

The Effect of Field Training on Students' Attitudes towards a Social Work Career

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Abstract

Social work students need valuable hands-on experience and mentoring. The aim of this research was to report training outcomes from a cohort of social work field education professionals. This study aimed to identify the factors that affect social work students' attitudes toward the career after field training practice from three main domains: theoretical, administrative, and personal. The results indicated that the personal factors were the highest factors affecting social work students' attitudes towards the social work career; the lowest factor was related to the theory and educational actors. It also showed that there were no significant differences between male and female attitudes post field training (sig .796). Also, there were no significant differences in attitudes between juniors and seniors after field training. Finally, this study indicated that there is no significant difference in the attitudes toward social work careers post training by the number of hours of field training.

Keywords: Practical field, student outcome, Social Work. Field education placements

1. Introduction:

Successful field placements rely on the willingness of social workers in the field. The field placement is a major part of the social work education curriculum. The process of learning in both classroom and field settings is critical for students to help them Practice and improve their values, skills, and knowledge needed for the profession(Papouli, 2014).Field training plays a leading role in social work education. Theoretical and practical learning are important for students to become professional social workers.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) endorses field education as such in the current Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (CSWE, 2015). In the field work practicum particularly, educators and instructors tend to focus more on the operational and task-oriented nature of learning than on the process of learning itself, while they also underestimate the value of critical reflection in student learning during the field experience (Papouli, 2014). Field education makes a huge difference in the quality of social programs and well-being in society. This is an important link which we must articulate in a compelling way. The quality of students' field experience greatly affects our ability to educate ethical, competent, innovative, effective clinical social workers (Bogo, 2015).

The foundational practice course is often the first place that students receive direct instruction in helping and communication skills. This course is considered the linchpin of the training process because it helps students apply the knowledge learned in other classes to real-life challenges drawn from the field, while fostering the self-awareness that facilitates further skill development Annemarie (Gockel & Burton, 2014). Field practicum allows students to learn such professional skills through practicing them in real settings.

2. Literature Review

The classroom is where the students gain knowledge about the competencies and the related practice behaviors. The knowledge base learned in the classroom is meant to be integrated in the practice setting (Bogo, 2010). Field instructors in clinical practice need to draw attention not only to interventions with the client, but also relate those interventions to students' understanding of theory and evidence, and of professional use of self (Bogo, 2015). Social work indeed has unique knowledge and skills to bring to this goal (Jones et al., 2014).

Field work has its practice roots in the apprenticeship model that used a master/teacher paradigm to prepare the next generation of craftspeople through actual workplace learning (Bogo, 2010).

The component social work of practice profession is pivotal in helping students integrate knowledge, learn the nuances of interpersonal work with actual people, and engage in reflection about their work and its effectiveness (Petracchi & Zastrow, 2010). This important learning occurs outside of the classroom under the supervision of an experienced social work field instructor and provides the opportunity for social work students to apply the concepts, theories and skills learned throughout the social work program in a professional setting with actual clients.

(Watkins, Davis, & Callahan, 2018). As noted earlier, the field is where it is expected that the classroom learning is operationalized and the field instructor is the person typically orchestrating this process.

Morley and Dunstan (2013) suggest that critical reflection may highlight the personal agency of social work practitioners, academics, students and field educators and point to the need to rethink and resist the participation in neoliberal discourse.

Field education placements can lead to greater personal and professional awareness. It is the field-placement setting, where the student, agency and clients all bring particular histories and ways of seeing the world, which can create a number of experiential tensions. These tensions often arose as students began to, firstly notice, and subsequently make decisions about how, when and where to deal with these concerns (Marlowe et al, 2015)

Such social and political activity requires social workers or students to handle a complex environment and many clients at the same time, and to work with numerous stakeholders who are often striving toward diverse and even conflicting goals (Boehm & Cohen, 2013). In sum, classroom and field

educators have a significant role to play in ensuring that students are able to put into practice what they have learned about resilience in the classroom (Gitterman& Knight, 2016)

3. Methodology

This quantitative research examined factors that affect social work student's attitudes towards social work career based on their field training experience. Participation in this study was completely voluntary for the field instructors invited to participate.

