



Experiences of Agency Social Work Supervisors in Gaborone

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Agency social work supervisors contribute to the learning experience of students during field practicum, but little is known about the knowledge these supervisors have on the expectations of the social work practicum, the challenges they face in supervising students and how they can be supported to provide effective and efficient supervision. A study to identify the supervisory gaps, problems, and inadequacies in social work fieldwork practicum was conducted in Gaborone to complement the body of knowledge. This qualitative study triangulated the exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research designs to appreciate the supervisors' experience. The researcher interviewed 20 agency based supervisors in the health settings, Social and Community Development Departments and Non-Governmental Organizations. Huberman and Miles (1994) framework was used to analyze data following the purposive non-probability sampling technique to get data from the respondents. It was established that some agency supervisors lacked supervisory skills and were ineffective to engage diversity in practice. Moreover, they were unable to deliver according to the Department of Social Work (UB) expectations. It was further discovered that there are three other challenges agency supervisors encountered, which are; lack of social

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work student passion to learn, negative attitude/behavior of students, and short duration of fieldwork. It was recommended that there is need to train agency supervisors to upgrade supervisory skills to maximize the benefits for social work students. The key terms are; supervision, agency, fieldwork, and social work.

Keywords: Social work supervisors; learning experience; students; field practicum.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork is a vital component of undergraduate social work education. It is dependent on efficient and effective agency supervision to bridge the classroom with the service setting and supervisors take a leading role in shaping future professionals. The agency supervisor is a critical influence in the student's future professional practice preferences. He or she enables students to integrate classroom content to practical situation to gain field practice in a meaningful way, and at the same time, acquiring practical skills of working with clients. It strengthens the very purpose of social work education, that is, to train competent social workers who can render efficient and effective services to the society. Fieldwork supervision as an educational process involves direct and individualized educator-learner relationship in which the supervisor judiciously and creatively assumes the teaching, helping, and administrative responsibilities to provide direction to the learner and to promote professional growth and assuming responsibilities (Department of Social Work [1], Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan, [2]. Both, the role of the social work educator and the fieldwork supervisor are crucial in the training of social work students to proficient practitioners. This article raise arguments based on the study of the supervisors, knowledge, and practical experience of the authors and contends that continuous review of the agency supervision is crucial. In addition, the objectives of the study were to explore challenges encountered by agency based supervisors and to determine the implementation of roles and responsibilities during the term of placement in the agency. It was established that although, there are some challenges, agency supervisors are committed to the development of social work practitioners.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While ideally, the academic and practical components of social work education are of equal importance, fieldwork is marginalized. Reality as Kaseke [3] observes, is that fieldwork is marginalized when compared to its academic

part. He asserts that, "there is very little written on this subject matter, thus leaving social work educators, students, and field supervisors without any meaningful and comprehensive guide on field instruction". Mupedziswa [4] also contends that "social work institutions need to rethink their fieldwork in order to give it equal importance to academic instruction. Furthermore, supervisors who are responsible for the practical training of social work students are not sufficiently resourced to undertake their role adequately and yet they are expected to provide opportunities for students to develop their professional knowledge and skills.

Kaseke [3] observes that there is not much documented on this subject and as a result, stakeholders do not have an adequate grasp of the issues involved, which inevitably compromises the quality of students learning in fieldwork. The researcher has also observed that many students expressed their dissatisfaction with the agency supervision. Some supervisors were appointed because of work experience and not because of their credibility in supervision. This view agrees with Cherniss [5] who discovered that poor supervision may result in part from the supervisor's attitudes or lack of skill. Based on the above discussions, the researcher deduced that the problem in the department of social work is the lack of formal supervision for social worker students on attachment. In addition, lack of well-trained supervisors' impact on how supervision is done.

