

Issues and Challenges in Fieldwork Practice of Social Workers in the Context of Nepal

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Abstract: Fieldwork practice is enclosed and explained in social work education in order to advance and improve the social work profession. Fieldwork discipline is the most crucial component of social work practice for creating competent, efficient, and ethical social workers. An essential fields where fieldwork trainees apply their fieldwork knowledge, skills, and techniques are human resource management. Theoretical portion of social work discipline is instructing in the classroom, and field-based education combines the academic and practical components. It is a cornerstone of social work is the fieldwork practicum. The main objective of this study is to seek the ethical issues arises in fieldwork practice of social work discipline in the context of Nepal. For the study, descriptive qualitative research design was used in the research. Secondary sources of data like journal articles, books, and reports were used in the research. Google, Google scholar, Eric, and Proquest were used for searching the relevant documents. Content analysis was used to draw the themes and results. The finding of the study suggested that fieldwork results may be unexpected. Hence, it's critical to share real-world knowledge that might assist others better understand ethical issues and difficulties and learn from them. Furthermore, disseminating such knowledge could serve as a guide for upcoming researchers and aid them in identifying approaches that can solve those problems and difficulties in their upcoming studies on social work promotion.

Keywords: Fieldwork, Social Work, Social Work Practice, Trainee, Nepal

1. Introduction

The social work curriculum provides the informational framework, theoretical knowledge, and understanding in all the basic domains through classroom instruction and learning from the real fields of practice [25]. Social work discipline includes a theoretical factor trained in the classroom and field-based education combines integrating the theoretical aspect and practice [86]. The social work practicum yields training in social work from the perspective of learning by doing. It is frequently referred to as "fieldwork" and forms the experiential foundation for the trainee's academic program [61]. The general objective of fieldwork practice in the social work discipline is to know about the achievements of field practice in real life, reflect social workers and have the knowledge, skill, abilities, and ethical framework necessary to affect change at the local, regional, national, and global levels. The professional practice of social work is to assist individuals in enhancing or regaining their

psychosocial functioning, which also comprises fostering social environments that support to gain its goal [55], who works for a public or private organization and assists those who are experiencing troubles is said to be engaged in social work. Social work attempts to enhance and improve group and individual social functioning [46].

Social work is a demanding professional discipline that places a premium on interpersonal communication skills, abilities, and the capacity to engage with a diverse population within organizations and in the form of clients [76]. Social workers are employed by many agencies and organizations to bring about social change that improves the lives of people and communities [64]. Since social work involves the general public, problems that need to be resolved can develop outside of the office [52]. Social work is a relatively new field of study that focuses on the scientific diagnosis and treatment of psychological issues [81]. Social work is a contemporary idea and environment for professional services that use scientific tools and methodologies. Its goal is to help

everyone reach their greatest potential and enhance their lives [29]. Social work is a profession that offers those services, aids in preventing social inequalities, and creates opportunities for social advancement [85].

2. Fieldwork Practice in Social Work Discipline

Fieldwork practice is one of the required standards for social work discipline, which approves by the international association of schools of social work (IASSW) and the international federation of social workers (IFSW). It is a practice-based profession that is essential to the development of social workers [41]. Fieldwork practice is a required element in social work discipline and the curriculum worldwide due to its significance [36]. Hence, fieldwork also referred to as field instruction, field placement, field education, practicum, or internship is a crucial part of the social work education process [74]. Trainee receives full professional development in fieldwork practices with individuals, families, groups, and communities thanks to the fieldwork practice (concurrent fieldwork) exposure to classroom theory and fieldwork [43]. Classroom instruction, teaching, and fieldwork experience are crucial to the social work education process. In contrast to its academic equivalent, fieldwork is unseen in many training institutions; fieldwork offers a chance to match theoretical learning and knowledge with societal and commercial needs [37]. Trainees are also given the chance to assume responsibility for solving other people's problems. Fieldwork practice goes to trainees incoming in the state that must learn to direct unaware social protocols to see the plan move from an idea to a noticeable result [15]. Fieldwork is also argued in a similar way to that trainees from different disciplines rely on field research to a greater or lesser extent [5].