3.1 Methods: A questionnaire was used to collect data. Then using SPSS a T- test was applied to test the variables.

3.2 Community and Sample

This study used a convenience sample drawn from Social Work students in the University of Jordan located in Jordan/ Middle East. A total of 102 field students volunteered to participate in the study: Junior (83) and senior (19)BSW students enrolled in the required field training practice.

3.3 Research Questions:

Question one: What is the effect of field training practical on University of Jordan social work students' attitudes towards the social work career?

Question Two: Is there a significant differences in attitudes toward the school social work career post field practice, by gender and by college classification?

Question Three: Is there a significant difference in attitudes toward the school social work career post field practice, by number of hours in field training and by work group or individual?

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Table (1)Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	102	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	102	100.0

Table (2)Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.895	51

The table shows the reliability for the questionnaire questions which reach .895 and this indicates that the reliability is acceptable. To determine the validity, the study questionnaire was given to two control respondents.

4. Discussion and Results

The future of the social work profession is dependent on how the current social work students are prepared for social work practice, much of this preparation occurs in the field placement (Bogo, 2015). Social work training involves a combination of academic study and fieldwork. Moreover, it is primarily in the field where students learn to integrate and apply what they have learned in classroom courses. Field education is potentially reinforcing notions of social work which align the profession with oppressive practices (Crisp & Hosken, 2016)

4.1 Research Questions

Q1: What is the effect of field training practical on University of Jordan social work students' attitudes towards the social work career?

Table (3) Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
personal	102	2.91	5.00	4.1970	.48542
career	102	2.94	5.00	4.1017	.44044
Theory	102	2.92	4.92	3.7828	.38231
Total	102	2.94	4.88	4.0615	.39166
Valid N (listwise)	102				

The results show that the total number of the sample was 102 students, the table shows that the personal factors had the highest mean 4.1970 then the factors related to the job in the organization which was 4.1017. And the lowest factor was related to the theory and educational with the mean 3.7828.

Table (4): Mean and Std. Deviation for Theoretical Domination

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The more I learn, the more I like the social work profession	1	5	4.47	.962
Using observation skills increased my abilities as a social worker	2	5	4.47	.741
My theoretical knowledge increased my ability to deal with the organization	1	5	4.32	.956
Field training increased my ability to use the scientific approach when I write reports	2	5	4.30	.768
I have applied confidentiality and privacy ethics when dealing with clients' records	1	5	4.22	1.087
When I need information that I do not have, I know how to get it	2	5	4.17	.891
There is a chance to apply social worker functions	1	5	3.84	1.106
There is a connect between the practical and theoretical	1	5	3.82	.938
I had an opportunity to see clients' records in the organization where I was trained	1	5	3.73	1.415
I used the library to write reports	1	5	3.56	1.122
It is better to follow the methodology that we know rather than find new ways	1	5	3.26	1.160
I took a long time to learn what I wanted from the training institution	1	5	2.91	1.178
When I see something in the organization, I do not understand, I do not ask about it	1	5	2.10	1.206
The philosophy of the foundation and vision are clear to me	3	5	4.44	.623
	2.92	4.92	3.7828	.38231
Theory				
Valid N (listwise)	102			

The results in Table 4 show the Mean and the Standard Deviation for the domain about theoretical factors that (the more I learn, the more I like the social work profession). And (using observation skills increased my abilities as a social worker), were the first two factors that affect students' attitudes towards a social work career with the mean 4.47. On the other hand, the lowest factor was (when I see something in the organization, I do not understand, I do not ask about it). With the mean 2.10. Supervising social work students in the field, or teaching in a more formal academic capacity, will have opportunities to intentionally shape and facilitate team dynamics and champion principles of strong inter-professional collaboration (Blackera, et al, 2016).

