

Challenges Of Social Work Profession In Pakistan

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Abstract

Pakistan is one of those countries, which appeared on world map in the twentieth century. Emergence of a new country after division of a larger country brought assassinations, theft and kidnapping of citizens. It created enormous socio-economic problems in health, education and employment area. To address the said issues, government requested UNTAA for help for the solution of these problems in a systematic way. With the collaboration of the government and the experts, first in-service training course was initiated in October 1952, which was a foundation stone for education of Social Work in Pakistan. Since its inception, the profession has faced certain challenges in the country. The objective this systematic review is to describe the challenges of Social Work Profession in Pakistan in the present decade. Followed by systematic literature review, this research has presented the challenges of seven decades old profession in Pakistan. This article is limited to the availability of secondary literature through library material and search engines. The methodology for this article is based on the steps of literature review process as described by Ramdhani, et. al. (2016) Some fundamental challenges of Social Work in Pakistan derived from systematic literature review are Defining Social Work as Profession in Pakistan, Social Work indigenous literature, Recognition of the Profession, Fieldwork practice and cultural competency, Gap between the Theory and the Practice, and Absence of Professional values and Code of Ethics. To conclude, challenges of Social Work Profession in Pakistan are not addressed by the different governments in the country. Under liberal governments, the recognition of the profession has a wider umbrella for the non-governmental organization through registration under legal framework. On the other hand, the licensure necessary for *Social Work practice* is still awaited in the country.

Key words: Social Work, Pakistan, systematic literature review, indigenous literature, Fieldwork practice, cultural competency, values and Code of Ethics.

Introduction and Background

Social Work practice is as old as the history of humanity. First footprints of welfare are found in Babylonia as historian document the code of Hammurabi (for the protection of widows and orphans) as initial attempts for the destitute on the planet. Historical development of Social Work reveals that the emergence of the profession has its evident roots in state social welfare policies and religious beliefs and practices for poor, widows, orphans and destitute in Middle East and European countries before the 11th century. Eleventh century welfare grew out of war as during the first Crusade (which abolished the Muslim states) well organized orders were passed for the care of pilgrims and the sick (Dulmus & Sowers, 2012).

Latterly European feudalism provided a state system, which dealt with poverty in the same century. While bubonic plague of the next two centuries in the Europe and Asian countries brought deaths, poverty, increased the miseries of the population, and resulted in English Law of settlement in 1388. In the coming centuries, the decline of Britain feudal system and the rise of industrialization paved the way for the laborers statues and resulted in Elizabethan Poor Law, 1601 and poor houses as social welfare institutions were observed (Woodside & McClam, 2013). However, dissatisfaction grew with the Poor Law system by the 19th century as a new policy named Speenhamland Law changed the real essence of the Elizabethan Poor Law and social problems were again dealt by the individuals rather than state. Nineteenth century brought dissatisfaction with the Poor Law in England. Responsively Charity Organization Society (COS) was established in 1869 with objective of charitable giving to the deserving masses and promoted self- help instead of dependency created by state intervention. While social Work education started with the formalized beginning from late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century with London COS volunteers training program through a series of lectures in 1903 and the same was replicated in Birmingham and Liverpool (Parker, 2023). Followed by development movements of nineteenth century, The Beveridge Report (1942) proved to be a foundation stone for post-war era and turned the welfare scenario in Britain.

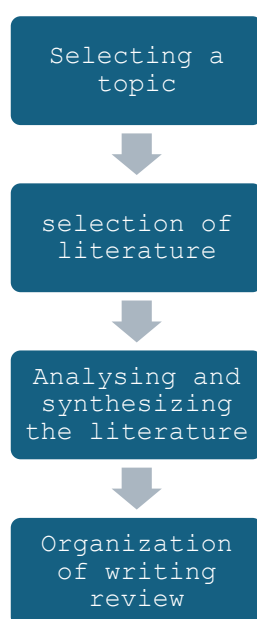
In parallel, Government of India Act, 1858 was promulgated in Indian Subcontinent as a colony of British rule. During pre-colonial period, there was no unity in India whether it was religious or cultural (Agnes, 2001). Heterogeneous population in different areas was seen commonly comprised of different castes, sects, and religions (Nair, 1996).