Social work training institutions generally use the forms of fieldwork practice in contexts of Nepal [66], especially in-service placements, concurrent fieldwork; block placements, and exposure visits [22]. A fieldwork placement is a consistent, full-time commitment made by a social work trainee to a fieldwork organization for 23 (twenty-three) to 30 (thirty) days a week [75]. Trainees typically spend two (2) days a week in the field agency/fieldwork practice and the other four (4) days in class. Concurrent fieldwork happens while students are instructed in the classroom [13]. The attractiveness of the concurrent fieldwork system is that theory learned in the classroom is immediately and simultaneously put into practice. It is the fact that social work trainees may easily share and discuss their issues with the faculty supervisor during this type of fieldwork is an added benefit that can help effectively integrate theory and practice [23]. In the context of Nepal, the field of social work is relatively new; it was established as an academic field in 1996 at St. Xavier's College in Kathmandu [32]. There is a broader scope of social work, fieldwork practice in Nepal, can work in a variety of public and private agencies that

assist needy individuals, families, groups, and communities, including I/NGOs, GOs, hospitals, mental health clinics, senior citizens centers, private practices, prisons, and correctional settings [17]. It imparts expertise and knowledge for working with individual, group, community, administration, research, and social action when necessary, trainee practices mention above social work techniques into field work practice [84]. Fieldwork is an initial work in a new context; although it is a global recognized work it has not yet recognized itself as a profession in Nepal [73]. In Nepal, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and other professions are well known, but social workers are not. Therefore, efforts are being made to change the organization of social workers as a profession fieldwork practice [50].

Fieldwork is emphasized social work as a means of applying knowledge [83]; it represents an essential component of social work education as it allows the students to practice social work skills under professional supervision [60]. Fieldwork involves learning by doing activities that expose the trainee to various social realities and teach them about the diversity, needs, and circumstances of the local population and situation [71]. In addition to fostering a holistic understanding of society, fieldwork trainees the development of specific skills, such as relationship-building and documentation, which makes social work practice more realistic [45]. Trainees from various social work intuitions and colleges have stated that fieldwork enables them to assimilate what they learn in the classroom and to pinpoint any differences between the pedagogy of social work education and the circumstances of real life [1]. The trainee is required to complete work that is trusting on social work knowledge, skills, and ethics, which may or may not be appropriate in that situation [77]. This study aims to contribute to the literature on fieldwork in social work education and training as there isn't much of it currently, expands on previously acquired knowledge about fieldwork, including but not limited to the fieldwork curriculum, fieldwork management, and the requirements and difficulties experienced by social workers, trainees, agency supervisors, and training institutions [19]. Hence, it is necessary to know the ethical issues arise in fieldwork practice of social work discipline in the context of Nepal. To fulfill the objectives this studies tries to answer the following questions: 1. What are the challenges faced by social workers in field work? 2. What kind of ethical issues are arises when practiced it? 3. How can minimize that kind of ethical issues?

3. Methodology

Descriptive qualitative research design was used in the research. Secondary sources of data like journal articles, books, and reports were used in the research. Google, Google scholar, Eric, and Proquest for searching the relevant documents by using different keywords like fieldwork, social work, social work practice, trainee, Nepal etc.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Issues and Challenges on Fieldwork Practice in Social Work Discipline

The social work practice is a central component of the social work discipline that delivers the trainees the chance to apply the theoretical foundation of the profession to the practice fieldwork discipline [30]. The general purpose of fieldwork is to familiarize the trainee with real-world social work circumstances to prepare them for professional social work practice [70], is an instrument utilized to introduce trainees to the field of social work by instilling and assimilating its ethics, values, and principles. As a result, throughout their fieldwork, social work trainees are exposed to social work at both the micro and macro levels [51]. Fieldwork offers a positive possibility to examine various relationships and involves the trainee and supervisor in identity work however there are various challenges [58].

4.2. Fieldwork Structure and Curriculum

Fieldwork content can shape trainees to empower by the existence of a distinct written curriculum and the practice curriculum's contents of what they study. At the beginning of the placement, they can also be aware of the necessary learning [89]. With a definite curriculum, it is feasible to determine what a student has learned in specific subject areas before moving on to other curriculum elements or figuring out how to make up for weaknesses in the learning environment. Some universities in Nepal, in the view of the agencies and trainees, have not yet created a curriculum on fieldwork [87] and to implement the stickily agencies as well the social field.

4.3. Supervision the Overall Structure

Supervision is a process in the fieldwork trainee supervised by a trainee from a reputable college and university who assigns tasks and evaluates performance facilitation of the social work practicum on a regular and ongoing basis promotes learning term trainee is supervision [54]. Supervision is an integral and critical component that aims to help them develop fundamental abilities like communication, observation, listening and intervention, relationship-building, fact-finding, recording, and analysis skills well as administrative and managerial procedures, planning, organizing, and implementing fieldwork trainee [20]. Every trainee at social work institution typically pairs with faculty members, such as a faculty supervisor or an agency supervisor, who generally is a licensed social worker [88]. Under supervision, trainees can learn to express challenges or concerns in a direct, frank, open, and honest manner. Guidance and support are required throughout the supervisory process [10]. The facilitation process involves regular individual and group conferences, close examination of the weekly reports, faculty visits to the agency, and conversations with the agency supervisor

and staff, giving chance trainees to practice contemplation and observation and develop professional self-use abilities [27].