It is apparent that there is limited research exploring experiences of social work agency supervisors and that research conducted has mostly focused on student's experiences in fieldwork. Field supervisors are essential in contributing to the learning experience for the students during practicum, but very little is known about the knowledge these supervisors have of the expectations of the practicum experience, their understanding of the academic preparation of the students they supervise, the challenges that these individuals face in supervising university students and what academic programs can be done in order to provide enhanced support for field supervisors. The literature

review justified the need for research to explore the experiences of agency-based supervisors. Considering that there is not much literature on experiences of agency-based supervisors, this study is intended to make a contribution towards filling this gap.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Challenges Agency Based Supervisors Encounter with Students

Literature shows that agency based supervisors experience several supervision challenges with students on placement. One of the challenges is the lack of field work manuals for their reference. Tanga [6] quantitative study on challenges of social work field training in Lesotho, found that fieldwork supervisors complained of the lack of fieldwork manuals to guide their different roles and responsibilities. These findings are similar to Dhemba [7] study on issues and challenges supervision in the eastern and southern part of Africa, who found that many agency supervisors did not have a programme on how the teaching and learning would happen. It was reported that the training institutions did not provide them with supervision guidelines and as a result they had to improvise. The majority of agency supervisors were groping in the dark for lack of clear and type of learning to provide to students on fieldwork.

Time management in student supervision requires the supervisor to deliberately set time aside for students needs while n field placement. Christie, Joyce and Moeller [8] argued that the problems with time management arise from the lack of preparation by supervisors. Many experienced supervisors felt that they were neither prepared nor aware of the diverse roles demanded of them as student supervisors while the inexperienced supervisors did not allocate time to fulfill additional supervisory responsibilities. Literature established that some supervisors had great difficulties with effectively integrating the various roles of being an agency supervisor, balancing the responsibilities of these roles, and setting priorities. In a more recent study by Sophia [9] a number of task supervisors were concerned that students' placement requires extra time.

According to Bogo, Regehr, Power & Regehr [10], giving feedback is not a problem for instructors when the student responds in a thoughtful manner or accepts it, works with, and

uses it in subsequent work with clients. Giving feedback becomes difficult when the student does not accept it. The instructors described a range of student reactions including arguing, becoming defensive, attacking the instructor's teaching style, and becoming silent and avoidant. They noted this was especially so when aspects of the student's personality or personal style were an issue. Field instructors argued that when feedback was not accepted, not only was learning and change impeded but also an acrimonious process developed in the relationship with the student [10]. Field instructors used strong terms to describe the atmosphere in their subsequent sessions and in the relationship such as "becoming tense," "very heavy, intense," "emotional," and "like me against the student." Giving negative feedback and continuing to teach in a deteriorating and tense relationship with the student was highly stressful, and instructors described their experience as "tedious, the repetition in teaching the same thing again and again with no change in the student's behavior was draining." In the end it had a profound impact on the instructors who felt horrible emotionally.

Additionally, Ketner, Bolinsky & Van Cleave [11] argued that fieldwork instruction becomes difficult, and significantly less desirable when working with underperforming or resistant students. Giving feedback is difficult when students are not receptive, or when they do not accept and use the feedback. Field instructors also identified conflicting feelings about recording a negative evaluation for a student who failed to achieve or adhere to performance standards, in part, because of questioning if anything more could or should have been done to improve student performance. The conflict between having high standards for performance in the profession, protection of clients, and gate keeping for the profession also pose challenges for fieldwork instructors. Gizara & Forrest [12] studied the experiences of 12 supervisors who had worked with students with serious competence problems, and, argued that further qualitative studies of this type could provide helpful information to other supervisors. They found that supervisors perceived the process of evaluation, especially when trainees were not achieving expected levels of competence, as complex, challenging, and difficult.

In a qualitative study by Christie, Joyce & Moeller [8], a major concern for supervisors was their lack of supervisory problem-solving skills. Supervisors were not able to identify students'

needs and problems timely. Responses indicated the difficulties in determining different learning styles; in developing basic supervisory observation skills; in objectively assessing student's affective behaviors. Supervisors also had difficulties knowing when and how to structure or modify the program and supervision to meet individual student needs. Furthermore, Bogo et al. [10] observed that lack of attention to the supervisory skills was one of the major problems associated with fieldwork education.

