstrates how students are better equipped to relate theory to practice when they receive the right kind of assistance. Students appreciate supervisors who listen to their worries and accurately communicate requirements, according to the survey. Some students, however, believed that their supervisors' support was inconsistent and not always available. They found it more difficult to successfully control their stress and learn as a result of this lack of assistance. Students who received close supervision reported feeling more confident when interacting with clients, improving their abilities, and making fewer mistakes. Peer support and institutional assistance are also important, according to another section of the study. Students reported that their fieldwork was more meaningful when they had access to supportive environments, clear guidelines, and strong mentors. In summary, this study demonstrates that effective supervision and support networks are critical to the success of social work students conducting fieldwork. It also demonstrates that in order to provide students with the right support and direction to develop into competent and accountable social workers, agencies and universities must collaborate.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study "Exploring the Significance of Supervision and Support for Fieldwork in Social Work Education" was to determine how institutional support and supervisory procedures affect the professional growth and learning opportunities of social work students when they are on field placements. The results, which are based on quantitative data gathered from students in various field settings, show the advantages and disadvantages of the present models of supervision in social work education. This study highlights that excellent supervision and institutional support are crucial components of successful social work education, not extras. Effective supervision enables students to develop into considerate, moral, and capable professionals. Future social workers will have better results and greater field experiences if current gaps are filled through institutional changes. This study is a crucial first step in developing field education approaches that are both emotionally and academically sound.

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