4.4. Individual and Group Conference

Social work trainees can discuss goals, learning preferences, anxieties, fears, worries, intelligence, and energy in a one-on-one meeting with the faculty supervisor [78]. While group conference is a platform in which they learn from one another. Trainees from each group are encouraged to share their accomplishments, learning progress, educational gains, and concerns during the group conference with the entire teamwork and project [53]. It is a stimulating and motivating activity, the faculty supervisor encourages the trainee to create a resource file for their precise client system [14]. For the social work trainee, it serves essentially as a learning tool. The goal of this assignment is to help trainees become more skillful at organizing their information for presentation. The social worker and the agency store it in a database for future research and follow-up. Before the individual conferences, the trainee must turn in weekly recordings to the concerned faculty supervisor [31]. In the block pattern, trainees are encouraged to keep daily logs of their activities and send weekly reports to the faculty supervisor. The recording should include information on how the time was used, specifics about the activities, and an analysis section based on theoretical inputs [72]. A critical analysis of the activities, problems, initiatives, issues, gaps, government policies, and potential for improvement should also be included.

4.5. Fieldwork Analysis and Assessment

The evaluation process is ongoing in fieldwork practice; it helps the development of self-awareness in the trainee [33], which is essential for the growth of a professional social worker. The faculty supervisor and trainee expect to take turns taking the initiative to assess the student's performance during the fieldwork teaching-learning process [42]. While the achievement of specific, measurable learning objectives evaluate for each semester, some common areas evaluate for the entire program, including learning, achievements, and areas for improvement, future learning, and personal development as a professional social worker. Concerning the goals of the semesters' field-based practicum, an evaluation was made of the trainee's growth in three areas: knowledge, attitude, and skills [79]. They are cumulative, which means that while new ones are added as needed for the new semester, the old ones are taking and, and the new ones are constructed on top of them. Evaluation occurs implicitly during weekly individual conferences rather than just in the written, formal end-of-placement evaluation [48]. Even though the specific faculty supervisor is primarily in charge of grading the trainees' field performance [65], the department faculty council reviews the s trainees' performance before deciding on the final grades to ensure some degree of standardization.

4.6. Presentation of Fieldwork Practice

Each semester's end-of-semester fieldwork presentation is in front of a panel of lecturers and agency managers and requires all trainees. The use of various media presentations made by trainees expects to be creative; the majority of the fieldwork practices for social workers do by field supervisors [62]. As co-participants in the training process, they are accountable for managing the change from the classroom to the field, which necessitates cooperation and ongoing communication between the training facility, the agency supervisor, and the agency [18]. The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) explicitly state that training institutions must give agency supervisors fieldwork manuals and orientation in recognition of this fact [7], allowing them to understand the demands of their position and guarantees that trainees have a possible chance to acquire professional knowledge and skills [80].

Supervision of trainees by individuals who are not social workers is still a common practice in the context of Nepal, the use of qualified and experienced supervisors is significant in any professional training [67]. Even some field supervisors are unaware of the objective of the work, to organize the fieldwork practice for field supervisors; many institutions have not made enough effort [82]. Trainees complain that the organizations lack specific fieldwork policies and perform related to professional discipline [21], and they engage the trainees' administrative work and activities to complete. The definition of trainee roles is a crucial first step in ensuring that the trainee makes the most of the educational opportunity and offers the right level of service to clients and agencies [49].

4.7. Shortage of Qualified Manpower in the Fieldwork Practice

In social work discipline, fieldwork practice frequently takes a back seat to more urgent issues like professional development, institutional requirements, and personal projects [34]. Fieldwork practice is the additional difficulty of the qualified men's power shortage. Many universities, institutions, and faculties are run the entire program is managed by little number of professors [3]. The level of supervision is reduced to merely editing the recordings; it is another difficulty is that the teachers have little actual instruction experience [16]. It's challenging to effectively guide and clear the trainees' future careers. Due to time constraints, they are unable to conduct action-oriented research to gain experiential knowledge. Finding fieldwork placements with reputable organizations, according to some professors, is difficult, many of these agencies favor block placement over concurrent placement as a structure [28].

4.8. Difficulties in Managing Fieldwork

- 1) The difficulties in managing fieldwork placement are found as follows:
- 2) Lacking among the trainees initiative, ingenuity, self-

motivation, and creativity [2].