According to Christie, Joyce and Moeller [8] agency supervisors indicated that they had problems with attitudinal /affective behaviors resulting from students' immaturity, stress, and anxiety; negative attitudes. Such unprofessional student attitudes included defensive reactions to supervision; unprofessional student attitudes, and resultant behaviors; lack of student interest and motivation to learning. It appeared that while new supervisors may feel prepared to guide the student in developing clinical competencies, they were not prepared for supervisory responsibilities to enable the student's growth. Through experience, supervisors realized that they have more responsibility to guide the student's personal, attitudinal, and professional behavior.

2.2 Benefits of Supervising Social Work Students in the Host Agency

Agency supervisor consider supervision of students as a contribution to the development of the profession. It has been established that students with strong social work skills, active and open minded learn quickly to integrate corrective feedback in a positive manner. The process of providing feedback is then rewarding for field instructors as they participate in the generative activity of teaching and preparing the next generation of social workers [13,14]. Sophia [9] indicated that task supervisors' responses were overwhelmingly positive about supporting social work student's placements, identifying rewards, and expressing appreciation for the added responsibility. Participants expressed it as enjoyable, gratifying, rewarding, and exciting to describe their experiences as task supervisors. Similarly, others were motivated by the desire to give back to their profession what they themselves benefited from fieldwork placement when they were students Doel & Shardlow, [15].

Professional development is another reason for agency supervisors' participation in student practice skill development. Doel et al. [15] states

that other supervisors because of the status derived from a university affiliation or the opportunity to receive continuing professional development take over the responsibility of supervising students [16]. Furthermore, Doel et al. [15] found that practice teachers regarded supervision as an opportunity to reflect on their own practice, which brought increased confidence, and motivation to acquire more knowledge in research and theory. Students were seen as providing a challenge in the best sense of the word.

2.3 Gain Supervisory Experience

Agency supervision provides the supervisors with the opportunity to gain experience with providing academic support for students. According to Doel et al. [15], there are a variety of reasons that agency staff members give for volunteering to become fieldwork supervisors. Some gain supervisory experience by taking advantage of the opportunity to become fieldwork supervisors.

2.4 Agency Supervisors' Roles and Responsibilities during the Terms of Placement in the Agency

Administrative function is the main responsibility of agency supervisor who is accountable to the senior management. As such, supervisor undertakes various roles in the agency during the time of student placement with them. Parker [17], in a qualitative study on the administrative role of the supervisor found that it involved the induction of workers; work planning, assignment and delegation; monitoring, reviewing and evaluation; administrative control; achievement of organizational objectives; and performance management. This adds significant weight to the work and responsibility of the supervisor, and it is inevitable that this function is dominant over the other two. Furthermore, that the administrative supervision ensures the effective and appropriate implementation of agency objectives, policies, and procedures. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the organization policy is implemented and is held accountable for doing so. In a similar study of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University [18], the responsibility of the fieldwork supervisor is to orientate students on the agency, its policies and procedures in order that they could begin to practice immediately.

The educational function of supervision is equally the responsibility of the supervisor and must be

for the benefit of the students. Mbau [19] pointed out that during educational supervision the supervisor performs the role of a teacher and mentor. The supervisor is also expected to partly by facilitate continuing education/ learning for a supervisee. In a qualitative study by Jacques [20], the educational function of supervision is to enhance the social worker professionalism. The social work student must apply the theory she has learnt into practice situations. The supervisor must, therefore, ensure that the social worker acquire knowledge, skills, and appropriate attitudes in relation to the target population; the policies, procedures, and objectives of the agency and its practice. Additionally, Parker [17] argue that one of the goals of the educational function is to help supervisees translate what they have learnt in an academic or training setting into practice, and this does not come automatically. Similarly, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University [18] asserts that the role of the supervisor is to help students integrate theoretical knowledge with experiences in practice. Department of Applied social studies [21] added that fieldwork instructors are expected to hold regular weekly individual and/or group supervision sessions with students, discussing their work and making an ongoing assessment of their assignment. Corrective feedback should be given clearly as early as possible so that students learn from mistakes and have time to correct them. According to the Hong Kong Polytechnic University [18], supervisors should continuously assess the educational progress of the students, for example, the level of competence the students have reached, their learning needs, and the best way of achieving them.

