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Analysis of social work competency standards in social welfare institutions in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

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Abstract

To improve social welfare, it is essential to ensure that social workers have adequate competency standards. This study analyzes the competency standards of social workers in the Social Welfare Institution of North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Research informants include social workers at LKS, beneficiaries, communities, government representatives, and academics. The results showed that social worker competency standards include theoretical knowledge and practical skills in assessment, intervention, case management, counseling, communication, advocacy, and policy understanding. In addition, it was found that existing social worker competencies need to be improved through continuous training to meet local needs and improve service quality. Evaluation using the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product) showed the effectiveness of training and competency development and a positive impact on the quality of services provided. However, the study also identified challenges, such as limited resources and barriers to implementing competency standards. Recommendations for future research include expanding the sample and research area, combining empirical with participatory approaches, and conducting comparative studies among social welfare institutions.

Keywords: competency, development, evaluation, social welfare, social worker, training



Public Interest Statement

This study investigates the significance of establishing social welfare institutions in Indonesia to enhance the well-being of vulnerable groups, including the impoverished, abandoned children, individuals with disabilities, and others. According to Law No. 11/2009 and Law No. 13/2011, the government executes social welfare programs. However, there are still complex obstacles, such as poverty, service limitations, and the consequences of disasters. Social workers are crucial in addressing these challenges, guided by the Social Worker Competency Standards. The lack of trained personnel, financial support, and community involvement pose challenges in North Sumatra Province. Collaborative efforts involving the government, community, and private sector are necessary to enhance financial support, human resource capacity, and practical policy implementation, thereby professionalizing and maximizing the impact of social services.

Introduction

The scope of the government's duties in implementing social welfare development in Indonesia is contained in Law (UU) Number 11 of 2009 concerning Social Welfare and Law Number 13 of 2011 concerning Handling the Poor to strengthen and accelerate social welfare development. The law is also strengthened by derivatives of Government Regulation Number 39 of 2012 concerning the Implementation of Social Welfare and Government Regulation Number 63 of 2013 concerning the Implementation of Efforts to Handle the Poor through a Regional Approach. The implementation of social welfare is still faced with various problems and challenges that are very complex, both from within and outside. These problems are related to poverty, child welfare, family, and disability, but also the impact of natural and non-natural disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation requires a quick and appropriate response so that these problems and challenges do not interfere with the implementation of social welfare (Thamrin et al., 2023a).

Therefore, social workers are needed to deal with social problems in Indonesia experienced by individuals, groups, and communities. Social workers are professionals who engage actively to address social issues such as poverty, minority populations, individuals with disabilities, abandoned children, and others (Andari, 2020; Bustamar, 2019). They work in or are affiliated with social service groups (Hermawati, 2001). Social workers' primary purpose is to assist the social functioning of people, groups, and communities while creating conditions that allow them to realize their goals (Zastrow, 2014).

Competency standards serve as the foundation for evaluating social workers' skills and attributes and providing formal instructions on the expectations of their roles (Ifsw.org, 2018). These criteria ensure that social workers have the essential knowledge, abilities, and attitudes to provide adequate services while also serving as a tool for performance evaluation (Socialworkers.org, 2024). Establishing explicit competency criteria enables an adequate and timely response to client requirements. In contrast, competency requirements impact the professional development of social workers. According to the Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Social Affairs, social services are critical in addressing social issues and safeguarding the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups such as children, older people, people with disabilities, and others (Peraturan.bpk.go.id, 2017).

As a result, competency requirements in social work are becoming more widely acknowledged in Indonesia. The Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia highlights the importance of competency standards in improving the professionalism and quality of services offered by social welfare institutions. Without established criteria, service quality might fluctuate, resulting in consumer discontent and limiting the effectiveness of social assistance programs. According to a 2022 study by North Sumatra Province's Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the most significant issues for social welfare institutions in North Sumatra are a shortage of competent staff, financial support, and poor community engagement.

Another concern is social workers' lack of training and professional development opportunities. These issues demonstrate that social welfare agencies would struggle to improve service quality and meet their objectives without established competency standards. Several social welfare groups in North Sumatra province work in various disciplines, including those that help children, older people, and persons with disabilities. Orphanages, nursing homes, and rehabilitation centres for individuals with disabilities are among the social institutions operating in North Sumatra, providing housing, education, vocational training, and psychosocial support.