- 3) Many agencies are concerned about managing and giving trainees from various colleges' exposure and experience, the agencies receive trainees from various colleges [57].
- 4) Fieldwork placement can be difficult to balance trainees' supervision and work completion, and the lack of time can be a real challenge for staff members working on projects with deadlines and targets [59].
- 5) In recent years, managing trainees who lack the necessary aptitude and attitude for the profession has become a concern; the staff is responsible for monitoring duty performance, required time hours, and attendance compliance [39].
- 6) According to some Social agency, fieldwork practice is not advantageous for the organization and may prevent trainees from gaining beneficial contacts, exposure, and publicity [63]. However, some people find it difficult to provide trainees with a full month's worth of work [40].
- 7) All the agencies eagerly await the faculty's involvement in trainee work and supervision. Often, the only response they receive is a call or a visit asking questions. Some colleges don't even meet this bare minimum requirement [47].
- 8) The faculty's involvement in trainee work and supervision is eagerly anticipated by all the agencies; frequently, all they can get is a visit or a phone call inquiring. This absolute minimum requirement is not even met by some colleges [4].

4.9. Experiences of Social Work Trainees in Term of Challenges

- 1) The following opinions have been gathered through the experiences shared by SW (Social Work) trainees from various universities and colleges in Nepal:
- 2) Especially during fieldwork practice and placement, many trainees felt their faculty supervisors were not adequately supervising those [12]. Due to the fieldwork trainees' global dispersal, there can be no direct consultation with the faculty [15].
- 3) Fieldwork trainees are dispersed across the world, so there can be no direct consultation with the faculty of social work discipline [35].
- 4) Even the corrected recordings are only given to the trainees once they return to the University and College [44].
- 5) Some trainees also believed that the University and College had established fieldwork goals for each semester, many of the agencies used trainees to complete their specific tasks [6]. As a result, the trainees had a difficult time meeting both sets of requirements. The semester requirements, agency needs, and student initiatives were all incorporated into the learning contracts of some of the top Universities and Colleges [56].
- 6) Some of the trainees found it difficult to write a report that linked theory in particular [49].

- 7) Some agencies do not support the trainees' initiative and creativity, they were only allowed to perform normal administrative tasks, and it also lacked difficult exposure [26].
- 8) In some residential facilities, casework and group work were known to the clients as well. Trainees expressed that they felt humiliated to repeat a case that had already been completed by another trainee [24].
- 9) Some of the fieldwork practice and placements, for some people, occasionally posed a financial challenge [38].

5. Recommendations on Strengthening Fieldwork

In social work practice, field work discipline is a common approach to field placement is concurrent fieldwork [69]. During fieldwork placement, allocates full-time field work practice is provided for trainees by a skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced field supervisor [11]. In essence, trainees are required to attend classes for four (4) days and spend two (2) days per week at the agency. However, the social work curriculum allocates two (2) types of fieldwork practicum, a) concurrent fieldwork, and b) block placements. These are based on the nature of the fieldwork and the participation of the trainees, the training of social workers who are professionally qualified is a challenge for the social work profession [68]. The present situation, social work trainees learn about the agencies and hone their skills during training, but according to social work, training entails doing some innovative or helpful work to address issues that already exist [8]. Unfortunately, some schools do not offer fieldwork or practical instruction. Real-life examples and an appreciation of the arts should be incorporated into social work education's classroom and fieldwork in order to prepare students for the realities of the profession [9].

6. Conclusion

Fieldwork is an essential part of social work education. The term fieldwork refers to a process or strategy used to apply social knowledge, values, and principles of another social work-related discipline in the context of social service welfare and sustainable development. The social customs and values of the community where fieldwork practice takes place must be understood. Supervisors can help assist trainees in becoming familiar with the agency context in which they will work as well as the network of social services that are available in a given area. To fully take advantage of the educational opportunity and still provide appropriate service to clients and agencies, it is crucial to define the roles of the student learner. To ensure that the trainee can take full advantage of the educational opportunity and still provide the right level of service to clients and agencies, it is crucial to clearly define the trainee's roles. Additionally, while government and management at training

institutions must intervene at the highest level to address the issues facing the fieldwork component of social worker training, people engaged in fieldwork must also carry out their tasks and responsibilities well. The fieldwork coordinator, agency supervisor, students, and school supervisors in particular should be capable and resourceful in carrying out their duties. It might support the colleges and universities of social work both directly and indirectly by encouraging members to take on the role of practicum supervisor for social work trainees. Broad-level intervention is an essential component of social work, just like broad practice.

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