

Social Work in Pakistan: Understanding of Punjab University Students

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is designed to explore the knowledge and understanding of the students of Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan regarding Social work. In particular, their source of knowledge about social work, bases and objectives of social work, social work training / institution, potential fields of social work, importance of social work and recognition & promotion of social work in Pakistani society. Majority had knowledge about Social Work and most of them got knowledge from their educational institute (college, school, university). A large majority defined Social Work as helping activity. Around half of the respondents were of the view that objective of Social Work is to serve humanity whereas thought it is to remove social problems. An overwhelming majority declared that Social Work is important for society. As almost half were of the view that Social Work is helpful in socio economic development of the country.

Keywords: social work, scope, values, fields, recognition, *socio economic development*

INTRODUCTION

Social Work provides help to individual, groups and communities to solve their social, economic and cultural problems and help them to enhance their capacities to be able to adjust in their social functioning.

In the beginning, Social Work around the world was limited to the religious and humanitarian activities. However, as time passed urbanization and industrialization brought about a great change in the living style in every aspect of life, which brought a variety of economic, social & psychological problems. To deal with these issues, social work also developed from religious/humanitarian activity to a profession.

Now, Social Work is recognized all over the world. Social Work profession is not merely concerned with individual and their personal problems but also with broader social issues such as unemployment & poverty.

The values of Social Work are based on the equality, worth and dignity of individuals. The main focus of Social Work is to fulfill the needs of the people and to enhance their human capacities so that they can help themselves and make their environment favorable for them.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the past individuals (motivated by religion) have helped the people in distress, destitute and deprivation and fought for the equality of all citizens, respect for the rights of others including the indigent, the handicapped the unemployed, the emotionally disturbed and those in need (Encyclopedia of Social Welfare, 2006).

In course of time, the charitable work taken up by individuals and voluntary organizations came to be termed as Social Work. So, Social Work was historically associated with charitable and philanthropic work, had come to generally known as Social Work and its

personnel were identified and designated as Social Workers (Encyclopedia of Social Welfare, 2006).

According to the National Association of Social Workers (2000); “Social Work is the professional activity of helping individual groups and communities to enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and to create societal conditions favorable to their goals”.

While describing this definition of Social Work it is focused on the relationship of individual groups and communities for the purpose to constitute interaction between human beings and their environment. So, this interaction emphasis on restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resources and prevention of social disfunctioning (Encyclopedia of Social Welfare, 2006).

The basic concepts of scientifically organized Social Work are universal. Their implication depends upon local conditions from place to place .Social Work is a dynamic activity that had developed out of, and is influenced by, evolving Social, Economic, and Political and Cultural factors. Social Work becomes a modern profession as well as a new discipline of Education (Khalid, 2001).

According to the National Association of Social Workers (1976) “Social Welfare generally denotes the full range of organized activities of voluntary and governmental agencies that seek to prevent, alleviate or contribute to the solution of organized social problems or to improve the well-being of individual, groups or communities. Such activities use a wide variety of professional personnel such as physicians, lawyers’ educators, engineers, Social Workers and paraprofessional counteragents”.

In this literature review, it is important to mention the relationship of Social Work and Social Welfare because this concept is often confused and used synonymously at times. Social Work is also confused with ‘Social Service’, ‘Social Reform’ and ‘Social Security’. The confusion and ambiguity has arisen because of the fact that they all have an identical and similar aim that is well-being of the people. These terms are interpreted differently in different countries and even in the same country at different times. In some countries social services are all embracing including Social Welfare Services where as in other countries, all Welfare Services including Social Services come under the umbrella of Social Welfare (Encyclopedia of Social Welfare, 2006).

According to Kohs in Khalid (2001) Social Work is multi profession and is an interrelated system of values, theories and practices. There are some values of Social Work. “The ten values regarded as the primary values of Social Work. The worth and dignity of man, the capacity of human nature to achieve full human potential, tolerance of differences, satisfaction of basic human needs, liberty, self-direction, non-judgmental attitude, constructive social cooperation, importance of work and constructive use of leisure, protection of one’s existence from the damages caused by man and nature”.