The goal of supportive supervision is the support function is to help the supervisee adjust to job-related stress [1,17]. Social work can be a high-stress profession, especially in South Africa, where social workers are faced with high workloads and complex, multi-problematic service users and communities [22]. Job-related stress can have a negative impact on performance, motivation, and commitment, and can lead to burnout and job dissatisfaction. It, therefore, is important that the supervisor offer the necessary support to the supervisee, which will in turn make the latter more effective at his/her job. Similarly, the Department of Applied social studies [21] showed that recognition should be given for the effort made by students and support is rendered when they face difficult situations. Additionally, the support function is

concerned with caring for the social worker and dealing with situations that might lead to stress [17]. The supervisor is responsible for reducing anxiety, enhancing adaptation to adversity, renewing faith, and restoring emotional equilibrium. The support function should include both practical and emotional aspects. For example, the supervisor should offer emotional support by listening to and encouraging the supervisee, but should also help the supervisee to pinpoint the source of stress and identify means to prevent it or cope with it more positively in the future.

Mbau [19] pointed out that during supportive supervision the supervisor assumes the role of comforter and psychological support provider. With this support, workers can continue to function on the job without being overwhelmed by work related stress. Accordingly supportive supervision is the major function of social work supervision. The goal is to promote the psychological well-being of the worker by preventing stress and tension and to help the worker to cope with emotional demanding situations. Kadushin [23] also is of the view that supportive supervision provides the psychological and interpersonal context that enables the worker to mobilize the emotional energy needed for effective job performance. According to him the primary goal of supportive supervision is to increase effectiveness of the worker by decreasing stress that interferes with performance and increasing motivation and intensifying commitment.

2.5 Competencies of Agency Based Social Work Supervisors

In South Africa, it is essential for supervisor to understand and apply the South African Council for Social Service Profession's Policy Guidelines. The guidelines are meant to regulate conduct, as per the Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers [24]. The supervisor should also have knowledge of other relevant ethical, legal and professional guidelines that influence the social work profession. According to Council on Social Work Education [25], social workers should understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers should understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas.

Professional relationships and communication are quite pivotal to the success of social work practice. Rodolfa, Eisman, Rehm, Bent, Nelson & Ritchie [26] identified professional relationships as an essential competence, and due to the fact that social work and supervision are based on relational interactions [27,28], professional relationships are identified as essential foundational competencies for social work supervisors. This being said, relationship competence is defined as the “capacity to relate effectively and meaningfully with individuals, groups, and/or communities” [26]. This means that the supervisor should be able to build and maintain professional relationships within the organization, particularly with the supervisee, as well as with interdisciplinary colleagues

Parker [17] asserted that supervisor to must understand the concepts of emotional intelligence and reflect it in his or her professional practice, as well as foster it within the supervisee. The awareness of emotions helps the supervisee and supervisor to be more empathic and to build a genuine relationship with the service user. At the most basic level, emotions reflect the relationships between people; for example, anger, frustration and joy might be emotions that are experienced in the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Emotional intelligence then refers to the ability to recognize the meanings of such emotions and to reason and solve problems. Mayer et al.[29] and Salovey and Mayer [30] argue that moods and emotions can greatly influence the components and strategies of problem solving, in both a negative and positive way

Supervisors who are competent within the domain of emotional intelligence are well on their way to greatly benefit the supervisee and service user [17]. However, emotions, learning styles and communication patterns, for example, are shaped by the supervisors’ and supervisees’ worldviews and personal experiences. Factors such as race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religious beliefs shape how supervisors and supervisees interact. Additionally, the supervisor should observe the wider context of the personal, professional, political and educational dimensions that may affect the working relationship [31].

Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers [32] states that social workers should recognize and appreciate that differences exist amongst individuals, families, groups and

communities. As stated in the Code of Ethics, “Social work is founded on a long-standing commitment to respect the inherent dignity and worth of all persons taking into account the breadth of differences that exist among individuals, families, groups and communities”. Culturally competent practice requires a commitment to increasing one’s knowledge and appreciation for diverse cultures, embracing culture as a central focus in social work practice, and becoming aware of one’s own culture, values and beliefs and how these shape one’s own worldview. Through their practices, “Social workers oppose prejudice and discrimination against any person or group of persons, on any grounds, and specifically challenge views and actions that stereotype particular persons or groups” Canadian Association of Social Workers, [33].

2.6 Best Ways through Which Agency Based Supervision could be Improved

Fieldwork agency supervisors face a number of challenges including the lack of instructional fieldwork manual. In a study conducted in Lesotho by Dhemba [7], manuals were considered useful resource for social work educators, students and agency supervisors. Therefore it is imperative that schools of social work should develop their own fieldwork manuals, covering the teaching and learning content for fieldwork. This is particularly important considering that each institution is unique in terms of prevailing socio-economic conditions, challenges and experiences, the social work education curriculum in a given country. Dhemba [7] argued that non-social work agency supervisors experienced problems completing students’ assessment forms at the end of the placement as some did not understand what was expected of them. As a result, most of the assessment forms were returned to the training institution incomplete. With the increasing use of non- social work agency supervisors, the provision of training and other supportive materials would go a long way in enhancing the quality of practice learning. These findings were aligned with those of Marquez & Kean [34] who conducted a similar study in United States. Marquez & Kean [34] found that many cooperating agencies that completed questionnaires talked of introducing supervision guidelines, manuals, and/or schedules to systematize supervision and make it more effective.

Training supervisors is crucial to improving the practice competences of social work student during placement. Marquez & Kean [34] showed that performance analyses of supervision often found that health professionals charged with the supervision responsibilities lacked the knowledge and skills needed to perform their responsibilities effectively. When surveyed, supervisors in developing-country health systems frequently commented on their need for more training, and training is probably the most common intervention used in an attempt to improve supervision practices. The areas in which supervisors needed training as cited in the survey of cooperating agencies included; problem identification, problem-solving, time management, communication, monitoring, coaching, and technical/ clinical updates. Additionally, Hugges [35] indicated that the key to effective supervision is a trained supervisor however; as there appears to be no specific supervision training available, perhaps a mandatory supervision training course should be available to those wishing to become supervisors.

Communication with agency supervisor has been found to be profound in helping student settle during placement. Kathuri-Ogola, Van Leeuwen, Kabaria-Muriithi, Weeks, Kieru, Ndayala [36] study on supervision challenges encountered by Kenyan University Students' on Practicum Attachment, established that in order to improve students' preparation for practicum, field supervisors should be invited to share their suggestions, especially in relation to how students, faculty and staff could better inform them about the objectives of the field attachment. The preferred modes of communication are through e-mail or written communication detailing a list of learning objectives for the students or use of brochures. The lack of communication could result in inadequate expectations (too great or too few) for student learning and performance during their practicum which could have a serious impact on the learning experience. Kathuri-Ogola et al. [36] recommended that faculty should provide detailed information to Field Supervisors about the particular units completed by students and the specific skills, abilities, and learning goal of individual students before the practicum begins.