According to the Indonesian Social Workers Association's 2022 study, over 60% of social welfare agencies in North Sumatra indicated a shortage of qualified professionals due to poor remuneration, a lack of professional development opportunities, and inadequate training. A lack of governmental backing is also a significant issue. Addressing these difficulties requires a collaborative effort among the government, community, and corporate sectors to boost financial support, strengthen human resource capability, and implement efficient policy. Improving the structure and quality of legally recognized competencies is a significant concern in North Sumatra province (Nasution et al., 2024). Clear competency standards guarantee social workers have the skills and knowledge to provide practical, high-quality services. However, the annual report on the Performance of the North Sumatra Social Service Year 2023 (Bpsdm.sumutprov.go.id, 2023) revealed that many provincial social welfare agencies do not have formal competency guidelines. As a result, social workers work without clear guidelines, leading to variations in service quality. Some social workers may have adequate skills and knowledge, while others may need to be better trained, affecting the consistency and effectiveness of services.

There is a significant gap between the competencies taught in educational institutions and the real needs in the field. According to a survey conducted by the Indonesian Social Worker Association in 2022, around 65% of social workers in North Sumatra felt poorly trained in case management skills, and 70% felt there was a need for improvement in crisis intervention skills. This survey shows that many social workers need more skills to deal with complex field challenges. Thus, to effectively address these issues, social workers must have adequate competency standards. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate and analyze the current competency standards. The CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model developed by Daniel Stufflebeam is one practical approach to conducting this evaluation. The CIPP model allows a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of competence, ranging from the context of the work environment, input or available resources, the process of implementing the training program, to the product or outcome of the program (Stufflebeam, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

a. Structural Functionalism Theory

Structural, functional theory, developed by Talcott Parsons (1985) and Robert K. Merton (1968) (Suharto, 2005), states that each element in society functions to maintain social stability and balance. In the context of social welfare institutions, this theory considers that every part of the institution, including social work competency standards, plays a vital role in ensuring that the institution can operate effectively and efficiently to improve its community welfare. This theory is relevant in analyzing how social work competency standards in social welfare institutions function to maintain the quality of services provided to the community. By understanding the function of each element in the institution's structure, we can evaluate how the competency standards support the institution's performance and achieve social welfare goals. Structural function theory is one of the main approaches in sociology developed by Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton. It focuses on how different parts of a society work similarly to maintain social stability and balance.

b. Competency Theory

Competency theory, popularized by David McClelland (1973), focuses on the skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics required to perform a job effectively. The theory identifies various competencies that social workers must possess to perform their duties well, such as communication skills, empathy, knowledge of social policy, and case management skills—competency Theory. Competency Theory, popularized by David McClelland, focuses on identifying and developing the competencies required for effective performance on the job. This theory differs from traditional approaches that rely on IQ measurements or formal educational assessments as predictors of performance. David McClelland, a Harvard psychologist, first introduced the concept of competence in his article “Testing for Competence Rather Than for ‘Intelligence’”, published in 1973. McClelland argued that competence better indicates job success than intelligence test scores or academic credentials. McClelland defines competence as an individual’s fundamental characteristics directly related to superior job performance. Competencies include knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes that can be observed and measured.

c. Operational Theory: Model Evaluasi CIPP

The CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) Evaluation Model developed by Daniel Stufflebeam (2003) is a comprehensive approach to evaluating programs or projects. The application of the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) Evaluation Model developed by Daniel Stufflebeam, while providing a comprehensive framework for program evaluation, is not free from challenges and constraints. One of the main challenges is the collection of comprehensive and accurate data. Not all required data is available or easily accessible, particularly data on social worker competencies and program impacts, which may not be well documented. The quality of available data may also not always be accurate, up-to-date or representative, affecting the validity of evaluation findings. This extensive data collection also requires adequate human and financial resources, often a constraint for agencies with insufficient staff or budget. In addition, some data may be complex to access for privacy or administrative reasons.

Literature Review

The research of Hussain and Ashcroft (2022) examined the leadership skills needed by social workers during the crisis. This study highlights the importance of adaptive and competency-based leadership in dealing with issues that arise in crises and provides a framework for developing leadership competencies in social work. Furthermore, Harrikari et al. (2021) examined the experiences of Finnish social workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, using SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results showed that social workers could adapt despite the challenges and find innovative ways to continue providing services amid the crisis. Meanwhile, Parashakti et al. (2020) investigated the effect of work environment and competence on motivation and its impact on the performance of health workers. This study concluded that a positive work environment and increased worker competence significantly improved motivation and performance. Then, Øzerk, K et al. (2021) examined the development of social skills and social competence in autistic children. This study highlights the importance of well-designed interventions and shows that specialized teaching methods can significantly improve the social service skills and social competence of children with autism.