Customary law (with judgement of segregated communities) was commonly promulgated under pre-colonial India and invaders considered it as the country lacked legal system (Chitnis & Wright, 2007). Diversified customs were observed among clans and castes as it was witnessed that upper class women of Hindu community were governed by the strict patriarchal customs (Agnes, 2001). To control the pluralism, the efforts were made by the British to redefine Indian society on religious and caste lines. Under the 1880s codification movement, castes and tribes were brought under Hinduism which were customarily outside the Varna system, resulting in the replacement of customary laws with canonical Hindu laws. Contrary to this, Muslim political and religious leaders were in the favor of unifying the Muslim community and the reinforcement of the Shariat law to bring about the "Islamization". It was easier for the Muslim community as they had already a written code and a text to be followed as the general law for Muslims (Nair, 1996).

The development era brought welfare reforms for all communities of Indian Subcontinent (though criticized by some experts) resulted in Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829, Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, Indian Military Service Family Pension Fund in 1873 (after World War- I as there was a significant and extensive contribution of Indian Subcontinent) Societies Registration Act, 1860, Trust Act 1882 and Muslim Personal Law 1937. Further certain historically documented social welfare institutions were working in the subcontinent under different religions were Sekundra Orphanage in Agra, Arya Samaj orphanages and Anjuman-i-Himayat-i Islam (the Society for the Defence of Islam) (Soni, 2020). Even list of orphanages compiled by National Archives of India in 1914-15 states that there were 446 orphanages in early twentieth-century in colonial India, but not a single orphanage was administered by the colonial state (ibid). Other state welfare was provided in the form of public schools, hospitals and transportation system in the Indian subcontinent.

Methodology

The main objective of this article is to provide the background for understanding the knowledge and highlighting the significance of the selected research topic. It can be an inspiration for Social Work research by identifying gaps in its body of knowledge. The objective of this article is to describe the challenges of Social Work Profession in Pakistan in the present decade. Followed by systematic literature review, this research presents the challenges of seven decades old profession in Pakistan. This article is limited to the availability of secondary literature through library material and search engines. The methodology for this article is based on the steps of literature review process as described by Ramdhani, et. al. (2016) given below.



Ramdhani, et. al. (2016)

Ramdhani, et. al. (2016) explains further that writing the review based article will be followed by three main sections; namely introduction, main body of the article and conclusion.

By relying on this method, some fundamental challenges of Social Work in Pakistan derived from systematic literature review are Defining Social Work as Profession in Pakistan, Social Work indigenous literature, Recognition of the Profession, Fieldwork practice and cultural competency and Gap between the Theory and the Practice.

Primary challenges of Social Work in Pakistan

Pakistan is one of those countries, which appeared on world map in the twentieth century. Emergence of a new country after division of a larger country brought assassinations, theft and kidnapping of citizens (Butt, 2021). Poverty, homelessness of refugees, abduction, property claims, lack of administration were the gigantic social Problems of Pakistan. It created enormous socio-economic problems in health, education and employment area. To address the said issues, government requested UNTAA for help for the solution of these problems in a systematic way. In 1952 Miss Elmina Luke was sent as a first expert from New York. Her first observation states

Although the government of Pakistan had originally felt the need for assistance in a number of specific social welfare fields and in particular in the establishment of a school of social welfare, it was agreed that it might be wiser that you be entrusted with a study of the existing facilities in Pakistan and make such recommendations as you deem necessary for the elaboration of a social welfare programme, possibly, the establishment of a school of social work (Luke, 1952).

With the collaboration of the government and the experts, first in-service training course was initiated in October 1952 (Rehmatullah, 2002) which was a foundation stone of Social Work education in Pakistan. These short-courses were proved as a basis for education and training of Social Work education at university level. Subsequently, two-year postgraduate diploma

was initiated in University of the Punjab in November 1954, which was upgraded in 1956 to a master degree (Jabeen, 2013; Shah, 2021). Followed by this, the professional degree was started in all the provinces of the country in different decades (Riaz&Granich, 2023). Since its inception, the profession has faced certain challenges in the country. Some fundamental challenges of Social Work in Pakistan are described below.