These values are accepted as universally and these values can be converted into instrumental values or can be changed as in accordance with the country situation. The application of these values changed in poor as well as in rich countries (Khalid, 2001).

The Profession of Social Work had been introduced in Pakistan in 1953 with the co-operation of United Nation Technical Assistance Administration. From the beginning Social Work becomes more complicated than elsewhere in the world because of the circumstances which occurred in the country at that time. The complications were in the sense that people’s attachment with customs and tradition and the late start on the path of progress in science, research and technology (Noon, 1963).

It started with highly idealistic positive changes in society but it becomes the victim of political and bureaucratic design of powers. In the process of establishment of services, the profession continues to be western oriented methods of problem solving and it still fall short of the original ideal of indigenous Social Work, literature of developing Pakistani methodology (IASSW, 2006).

Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, in the first Pakistan conference of Social Work held in Karachi in 1955, “the job of the Social Workers is, in reality, to create a sort of divine discontent, to help people themselves in recognizing their needs, in seeking out available facilities, in initiating action, in establishing proper adjustment with each other and their surrounding and in general, solving their social problems” (Khalid, 2001).

Social Work in Pakistan has not yet attained a professional status as it is generally considered a charitable activity to help poor and needy people. It has been supported by religious perceptive and ethical maxims.

So, Social Work and the education of Social Workers are changing because of the pressure on curriculum and funding have promoted departments of Social Policies, Social Work or Social Administration, Social Workers with master’s degree are administrators of programs, teaches in college and universities and independent professional practitioners (Nash, 2003).

However, in Pakistan Social Work curriculum tended to follow the traditional pattern of Western Social Work Education. The Social Work Methodologies were comprised on Western based but the task of developing Pakistani Methods of Social Work and producing Pakistani literature can be achieved with the collaboration of Government as well as local communities. In this way very little social work literature has been produces and still old ways of teaching the “group work” and case work are adopted as these were taught in 1954 is absence of professional association (Rehmatullah, 2002).

Another issue with regard to recognition and promotion of Social Work Profession. Pakistan association of social workers had their membership revoked by International Federation of Social Workers as per following reason “this decision was based upon available information that the organization in provincial membership does not have membership of professional Social Workers, but mainly is an organization of Social Welfare Volunteers” (John, Krewani, & Zaidi, 2007).

According to Davenport and Davenport in Knezevic, Ovsenik & Jerman (2006) the perception of the profession in 1990s was found that 86% of media presentation of Social Work were positive rather than negative. They set forth the belief that the public perception of Social Work is far better than social worker generally think.

Further, though Pakistan has “rich cultural heritage (especially of philanthropy) has abundant natural and human resources a large and potentially more productive agricultural sector a strategic location for trade. Pakistan has been facing many socio-economic problems and burdened by internal political instability and costly regional conflicts in its first 53 years of independence it has still managed to achieve to substantial economic growth, while Pakistan’s Social Welfare indicators have improved over the past two decades, progress remains slow and challenges daunting. Only 47% of the population is literate, compared to the average literacy rate of 49% in South Asia and 53% in low income countries worldwide” (Asian Development Bank, 1999).

Now, it is the high time in Pakistan for Social Workers to seize the golden opportunity to apply the Social Welfare Services to achieve the welfare goal for people (Kumar, 2005).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted with the following objectives.

1. To know about the understanding of the respondents about Social Work Profession.
2. To know the scope of Social Work in terms of its fields of application.
3. To get recommendations from respondents for further recognition and promotion of Social Work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to the nature of the study and universe quantitative research method was proposed. Among qualitative methods further Social Survey was adopted to conduct study as it is profitably used for opinion polling and enables researcher to take stock of existing situation.