Mokoena [37] holds that a healthy relationship between the supervisor and supervisee should be developed from the beginning, maintained, and prevail throughout the process of

supervision. A healthy supervisory relationship stimulates positive attitudes and confidence, trust and openness from both sides. In order to stimulate such a positive relationship, Watkins [38] states that effective supervision should be characterized by well-developed communication skills and a thorough assessment of the supervisee's knowledge base and prior working experience. The danger is that unexplored assumptions about supervisee's background knowledge could negatively affect the supervision process.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

There are three main research designs that researchers draw from in the design of their study (explanatory, exploratory and descriptive). Research design is needed to facilitate the smooth sailing of the various research operations, thereby making research as efficient as possible yielding maximal information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money [5]. This study triangulated the research design. It adopted exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research designs.

3.2 Research Methods

The study adopted qualitative research method. According to Chilisa & Preece [39] qualitative research refers to the type of inquiry in which the researcher carries research about people's experiences in natural settings in which they occur using a variety of techniques and report findings mainly in words rather than in statistics, therefore creating a space for marginalized voices. This method was chosen because the study is exploratory in nature; exploratory qualitative research aims at tackling new issues in which little research has been done. In this study little has been researched about the experiences of social work agency supervisors therefore the researcher was able to gather more information about this topic. The researcher had personal contact with social work agency supervisors and got insight about the challenges they encounter. Moreover qualitative research was chosen because it is appropriate for purposive sampling technique that is required in the study to obtain the required data.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Face to face interview: The researcher used semi-structured face-to-face interviews to collect data from respondents. It mainly consists of

open-ended. Although the interview focuses on key topics, there is also the opportunity to discuss, in more detail, some particular areas of interest [40]. The social work agency supervisors in Gaborone were interviewed through semi-structured interviews because the technique allows the researcher to gather detailed information about attitudes and behavior towards the experiences respondents encounter. Also the technique enabled the researcher to probe in order to get more information about the experiences of agency social work supervisors.

3.4 Study Site

The study site refers to the location where the research will be undertaken [41]. The study was conducted in Gaborone among social work agency supervisors who are based in Social and Community Development (S&CD), health settings such as clinics and hospitals and also from non-governmental organizations. Gaborone City was chosen as a study site to enable the researcher to easily access the place and reduce transportation costs. Furthermore Gaborone has a huge number of social work agency based supervisors therefore it enabled the researcher to find participants who were willing to give consent.

3.5 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

- The study included social work agency-based supervisors from health settings, Social and Community Development departments and from non-governmental organizations who are willing to give consent.
- The study excluded social work agency-based supervisors who do not give consent. It also excluded non-social work agency-based supervisors (psychologists, physiologists and sociologists etc.).

3.6 Sampling Technique

Purposive/ Judgmental technique: The study used purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique to identify the potential respondents who had supervised social work students and willing to participate in the study. The sampling technique was chosen because of its process of isolating the respondents who could conveniently answer the research questions. The study focused on a certain group of individuals (agency social work supervisors) who were selected based on the characteristics that the researcher was looking

for. Therefore, purposive sampling is about selecting the sample units based on the researcher's judgment about which ones will be more suitable for the study than others [42].

3.7 Sample Size

The researcher interviewed 20 agency social work supervisors who were purposively selected and representative of the Social and Community Development Department, Non-Governmental Organization, and Health settings. The sample size used in qualitative research methods is often small because it is often concerned with gathering in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings are based on the objectives of the study revealed interesting issues which are fundamental to the development of practice skills in social work. The objectives were meant to explore challenges agency based supervisors encounter when supervising social work students on attachment and to assess the best ways through which agency-based supervision could be improved. It is from these objectives that themes for data analysis were developed for analytical data processing purpose. The findings revealed the challenges with supervision, lack of student passion for social work, attitudes of students to work, and duration of placement which is discussed below:

4.1. Challenges of Supervising Social Work Students

Agency supervisors encounter various challenges while supervising students on attachment. It was established that some challenges emanate from the University of Botswana which inversely brings difficulties/problems for agency supervisors. The findings have shown that there are three challenges agency supervisors encounter which are; lack of passion for social work, attitude/behavior of students and short duration of fieldwork.