In Indonesia context, A study by Andari (2020) highlighted the critical role of social workers in providing social assistance, including direct support to individuals and communities and policy advocacy to promote social justice and welfare. They apply various theories of human behavior and social systems in practice despite facing challenges such as limited resources and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, Firdaus (2021) reviewed the role of correctional wardens at Cipinang IIA Narcotics Prison from a

correctional social work perspective. They facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners through counseling services, rehabilitation programs, and advocacy for prisoners' rights. In the context of correctional social work theory, their role focuses on using psychological theories and rehabilitation models to increase the effectiveness of interventions.

Likewise, Santoso, Irfan, and Nurwati (2020) reviewed the transformation of social work practice towards the concept of society 5.0. They emphasized using technology in social services, including digital platforms for counseling and inclusion, to ensure equitable access. Cross-disciplinary collaboration between social workers, technology, and other sectors is critical to addressing challenges such as the digital divide. In this theory, they used the concept of Society 5.0 as a foundation for technology integration in social work practice. Finally, Witono (2020) highlights the relationship between social development, social welfare, and the role of social work in modern society. His article outlines the importance of social development theory in improving quality of life through community empowerment and policy advocacy. Social welfare is explained as the result of effective social development, which includes vital aspects such as health and education. Within this theory, they identify social work's role in facilitating sustainable social policy implementation.

Methods

This research used a qualitative approach to understand social work competency standards in-depth. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research explores and understands the meaning that individuals or groups consider important regarding social or humanitarian issues. The type of research used is descriptive qualitative, which aims to provide a detailed and in-depth description of the phenomenon under study. In addition, qualitative description is a research method that emphasizes describing phenomena accurately and thoroughly and remaining faithful to the data obtained from the field (Zakariah et al., 2020). In this case, a descriptive qualitative approach was used to identify the social work competency standards applied in social welfare institutions and analyze their implementation in daily practice while aiming to identify the obstacles faced in their application. This research was conducted in social welfare institutions in North Sumatra Province.

Results

Conformity of Social Worker Competency Standards at the Social Welfare Institution of North Sumatra Province with Local Needs and Conditions

The competency qualifications of social workers in social welfare institutions (LKS) in North Sumatra with local needs and conditions show that the background and experience of social workers are very diverse. Daniel, Hanif, Rafli, and Cindy, social worker representatives from social welfare institutions in North Sumatra Province, are examples of social workers who highlighted the importance of a combination of formal education and practical experience to acquire social work skills (Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2017). Social workers in North Sumatra must be dedicated to their tasks and responsibilities, which include assessing client needs, devising interventions, implementing social action programs, and evaluating outcomes [16]. Assessment, diagnosis, intervention, case management, counselling, communication, advocacy, policy understanding, professional ethics, and cultural competency are all essential competencies. This is consistent with the perspectives of Zastrow (Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2017) and Hepworth et al. (Hepworth et al., 2017), who emphasize the significance of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and values in professional social work practice.

However, the study highlighted some of the obstacles social workers confront in the province, such as limited resources, logistical and geographical limits, varying levels of ability and experience,

and shifting policies and regulations. According to Kadushin and Harkness (2002), overcoming these difficulties requires a complete approach that includes proper supervision and continuing support. This study proposes many activities to increase the competence of social workers in North Sumatra's LKS:

1. Enhance academic credentials and professional certifications via comprehensive education and training programs.
2. Enhancing training and case management using technology for more efficiency and accessibility.
3. Enhance collaboration with educational institutions and professional organizations.
4. Promote suitable financial and regulatory assistance.

Implementing these recommendations is expected to increase the quality of social welfare services in North Sumatra province and ensure that social workers have the necessary skills for the region's demands and the socioeconomic conditions of local populations.