1. Defining Social Work as Profession in Pakistan: a century journey

Defining a multi-faced profession of Social Work has passed through a variety of stages since 1950s. Primarily it was defined as ‘helping the poor through informal charity delivery as social service and social welfare by the family institution’, moving towards the concept of ‘a systematic way of helping individuals and groups’, and ‘Social Work as a process that operates to assist individuals’, and eventually the concept of ‘Social work as a practice-based profession’ in the current century. The profession and formal education of Social Work reached in the newly independent colonies of the British Empire after Second World War; Pakistan was one of those countries. However, the absence of indigenous literature has affected the formulation of a body of literature needed to define a comprehensive definition of Social Work in the country.

Defining Social Work by its own professional is quiet challenging and confusing as narrated by some authors (Siddiqui, 2015). Mary E Richmond (1915 to 2014) primarily defined however evolution of definition of Social Work has a journey of a century (1915 to 2014) as it as helping the helpless individuals in a society. Later it varied from helping in the form of charity to humanitarian philosophy and scientific knowledge of Social Work. In the second half of the twentieth century, there was shift towards the inter-personal adjustments and capacity restoration of individuals for social functioning. Bhatt & Sanyaal (2019) has articulated the definition of Social Work under four phases of a century. From 1915-1940 it was claimed as “*Charity Model*”; while in 1941 it turned into “*Welfare Model*”. Developmental model and empowerment model were emerged in second half of the twentieth century and at the rise of twenty first century.

For more understanding and close observation, primary to contemporary definitions of Social Work has gone through different phases. Early 20th Century has debated the definition of Social Work as “Art” bringing about better adjustments or changing the human attitudes” (Richmond, 1917; Jerett, 1919; Lee, 1923). In the first half of the 20th Century the concept shifted into the “give assistance”; “mobilizing the capacities of the individual” or “professional service based on scientific knowledge and skill in human relations” (Witmer, 1942; Anderson, 1945; Bowers, 1949; International Federation of Social Workers, 1957; Friedlander, 1958). Moving towards end of 20th century, journey of Social Work reached to the status of professional activity (National Association of Social Workers, 1973), while 21st century status brought a turning point in the history. It was declared as practice-based profession by its professional bodies as,

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels” (IFSW, 2014).

In Pakistan, the absence of indigenous literature has also affected the formulation of a comprehensive definition of Social Work in the country. Before moving towards a comprehensive definition, state of social welfare in the country can be explained briefly. This profession has passed the different stages as social welfare arena can be explained relying on documented history under the two welfare models i.e. state welfare model and family welfare model.

State Welfare	Family Welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 1947- Public hospitals and schools as institutional social welfare • 1950s State Intervention- Government request to UNTAB for advisory services, training programs for trained social workers • 1960s Legal rights provision- Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961, Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Ordinance, 1961 • 1970s Rights based emerging welfare state after Constitution of 1973 • Formal Islamic charity delivery as social service and social welfare in the form of Zakat by Zakat and Ushar Ordinance, 1981 • 1980s Islamization of laws • Political instability era 1989-99 • Laws re-appealing reforms- 1999-2007 • Tension between political parties but safety nets era 2013 onwards 	<p>Informal Islamic charity delivery as social service and social welfare in the form of Zakat, Sadqat, Fitrana to the relatives, neighbors, servants.</p>

Thus Social Work concept has passed through a variety of stages since 1950s, as primarily it can be defined as ‘helping the poor through informal charity delivery as social service and social welfare by the family institution’, moving towards the concept of ‘a systematic way of helping individuals and groups’, and ‘Social Work as a process that operates to assist

individuals', and eventually the concept of 'Social work as a practice-based profession' in the current century. Based on all above, Social Work in Pakistan is defined as,

"Social Work is a practice-based profession which focuses on solution and management of social problems to bring social change in society. It promotes empowerment of marginalized segments of society to ensure their well-being and is surrounded by the state welfare derived from the country's constitution. As an academic discipline, Social Work has practice methods as main body of knowledge, social welfare agencies as field of practice, finding the philosophical foundation in values and ethics of Social Work and focuses on clients' problems underpinned by theories of Social Work in order to ensure the clients' well-being".