4.2. Lack of Passion for Social Work

Majority of the respondents in NGOs, health settings, and S&CD expressed concern that some students they supervised lacked passion for the social work programme and acquisition of practice skills. The supervisors indicated that the

problem seemed to emanate from the University of Botswana admission and enrolment of students into social work program even though they didn't apply to pursue it. This results in students undertaking a course they didn't have passion for, hence bringing difficulties for agency supervisors. One respondent summarized this by saying:

"Some students are not interested in social work, not because they do it deliberately but because they were enrolled in a program they didn't want. The social work intake program used at the university of Botswana has changed I guess because it brings a lot of problems. The UB give students courses they didn't want to do. Many students are misplaced therefore when they come for their attachment they would want to be pushed to do work; they come late at work because they don't even have a passion for this profession".

4.3 Attitude/ Behavior of Students

The findings have shown that students are not interested in their fieldwork; they don't perform duties assigned diligently, they entertain themselves with irrelevant videos and computer games during working hours which shows lack interest in their work. As cited below by one respondent:

"I once had a student who was not interested in her fieldwork, you assign her work and she just decides to sit on the computer playing games. She was also not ready to change how she dresses and meeting organizational dress code. It was not easy to deal with her because she ended up going back to school without completing her community project".

4.4 Short Duration of Fieldwork

Some agency supervisors in health settings argued that the time frame for attachment is short therefore students are unable to finish their cases and projects. Students are very slow to grasp what is transpiring in the field because the time to practice is short. Therefore, there is no ample time for observation, being observed and doing tasks solely. It also makes it difficult for students to articulate themselves well; sometimes it is not easy for students to carry out their projects due to time given for attachment. Furthermore another respondent said:

"Students are very slow to grasp what is transpiring in the field because the time

frame given to them for practice is short. Therefore there is no ample time for observation, being observed and doing tasks solely. It also makes it difficult for students to articulate themselves well; sometimes it is not easy for students to carry out their projects due to time given for attachment".

These findings tally with the study conducted by Christie, Joyce and Moeller [43] who established that supervisors have problems with attitudinal/affective behaviors of students which include their defensive reactions to supervision and lack of student interest and motivation for learning. The theory shows that fieldwork is an activity that is characterized by tensions and contradictions and complex interrelationship between actors in different organizational settings. These tensions and contradictions impact on the approach that agency-based supervisors take to work with students and their own professional development, which in turn impacts on the quality of outcomes for student social workers.

5. BEST WAYS TO IMPROVE SUPERVISION

Agency social work supervisors charged with supervisory responsibilities encounter challenges with students which call for an exploration of alternatives to solve the challenges. It has been established that the best ways to improve supervision are; training of supervisors, communication and collaboration, and increased attachment period. However; the major resolution is the training of agency supervisors in order to acquire supervisory skills. Particularly, the agency supervisors who are diploma holders require training to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competences to support those pursuing a higher qualification.

Hugges [35] argue that the key to effective student supervision is a trained supervisor; perhaps a mandatory supervision training course should be developed and made available to those wishing to become agency supervisors. The training should equip them with the prerequisite knowledge and skills by which they could offer effective supervision and following the detailed process for the benefit of their supervisees. The theory also confirms the findings because it shows that in order to improve supervision; a new agency-based supervisor should be provided an opportunity to work in a supportive team, alongside an

experienced practitioner. Furthermore, the theory depicts that it is critical for agency based supervisors to incorporate the knowledge, skills and attitudes of an educator, to effectively support student learning in the context of a field placement.

6. WAYFORWARD FOR EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

This section presents way-forward of improving supervision of social work students for maximum benefits of intended outcome. This is based on the contribution of agency supervisor in terms of what should be done in the light of key findings on the study of experiences of agency social work supervisors in Gaborone. The way-forward provide ideas about ways of addressing the identified agency supervision challenges.