Improving the quality of social work requires the actual use of defined competency criteria. Continuing education and training are critical for keeping social workers' knowledge and skills current (Zastrow & Hessenauer, 2017). Technology can also boost the effectiveness and accessibility of training and case management (Peraturan.bpk.go.id, 2020). Interprofessional teamwork is vital for providing comprehensive and holistic treatments (Hepworth et al., 2017). Strengthening professional ethics and adhering to the social work code of ethics should always be the starting point when engaging with clients. Political advocacy and lobbying local governments for adequate financial and regulatory support are also crucial (Bpsdm.sumutprov.go.id, 2023). By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, LKS in North Sumatra province can improve social worker competencies and the community's quality of social work services. This ensures that social workers have competencies that match the local needs and socio-economic conditions of the local community so that the services provided are more professional and integrated and positively impact the community, especially vulnerable groups. Effective implementation of competency standards improves social welfare in North Sumatra Province and significantly benefits the wider community.

Availability and Utilization of Resources to Support the Implementation of Social Worker Competency Standards in Social Welfare Institutions in North Sumatra Province

Research on the suitability of competency standards for social workers at the North Sumatra Province Social Welfare Institution (LKS) with local needs and conditions shows that significant challenges exist related to the availability and utilization of resources.

Table 1. Availability of Resources at Social Welfare Institutions (LKS) in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

Resource Category	Current Condition	Challenge	Development Strategy
Labor	The educational background and experience of social workers is strong, but the distribution in each region is uneven.	The majority of social workers are concentrated in Medan City and surrounding areas.	Equitable distribution of labor by providing incentives for placement in remote areas, collaborating with universities, private institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Budget	Budget allocations are often insufficient for ongoing training and facility upgrades	Budget constraints are the main obstacle	Diversifying budget sources through several actions such as donations, CSR budget sources and acting on policy advocacy for budget increases.
Facilities	About 40% of the LKS require renovation and upgrading of facilities.	The condition of the infrastructure, which is still in need of renewal, hampers the effectiveness of social work.	Infrastructure capacity development such as provision of adequate buildings and equipment, policy advocacy for infrastructure development support.
Technology	Technology utilization is still limited, resistance to new technology adoption.	There is still a lack of technological literacy and a tendency towards resistance to change.	Conduct specialized training (technical guidance) for technological literacy.
Training and Competency Development	Training and competency development programs have not been optimal due to budget constraints.	Continuous training is often hampered by limited resources.	Collaborate with relevant institutions to provide comprehensive training.

Source: processed by researchers, 2024

Available resources, such as workforce, budget, facilities, and technology, often need to be more distributed across the province. Social workers in LKS, such as Daniel, Hanif, Rafli, and Cindy, despite their strong educational background and experience, need more resources to execute their duties. According to data from BPS North Sumatra, in 2023, around 40 percent of LKS will require renovation and improvement of facilities. The uneven distribution of social workers is also an obstacle to ensuring adequate services across the region, with most social workers concentrated in Medan City and its surroundings.

According to Hepworth et al. (2017), effective allocation of human resources is critical to ensuring equitable and quality services. Budget limitations are also a significant constraint, as allocated budgets are often insufficient for ongoing training and facility upgrades. On the other hand, proper budget support and sound resource management are essential for boosting social workers' competence and effectiveness (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Another critical problem is using technology to improve the efficiency and accessibility of services. E-learning platforms and technology-based case management systems can help social workers better manage client information and interventions. However, resistance to change and the adoption of new technology remain significant challenges that must be addressed by

continual training and support (Thamrin, et al., 2023b).

Overcoming these difficulties necessitates a systematic strategy that includes a variety of parties. Local governments must set aside enough funding for social worker skill development to ensure efficient and effective resource allocation. Diversifying budget sources through fundraising, contributions, and partnerships with the private sector through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs can provide significant new revenue. Adopting technology is another technique that could boost the efficiency and efficacy of social services. According to Reamer (2018), technology has the potential to improve the effectiveness of social welfare significantly. To successfully implement LKS in North Sumatra Province must adopt the necessary technologies and train social workers. Collaboration and interaction with academic and professional institutions are also required. LKS can collaborate with universities and other educational institutions to provide complete internships and training opportunities. Cooperation with the Indonesian Professional Social Workers Association can help with training, certification, and setting competency standards. Similarly, good supervision and mentoring can assist social workers in overcoming obstacles and continuously improving their skills (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002).