As a way forward towards the indigenous literature, Social Work is defined in Pakistan. However defining a multi-faced profession of Social Work has passed through a variety of stages since 1950s and eventually the concept of 'Social work as a practice-based profession' in the current century has reached to the acceptance level by the active efforts of academia.

2. Recognition of the Profession

Another challenge of the profession is the recognition of the profession in the country. The image of the Social Work profession and social worker has remained challenging by its self. As Zastrow (2017) explains, that stereotype attached with a social worker can be explained as a person who brings a basket of food for distribution; though have a little understanding of peoples' problem.

In Pakistan, image of the Social Work profession still faces social work stereotypes. Here a person helping the neighbors or the community in social or economic domain, without any education or social welfare agency are commonly called as a social worker.

Recognition of the profession is generally characterized by two main types i.e. academic and professional recognition; as academic recognition is related to the course work of study while after completion of the degree students seek professional recognition (Kortese, 2016). Even if professional and academic recognition overlap under some cases as when individuals completing internships while completing a degree become a fully qualified professional.

In Pakistan, academic recognition of the domain is given by the charter universities in the country in the form of undergraduate and graduate Social Work degrees. In addition; social workers complete fieldwork/ internship in their degrees; hence has a professional and academic recognition. However, at community level, Social Work profession still faces social work stereotypes. Here non-governmental organizations are also working without formal social work education. Only they are registered under the government.

3. Social Work Indigenous Literature

Absence of Social Work indigenous literature is a big question to be solved yet in Pakistan. The curriculum of Social Work introduced in Pakistan was completely relied on western ethics, values and history of Social Work. With the promulgation of Social Work education by University of the Punjab, western ideologies infused into educational institutions of Pakistan.

Still Social Work education in universities of Pakistan is governed by Britain and US literature. Borrowed from indigenous literature, initially it relied on the Britain literature in English medium. Professional records from the fieldwork experience were the first material for classroom discussions at University of the Punjab in 1956 (Rehmatullah, 2002). Primary literature for learning was taken from psychiatry, sociology, philosophy, social research and Islamic literature along with international journals (ibid).

Presently the indigenous literature is mostly published at undergraduate level and are printed in Urdu (Saeed, 2017; Khalid, 2014) as a textbook while at university level; research articles by academicians serve the purpose. These books follow the fundamental and decades go methods of Social Work. A few books and book chapters also serve the purpose of Social Work indigenous literature (Riaz, 2022; Shah, 2021). On the other hand, we do not find any book which explains the basic literature like process of Social Work i.e. Assessment, Planning, Intervention and Review & Evaluation in the Pakistani context. It is the case with the other methods and areas of Social Work. Ultimately, the university syllabus is dependent upon the Britain and United States literature.

This fundamental orientation of Social Work education was contrary to indigenous values and belief system of the masses. This borrowed social work theories, methods, and techniques has not only immobilized the professional journey but also could not bring social change and development in the country.

4. Fieldwork practice and cultural competency

Social Work field practice is an integral part of Social Work Education and is popular as signature pedagogy (Council on Social Work Education, 2008) of Social Work. Fieldwork practice of Social Work enables students to apply the theoretical knowledge at a fieldwork agency. Importance of fieldwork training has been highlighted under different Social Work published literature (Agnimitra, 2018; Roy & Dash 2019; Ahmed, Butt & Sajid, 2021; Tariq, Butt & Javed, 2023).

Like many other professions, pedagogical norms are also required in Social Work, which are required to integrate theory into practice. Social workers deal with the individual, group and community problems in their relevant communities. While dealing with clients' problems, fieldwork methods and techniques, as depicted before, relies on borrowed Britain and US literature.