Table (5): Mean and Std. Deviation for The administrative and professional

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The university 's instruction helped me to get the opportunity to train effectively	2	5	4.36	.728
There is a professional relationship and follow up between the instruction and the supervisor of the organization	2	5	4.34	.738
The employees of the foundation cooperated and accepted my opportunity as a social worker	2	5	4.23	.911
The supervisor in the organization takes into consideration the personal circumstances of trainers	1	5	4.19	1.022
The organization supervisor listened to my notes and take it them in consideration	1	5	4.18	.989
The supervisor listened to my notes about the organization and take them in consideration	1	5	4.17	.913
The supervisor has the necessary scientific skills to train the student	1	5	4.17	1.054
The trainer learned through field training to employ the rules and regulation of the training foundation	1	5	4.14	1.063
I felt that the foundation applied the ethics of social work in dealing with clients	1	5	4.12	.978
The organization lacks the resources that are offered to the clients	1	5	3.69	1.335
Field training contributed to determine the type of organization I would work in after graduation	1	5	4.07	1.017
The organization made available continuous meetings with trainers	1	5	4.06	1.079
It is important to have interviews with student trainers prior to approval of training in the organization	1	5	3.93	1.163
The field training gives the opportunity to join the organization after the graduation	1	5	3.85	1.206
Transportation was an obstacle to access to the training organization	1	5	3.71	1.339
The administrative and professional	2.94	5.00	4.1017	.44044
Valid N (listwise)	102			

The results in Table 5 show the Mean and the Standard Deviation for the domain of the administrative and professional. It showed that the highest factor was there is a professional relationship and follow up between the instruction and the supervisor of the organization with a mean of 4.36. While the lowest factor affecting students social work attitudes towards social career was: I felt that the foundation applied the ethics of social work in dealing with clients. The mean for this factor was 3.69.

Table (7): Mean and the Std. Deviation for the domain of Personal factors

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I become more convinced of the major of social work after field training	1	5	4.47	.805
The institution's assessment of students is an important evaluation process	1	5	4.43	.960
I was the leader in positions that required working with groups	1	5	4.41	.749
I performed all the tasks assigned to me	1	5	4.36	.806
Field training increased my ability in social work communication	2	5	4.33	.749
I have the ability to identify strengths and weaknesses in the organization's work	2	5	4.31	.820
Field training increased my ability to work with groups	2	5	4.31	.660
Field training increased my knowledge of institutions	2	5	4.31	.783
My convince of social work has increased through field training	2	5	4.26	.867
I learned a lot about the social work profession through field training	2	5	4.26	.974
Field training increased my ability to deal with emergency situations	1	5	4.25	.951
Field training has contributed to identifying the categories where I will work	1	5	4.21	.905
Field training increased my experience and skills	1	5	4.21	.948
Field training made me think of my future as a social worker	1	5	4.21	.988
I learned what I wanted to learn through field training	1	5	3.69	1.081
I think the challenges and difficulties encountered did not stop my passion for social work	1	5	4.18	.959
I hoped to have a longer time to learn more	2	5	4.16	.898
I have suggested many activities that have been added to the organization	1	5	4.10	.980
My practical skills have improved greatly	2	5	4.03	.814
My personal skills have helped me to deal with emergency situations	1	5	4.02	.954
I was able to make balance between what I want to learn and my goals	1	5	3.96	.984
Personal	2.91	5.00	4.1970	.48542
Valid N (listwise)	102			

The results in Table 7 show the Mean and the Standard Deviation for the domain of Personal factors, which shows that the highest factor is the institution's assessment of students is an important

evaluation process. The mean was 4.47 while the lowest factor for this section was I learned what I wanted to learn through field training, the mean was 3.69. The training was designed to enhance field instructors’ ability to support students’ learning as they apply the education practice process in their field placements (Matthieua, Carterb, Casner&Edmond, 2016) u might not need citation.

Question Two: Is there a significant differences in attitudes toward the school social work career post field practice, by gender and by college classification?