Universe and Sampling

Universe of the study was both male and female students of M.A. / M.Sc., semester III session 2006-08, Morning, University of the Punjab, Lahore. The researcher followed probability sampling method in order to draw a representative sample. From the probability sampling method simple random sampling method was adopted and elements were further selected through lottery system. Post-graduate students of semester III, session 2006-2008, morning were target population. First of all the list of total departments offering master degree programmes in the University of the Punjab, Lahore was collected. Out of 47 departments offering the said programmes, 45 provided list of their regular students while 2 departments refused to provide lists to the group. Total students in these departments were found as 1889. The researcher took 30% sample out of total population i.e. 571 students. Procedure of drawing sample was, 30% of each list (enrolled students in any master programme) was drawn by applying lottery method.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATIONS

The collected primary data were analyzed by using simple statistical tools and interpreted to draw logical conclusion.

Sex Wise Distribution of the Respondents

The study shows sex wise distribution of the respondents. About two third (71%) of all respondents were female and only (29%) were male.

Knowledge about Social Work

The study shows that the majority of the respondents (98%) have knowledge about Social Work and remaining (2%) were unaware about Social Work.

Source of Awareness / Knowledge about Social Work

The results indicate respondents' source of knowledge about Social Work. Large Majority of the respondents (81%) got this knowledge from an educational institute (School / College / University). For some (8%) their relatives were the source. Those who got knowledge from students / teachers / practitioners of Social Work was about (6%) and (4%) obtained this knowledge from workshops / seminar / conference. Only (1%) obtained this knowledge from print / electronic Media.

Choice of the Definition of Social Work

The study shows the distribution of the respondents as per their choice of the definition of

Social Work. Almost two third of the respondents (63%) defined Social Work as helping activity. Remaining defined Social Work as profession (15%), as humanitarian belief (12%) and as religious belief (8%) only (2%) defined Social Work as source of making money.

Opinion about Bases of Social Work Ideology

The study shows that around two third (65%) of the total declared humanitarian approach as bases of Social Work ideology. Almost one third (31%) found the basis of Social Work in religious belief and about (4%) thought that it is western enlightenment, which serves as bases of Social Work ideology.

Views about Objectives of Social Work

The results show the distribution of respondents as per their views about objectives of Social Work. As sizeable ratio (41%) declared that the main objective of Social Work is to serve humanity. Around one third of all (34%) respondents declared that objective of Social Work is to remove social problems. Almost one fifth of all the respondents (19%) thought that the objective of Social Work is to help marginalized people. A small ratio (6%) of the respondents declared that objective of Social Work is to gather money in the name of poor.

Views about the Importance of Social Work in Society

The study shows distribution of the respondents' views about the importance of Social Work in the society. An over whelming majority (96%) respondents declared Social Work as important for society. However, a very small ratio (4%) was in opposition.

Reason/s of Importance of Social Work in Society

The results show the reason given by the respondents about the importance of Social Work in society. A little less than half of the respondents (44%) reasoned that it is helpful in socio-economic development in the country. A sizeable ratio (38%) gave reason that it is a source of meeting needs of the people and remaining (18%) declared that Social Work is important because it is relevant to Pakistani social realities.

Opinion Regarding the Contribution Social Work Made in Various Fields in Pakistan

The result is about the distribution of respondents as per their opinion regarding the contribution of Social Work in various fields in Pakistan. The highest response (26%) was given to all the fields mentioned in the table, however almost one fourth (24%) of the all respondents recognized contribution of Social Work in field of health, (19%) in the field of education, (11%) in economy, (6%) in the field of family welfare, (5%) in religion, and (3%) in the field of politics. However (4%) respondents declared that there was no contribution of Social Work in any field in Pakistan.