In contrast, cultural competence is known as a central pillar of Social Work. It has emerged from culturally specific practice frameworks from varied fields of social sciences. As a central pillar, it covers three major areas namely, knowledge, awareness and skills. Here knowledge refers to the knowing different cultural groups in the field of practice of Social Worker; awareness describes the Social Workers' culture, values, and belief system. Whereas skills refers to the workers's ability to apply culturally appropriate techniques for the clients' assessment and intervention (NASW 2015). By combining these three areas, framework for cultural competence is applied in social work practice (Kohli, 2010).

Here Fieldwork practice and cultural competency does not seems to be supporting aspects of Social Work practice. On one hand fieldwork, practice is done according to the adopted methods and techniques of Social Work. On the flip side of this page, cultural competency requires indigenization of concepts discussed above. Here Fieldwork practice and cultural competency seems to be confronting each other. This result in other issues like students has to face some contradictions in given orientations regarding field practicum than actually exploring it by field visits. Moreover, they are incompetent to manage unwanted and unfamiliar complex situations at field practice (Tariq, Butt & Javed, 2023). Hence, due to this unfelt clash between the Fieldwork practice and cultural competency do not make it possible to acquaint the students with the practice of field with true letter and spirit.

5. Gap between the Theory and the Practice

As a practice based profession, Social Work relies on theoretical foundations and practice to accomplish the aim of better societal conditions and enhancement of social functioning' (IFSW, 2014) in communities. Fieldwork training during graduate degree of Social Work has a significant and indispensable role for integration of theory into practice. Through this practice, students are able to apply values, ethics and skills to address the clients' problems. However, the gap between theory and practice has been under consideration since recent years in Social Work (Tariq, Butt & Javed, 2023). It is one of the documented challenges in Social Work for many years (Beckett, 2006; Heck et al, 2010; Lister, 2012; Baikady et al, 2022). Review of literature depicts that the integration of theory and practice in Social Work has remained problematic. They have argued that this gap is a common challenge in Social Work practice in many region (ibid).

Broadly speaking, it is related to various aspects such as the applied curriculum and professional practice in Social Work education. However, the gulf between these two has always been felt in academic institutions. This gap is like 'what is written' and 'what has to be done'. Beckett (2006) is also of the view that gap between the theory and the practice is like 'rhetoric and reality'.

One of the contributing factors for this gap is the non-indigenous literature. This situation prevails in Pakistan, as we do not teach indigenous literature in Social Work departments. Furthermore, this gap become more wide when applying theory from borrowed literature to practice under our own cultural structures. Another key contributing factor for the said gap is the wider range of theoretical literature. Here the theoretical literature is much more available than the practice modules for fieldwork practice.

Also the theory in Social Work encompasses the knowledge, skills and values that informs practice. Different theorist of Social Work (Payne, 2014; Langer & Lietz, 2015) are of the view that Social Work is not only dependent on a theory or some specific intervention model. It is acquainted with a comprehensive knowledge, from which most appropriate theory or model can be chosen for the case under consideration e.g. ecosystem theory, cognitive behavioral therapy, the client-centered model. Having diversified approach, Social Workers can adopt and adapt different interventions from different models as required by the individual cases. It also brings a gap between theory and practice for the social worker.

Conclusion

Social Work profession was initiated and welcomed by the government of Pakistan right after its creation in collaboration with international treaties. It has passed through a variety of stages since 1950s. It has travelled for seventy years for its recognition; but its initiators has not moved it to its heights. The country has faced many layers of political instability and has witnessed conservative and liberal governments under different decades. Under liberal governments, the recognition of the profession has a wider umbrella for the non-governmental organization through registration under legal framework. On the other hand, the licensure necessary for the Social Work practice is still awaited. Under academia, the gap between theory and practice and indigenization of the discipline are still in tug of war. Academicians are still unsuccessful to develop a nexus for indigenous literature uniformly.

As practice-based profession, social change and advocacy are fundamental elements of Social Work profession. Social worker are agents of change on the basis of social research and social policy analysis in a country. These methods of Social Work are equally important for the social workers' change agent role. Despite the fact, social policy analysis is an essential element of Social Work practice, the participation of social workers seem rare in Pakistan. Although historical evidence across the globe shows, that policy practice has played a vital role for the development of Social Work profession.

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