Table 8: Total Mean and St. Deviation of Gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	4.0332	13	.51837
Female	4.0657	89	.37321
Total	4.0615	102	.39166

The total sample was 102 students in social work, females (89) with the mean 4.0657 more than males (13) with the mean 4.0332. It can be concluded from the table that the mean for female was (4.0657) more than the mean for male which was (4.0332).

Table 9: Total Mean and St. Deviation of College Classification

College Classification	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Junior	4.0690	83	.35005
Senior	4.0289	19	.54876
Total	4.0615	102	.39166

The table shows the mean and the Standard Deviation for academic year variable, it can be seen that just junior and senior students participated in this study because students cannot enroll into the field training practical without taking several required academic courses. The number of Junior was 83 with the mean 4.0690 more than Senior which was 19 with mean 4.0289.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Table 9: Dependent Variable: Gender and College Classification

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	.011	1	.011	.067	.796
College Classification	.023	1	.023	.150	.699
Error	15.458	99	.156		
Corrected Total	15.493	101			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**Table 9: Dependent Variable: Gender and College Classification**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	.011	1	.011	.067	.796
College Classification	.023	1	.023	.150	.699
Error	15.458	99	.156		
Corrected Total	15.493	101			

The result in the table 9 shows that there is no significant differences between males and females in the effect of field training on students' attitudes towards a social work career in the sig .796 which is greater than .05. It also shows there is no significant differences between junior and senior in the effect of field training on students' attitudes towards a social work career with sig .699 which is greater than .05. This means that participants in this sample were more positive in their attitudes and intentions.

Question Three: Is there a significant difference in attitudes toward the school social work career post field practice, by number of hours in field training and by work group or individual?

Table (10) Total: Number of hours of training

Number of hours of training	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
3-5 hours weekly	4.0715	17	.41502
6-8 hours weekly	4.0595	85	.38937
Total	4.0615	102	.39166

The table shows the mean and the Standard Deviation for number of hours of training variable, it can be seen that the mean for students who trained 3-5 hours weekly 4.0715 was higher than the mean students who trained 6-8 hours weekly 4.0595. Students in the Department of Social Work have their training Monday and Wednesday every week per semester.

Table (11): Total of Groups or Individual work

Groups or Individual Work	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Group	4.0555	83	.38584
Individual	4.0877	19	.42621
Total	4.0615	102	.39166

The table shows the mean and Std. Deviation for the type of work for students, 83 students from the participants has training field with group work with mean (4.0555), whereas 19 students have their training field with individual work with mean 4.0877. Finding the agency to exercise such practices of

resistance may be important in creating alternative ways of engaging in and with field education, and may ultimately be crucial to our capacity to maintain and protect the quality of field education and social work programs into the future (Morley & Dunstan, 2013).

Table (12): Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: total of the effect of field training on students' attitudes towards a social work career

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Number of hours of training	.014	1	.014	.092	.762
Groups or Individual Work	.000	1	.000	.003	.957
Error	15.477	99	.156		
Corrected Total	15.493	101			

The results shows that there is no significant differences in the effect of field training on students' attitudes towards a social work career according to the number of hours of training .762 greater than .05. It also shows there is no significant differences between the group or individual work with sig .957 greater than .05. Social workers should be leaders in the development of inter professional activities and learning.

Appropriate social work tasks are defined as tasks which enable students to develop practice and analytic skills in community work, casework, group work, social planning and social action, research, social policy analysis or social policy development. (AASW, 2012, p. 4)

Conclusion

Fieldwork placement is a crucial component of social work education in a student's preparation for the profession. The ability of social work education to graduate ethical, competent, innovative, effective clinical social workers is highly dependent on the quality of their field experience (Bogo, 2015). Students who participated in this research demonstrated that after they received their field education training, they become more aware of the profession and their understanding is increased.

Students are often quick to notice the disparity between the progressive social change ideals that they have learned as part of critical social work education, and the organizational context of their placements. Student feedback and evaluation contributed to the importance of the link between the faculty supervisor and the supervisor in the organization. It can be concluded that if the students have the opportunity to get more hours in field training, they will learn more about the social work career.

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