Views about the Real Contribution of Social Work Made in Different Events in Pakistan:

The study shows respondents views about the real contribution Social Work made in any event in Pakistan. Majority of the respondents (87%) thought that Social Worker really contributed in relief and rehabilitation process after 2005 Earthquake. Remaining recognized the contribution of Social Workers in after math of 1947 partition (4%), Indo-Pak war (3%), 1974 Islamic Summit (4%) and 1989 SAF games (2%) among others.

Potential Fields of Employment for Social Workers

The study shows distribution of the respondents as per their views about the potential fields of employment for Social Workers. More than one third of the respondents (39%) declared that Social Workers join the institutions for individuals and groups with particular needs such

as (children, aged, women, and disabled). A little less than one third (29%) of the respondents declared that it is the field of Social / Community Development that suits Social Work. Most of the remaining respondents declared that it is the field of Physical and Mental Health (17%), Public Works (12%), work with Families (2%), Marriage Bureau (1%) among others.

Knowledge about any Department / Institution of Formal Social Work Training / Education

The results show the knowledge of respondents regarding any department / institution of formal Social Work training / education. Majority of (81%) had knowledge about the department / institution of Social Work education and around one fifth (19%) were unaware.

Information about Social Work Institution

The study indicates about information that respondents have about whereabouts of the institution where Social Work training is provided. Majority of the respondents (96%) were aware of the department of Social Work, Punjab University. Remaining (4%) respondents were aware of Public Sector Post-Graduate Colleges.

Knowledge about Nature of Training of Social Work

The results are about the knowledge of the respondent about the nature of Social Work education / training. A large majority (71%) of all declared that it is a master degree in Arts (M.A) like any other M.A. However, some other (12%) thought it is a science degree with a lot of practice (M.Sc). Another small ratio (11%) told that it involves course work and apprenticeship. Yet another (6%) declared that it is all practical training.

Recommendations Regarding Further Recognition and Promotion of Social Work

The results show distribution of the respondents as per their recommendations regarding further recognition and promotion of Social Work. One fourth of the all (25%) respondents suggested that seminars are the best way of its promotion. Another one fourth (23%) suggested media campaigns, one fifth (20%) respondents suggested Social Workers participation every aspect of life, which will help in their further recognition and promotion. A little less than one fifth (18%) thought that Social Work promotion could be done through enhancing Social Services. While remaining (14%) gave no suggestions.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The respondent of this study were the master degree students (third semester, morning), the University of the Punjab, Lahore.

The source of knowledge for most of the respondents was the department of Social Work, at the University, offering master's degree in Arts like any other subject. But there were some who thought that it is a science degree or practice oriented discipline.

Around two third of all the respondents defined Social Work as helping activity and considered humanitarian approach as the basis of Social Work ideology, with the objectives of serving humanity and removing social problems.

Almost all the respondents declared Social Work as important for society in terms of socio-economic development of the country, as a source of meeting needs of the people and being relevant to Pakistani social realities.

A large majority of respondents were aware of the fact that Social Work is practiced and almost one third of all the respondents thought that it is practiced in a variety of fields (i.e. with individuals in need / distress, with marginalized communities, with excluded groups such as poor, women, ethnic minorities, children, refugees, disabled), for research on

emerging social issues (govt. policies) and with populations at risk (of war, natural calamities).

However, respondents have somewhat clearer knowledge about potentials sectors in which social worker could be employed including institutions for individuals and groups with particular needs (such as children, aged, women and disabled), social / community development sector, physical and mental health and public works. Also, they ranked Social Work at highest priority amongst contemporary professions including medical, art and design.

Respondents acknowledged the Social Work contribution in almost all different fields in Pakistan (like economy, health, politics, education, fashion, family, religion) and the contribution of Social Work in historical events in the life of the country including 2005 earthquake, though, in official documents, there is not any empirical / documented evidence of that as yet (ERRA, 2006).

In terms of suggestions and / or recommendations about recognition and promotion of Social Work, not much innovative recommendations came forward; one fourth suggested to conduct seminars and only one fifth respondents recommended that Social Services should be enhanced for further recognition and promotion of Social Work.

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