Improving the efficiency of social welfare services requires the development of infrastructure capacity. Local governments must ensure that social work service infrastructure, such as buildings, equipment, and information technology, meet the needs of social workers. Proper infrastructure will foster a positive working atmosphere for social workers, allowing them to perform more effectively. More significant support necessitates political activism and lobbying with local governments. Local governments should create rules that support social workers' competency standards and constantly monitor their implementation. To address the issue of resistance to change, mainly when introducing new technology, the North Sumatra provincial LKS should give specialized training on technology skills and the benefits of employing technology in social work. These trainings aim to improve social workers' ability to use case management software and online assessment tools, as well as their understanding of the role of technology in promoting service efficiency and effectiveness. Implementing these proposed techniques will increase the availability and usage of resources required to support the implementation of social worker competency standards in North Sumatra's province, LKS. Social services can become more professional and successful by resolving budget constraints and increasing political backing, benefiting local communities.

Effectiveness of the Training and Competency Development Process for Social Workers in Social Welfare Institutions in North Sumatra Province

According to the research, the efficiency of training and competency development for social workers in North Sumatra Province's Social Work Institutions (LKS) has encountered many challenges. Although the training program has been launched, numerous challenges must be overcome to reduce its efficacy. One of the most significant barriers is a lack of resources, such as a budget and insufficient facilities for continuous training. Interviews with social workers in North Sumatra province's social welfare organizations revealed that training frequently fails to cover all required skills and is not structured regularly. Experts such as Zastrow (2017) and Hepworth (2017) underline the importance of continual training for social workers. Practical training should cover theory and practice and be tailored to social workers' local needs and working conditions. However, the findings of this study show that existing training is often general and needs more depth, thus not fully addressing the challenges faced in the field. The research also found that the training methods still need to be revised and utilized. Using online learning platforms and technology-based case management systems can improve the efficiency and accessibility of training. Reamer (2018), in "Social Work Values and Ethics," suggests that technology

can play an essential role in improving the effectiveness of social worker training by enabling broader and more flexible access. In addition, support from the government and related organizations is still limited. While the Social Services Office organizes some training programs, the frequency and scope of such training still need to be improved to meet the needs of all social workers in the province. The North Sumatra Provincial Social Services Performance Report 2023 indicates that budget allocations for training still need to be improved, which impacts the quality and number of trainings that can be organized. Evaluation of the training programs that have been implemented shows a gap between the expected competencies and the competencies achieved by social workers after training. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) state that practical evaluation of training programs is essential to ensure that training objectives are achieved and identify improvement areas. The findings from this study also show that training is often not followed by adequate supervision and mentoring. Good supervision can provide ongoing support and help social workers to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during training. Such ongoing support ensures that learning leads to natural and sustainable skills improvement.

Several steps can be taken to improve the effectiveness of training and skills development for social workers in North Sumatra Province. First, the training budget needs to be increased. An increased budget will enable more comprehensive and sustainable training. In addition, the use of learning technology is also essential to provide more flexible and accessible training. E-learning platforms allow social workers to learn anytime, anywhere, which is especially important given the often hectic work schedules. In addition, emphasizing the importance of technology can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning (Reamer, 2018). Developing a comprehensive curriculum is also very important. The training curriculum should cover all aspects of competencies required by social workers, including theoretical knowledge, practical skills, professional ethics, and understanding of social policy. Periodic evaluation and curriculum revision are essential to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Training combining theory and practice will improve social workers' competencies more effectively. Hands-on experience through case simulations, role-playing, and other practical activities allows social workers to apply the knowledge they acquire in real situations. Kolb (1984), in his theory of experiential learning, shows that direct experience is very effective in improving understanding and skills.

Ongoing supervision and mentoring are essential to support social workers in applying the skills they acquire during training. Adequate supervision can provide moral and professional support and help social workers overcome the challenges they face in their daily work. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) emphasize the importance of supervision in maintaining service quality and improving social workers' competencies. Collaboration with international agencies and non-governmental organizations can also provide additional resources, expertise, and valuable experience to enrich local training programs. Agencies such as UNICEF and Save the Children have many training programs that can be adapted and implemented in the LKS of North Sumatra Province. Developing effective feedback mechanisms allows social workers to provide their views on the quality and relevance of their training. Such feedback, then, is essential for evaluating and improving training programs. Kirkpatrick (1994), in his training evaluation model, emphasizes that participant feedback is an essential component in evaluating training effectiveness. Involving social workers in training planning and evaluation can also increase their interest and commitment. If social workers feel they have a stake in the process, they are more likely to participate actively in the training. Group discussions, surveys, and in-depth interviews can be used to involve social workers in the training process. To improve the effectiveness of the training process and develop the competencies of LKS social workers in North Sumatra Province, an integrated and sustainable approach is needed that includes a comprehensive needs assessment, practical approaches, modular and flexible training programs, collaboration with international organizations, effective feedback mechanisms, and

active involvement of social workers in training planning and evaluation. Implementing this strategy will significantly improve the competencies of social workers so that they can provide more effective services and positively impact all communities in North Sumatra Province.