6.1 Professional Practice

Efficient and effective fieldwork supervision requires the Department of Social Work at the University of Botswana to regularly communicate with the agency supervisors especially when students are placed in their agency. Academic supervisors should have contact with agency-based supervisors on weekly basis to check on the students' progress and by so doing; the students will take their fieldwork seriously knowing that they are constantly being monitored. They should also collaborate and build a good relationship with the agency supervisors to ensure that students receive quality supervision. This will enable all the key players to identify the challenges that the agency supervisors or student encounter during the time of field work placement. One respondent argued that:

"Myself being a social worker motivated me to supervise other people because I belief sharing ideas with them will enable them to be better social workers. I have to pay back to my profession by supervising those who come after me. Besides at the end of the day this is a profession so I want the world to see it as respectable, people knowing that when you see a social worker you are sure that your concerns will be taken care of".

One respondent said:

"There should be collaboration between academics and field supervisors to ensure that students are meeting academic

requirements but also considering agency realities. For fieldwork supervision to be effective it is essential that all role players work collaboratively in the best interest of the student academic progress while serving vulnerable clients".

Another respondent supporting this idea, said:

"Communication is the key. Academic supervisors should contact agency supervisors every week just to check the progress of the students, that way student will take the practicum very seriously because they will know that they are monitored every week".

6.2 Training

It is recommended that agency supervisors be continually trained to upgrade their supervisory skills to maximize the benefits for social work students. Refresher courses for agency supervisors should be introduced to remind agency supervisors their roles and responsibilities and the key areas of focus. The training should ensure supervisors have adequate knowledge and skills to manage students' attitudinal/affective behaviors, motivate student interest, and ensure they learn practice skills. Commenting on the issue of training, one participant said:

"Supervisors should be trained so that they can be fully equipped and be able to provide students with proper supervision. The one day workshop we usually attend at UB is not enough because you may find out that students are being supervised by non-social workers so they can't really grasp the content of student supervision in one day".

One respondent with a different view said:

"Supervision doesn't require training because what I think is that I already have Bachelor degree in Social Work; I have undergone attachment and internship so I believe I have an experience on how to handle upcoming students".

One respondent noted that:

As a supervisor I still need to be trained in some things because the world is revolving very fast and I cannot say I know everything, that is why it is important for a supervisor to

keep an open mind that I can learn something from this mere second year student. They are academic all the time, they see the current trends, they read a lot but as for me I am just here in the office working and having limited time to see what is going on out there.

A Diploma respondent holder put it:

“Obviously I need to improve my supervisory skills because I possess diploma in social work so I feel with these challenging emerging issues, a diploma holder will struggle since it is outdated”.

6.3 Policy

The University of Botswana should consider enrolling students for programs they have applied for as their first preference. This will enable the students to pursue a course they are passionate about hence curbing the problems agency supervisors' encounter with supervising students who lack passion for social work. In addition, the Department of Social Work (UB) should increase attachment period to at least a semester to enable students to complete their cases and community projects. Another respondent summarized by saying:

“The attachment should be a semester so that students can complete their cases and not leave them in the middle because counseling is not a once-off session, it has many sessions so a student should start with a client and terminate at the end with results. So in 9 weeks they can't do school projects, and counsel clients”.

7. CONCLUSION

The study established that the agency based supervisors encounter some challenges while supervising social work students on fieldwork placement. Some of the challenges are that some social work students lack passion for social work programme, and as a result, display negative attitude towards supervisors and their work during placement. This has been found to bring about difficulties/ problems for agency supervisors who may not be social workers and also charged with other administrative responsibility in the agency. Therefore training should be provided to non-social work agency supervisors in order to impart to the social work supervisory skills. It will enable them to handle social work students who have attitudinal/

affective behavior challenges appropriately. It is also vital for the Department of Social Work to maintain effective and efficient communication and collaboration with agency supervisors to ensure that students fulfil academic practicum requirements and to monitor the progress of the students in the field. Furthermore, it is highly recommend that the University of Botswana should consider enrolling students for courses and/or programmes they may have a passion for in order to make it easier for agency supervisors to provide professional guidance.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard written participant consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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