The Impact of the Implementation of Social Worker Competency Standards in Social Welfare Institutions in North Sumatra Province on the Quality of Social Services Provided

Based on the results of previous research and discussion, the application of social worker competency standards significantly impacts the quality of social services. This study found that using proper competency standards helps improve the service quality of social welfare institutions (LKS) in North Sumatra province. Social workers with the necessary skills can offer their clients more effective, efficient, and responsive services. Following systematic training and skill development, social workers in North Sumatra Province welfare institutions demonstrated improvements in needs assessment, intervention planning, and social assistance program implementation. Hepworth (2017) states that social worker competencies comprise theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and solid professional ethical beliefs. These skills help social workers provide quality services appropriate for their client's needs and circumstances. The study's findings suggest that introducing transparent and standardized competency standards helps social workers enhance their abilities in various areas, including counselling, advocacy, and case administration. This is further backed by Kadushin's (2002) discovery that trained social workers can better deal with complicated difficulties, increasing client satisfaction and well-being.

According to the findings of this study, applying competency standards improves interprofessional coordination and team collaboration, both of which are necessary for providing holistic and integrated services. Interviews and questionnaires revealed that applying competency standards enhanced social workers' capacity to perform proper evaluations, develop successful interventions, and systematically evaluate outcomes. This enhancement has an impact not only on service quality but also on customer satisfaction and the overall effectiveness of the welfare program. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the competency requirements introduced in the North Sumatra provincial LKS favourably impact social workers' professional development. They feel more confident and inspired to pursue additional training and growth. This is consistent with Zastrow's (2017) belief that excellent competency requirements can increase service quality and help social workers develop professionally. However, this study revealed areas for improvement, such as increased supervision and continuous support for consistently adopting competency criteria. Implementing competency standards can be more effective if the necessary support is in place, as proven by Reamer's (2018) research, which highlights the relevance of supervision and support in social work practice. Overall, imposing competency criteria for social workers in North Sumatra Province improves social services' quality. Increased social worker competency enables them to provide more responsive, effective, and efficient services that can benefit clients and society.

Establishing competency requirements for social workers in North Sumatra province has significantly improved the quality of social services. Improved assessment and intervention abilities, service efficiency and responsiveness, team collaboration, client satisfaction and well-being, and professional development for social workers are among the positive results mentioned. However, additional government and relevant organizations support is needed to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of implementing these competency standards. Sustainable and comprehensive implementation of the competency standards can help improve social welfare in North Sumatra province and bring significant benefits to the community. In addition, this study shows that the competency standards implemented in the North Sumatra Provincial LKS also positively impact the professional development of social workers. They feel more confident and motivated to continue learning and developing. This is in line

with Zastrow's (2017) idea that good competency standards will improve service quality and support the professional development of social workers.

To strengthen some of the findings above, some additional strategies can be implemented to improve the effectiveness of the training and skills development process for social workers in LKS in North Sumatra Province, including:

1. A more thorough and continuous assessment of training needs should be conducted. This includes an in-depth analysis of social workers' specific needs in relation to the local context and the challenges they face in the field.
2. A practical approach to training is essential to improve social workers' skills. This approach allows social workers to apply the theories and skills they have learned in real-life situations, which aligns with Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984).
3. Developing modular and flexible training programs that allow social workers to train on time is also essential.
4. Collaboration with international agencies and non-governmental organizations can provide additional resources, expertise, and valuable experience to enrich local training programs.
5. Effective feedback mechanisms allow social workers to provide feedback on the quality and relevance of their training. According to Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model (1994), participant feedback is essential to assessing training effectiveness.
6. Involving social workers in planning and evaluating training can increase their commitment and participation.
7. Local governments should ensure that LKS facilities are adequate to support the work of social workers.
8. Advocacy to improve local government policy and regulatory support is essential to ensure adequate and sustainable implementation of competency standards.

Effective implementation of competency standards can improve social welfare in North Sumatra Province and significantly benefit society.

Social Services Provided Social Worker Model Development

Social workers are trained and qualified to assist individuals, families, and communities with various social issues. They are critical to enhancing social welfare, fostering social change, and fighting for human rights. Social workers serve in various settings, including hospitals, welfare agencies, schools, and nongovernmental organizations. A competency model for social workers is required to carry out their jobs efficiently. This paradigm incorporates academic credentials, professional certification, continued training, supervision and mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, the use of technology, policy formation and lobbying, and monitoring and evaluation.

Social workers in Indonesia often hold a bachelor's degree in social work or a similar area and professional certification from a competent accreditation authority. Their main talents include assessing and solving social problems, empowering individuals and communities, and serving as social change agents. Furthermore, social workers must have strong communication skills, empathy, and the capacity to form constructive connections with clients and coworkers and follow a professional code of ethics that encompasses confidentiality, professional accountability, and social justice. In Indonesia, social work is governed by various laws and regulations. Law No. 11/2009 governs several aspects of social welfare, including the tasks and responsibilities of social workers. Furthermore, Law No. 14/2019 on Social Workers regulates the social work profession expressly, including education and training,

certification, social workers' rights and obligations, and competency criteria. The Indonesian Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 8/2012 on Social Work rules establishes operational rules for social workers to carry out their responsibilities, such as service standards, professional ethics, and working procedures.

Implementing certification standards for social workers in North Sumatra Province is consistent with national regulations and the Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Social Affairs' recommendations. The province's social welfare institutions are committed to ensuring that social workers have the qualifications and abilities to offer practical and high-quality services to the community. Social workers can improve their skills through training programs that include social policy analysis, community empowerment, and therapeutic and rehabilitative interventions. Supervision and mentoring mechanisms have been implemented to help social workers develop professionally, increase service quality, and solve problems more effectively. Developing a competency standards model for social workers working in social welfare institutions in North Sumatra province aims to improve the quality of social services provided, ensure that social workers have knowledge and skills relevant to local needs, and increase social service efficiency and effectiveness. The model provides clear and structured guidelines for social workers to fulfil their obligations, ensuring they fulfil professional standards and provide quality services. The model is also utilized as an assessment tool for social workers' performance and skill development. The competency standards model's key components are academic qualifications and professional certification, continuous education, supervision and mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, technology use, policy formation and advocacy, and monitoring and assessment. Academic degrees and professional certifications ensure social workers possess the requisite knowledge and abilities. Continuing education, supervision, and mentoring all offer assistance and constructive feedback. Interdisciplinary cooperation guarantees that consumers receive holistic and integrated services, while technology improves service efficiency and accessibility. Policy planning and campaigning are crucial for obtaining enough budgetary and regulatory assistance from local governments. Continuous monitoring and assessment ensure this model is implemented correctly and produces the intended results.

Creating and implementing a competency standards model for social workers at the North Sumatra Provincial Social Service is critical to improving the quality of social services. This approach provides clear and structured guidelines for social workers, helps them grow their skills and expertise, and guarantees that services are tailored to local requirements and conditions. With the necessary assistance from the government, educational institutions, and professional organizations, this concept has the potential to dramatically improve the social welfare of North Sumatra Province and benefit the entire community.

Discussion

This research found that aligning social workers' competency standards with local needs and conditions in North Sumatra province plays a vital role in the effectiveness of social work services. Based on interviews and questionnaires, it was found that the education and experience of social workers vary widely. Social workers in the province strongly emphasized the importance of formal education and practical experience in building social work skills. They stated that the tasks and responsibilities of social workers, such as assessing client needs, planning interventions, implementing social work programs, and evaluating outcomes, should be carried out with high commitment and supported by appropriate skills. However, social workers face some challenges in North Sumatra province. These challenges include resource scarcity, logistical and geographical limitations, skill and experience differences, and policy and law changes. Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, including adequate

supervision and ongoing support. This research recommends several actions to improve the skills of social workers in LKS in North Sumatra, including improving academic qualifications and professional certification, using technology to increase the effectiveness and accessibility of training, strengthening collaboration with educational institutions and professional organizations, and promoting appropriate financial and regulatory support.

In addition, this study emphasizes the importance of effectively implementing established competency standards. Continuing education and training are essential to ensure that social workers continuously update their knowledge and skills. Technology can also improve the effectiveness and availability of training and case management. Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential to ensure comprehensive and holistic services. Strengthening professional ethics and commitment to the social work code of ethics should always be at the core of every client interaction. Promoting policies and lobbying local governments for adequate financial and regulatory support is also essential. By addressing these issues and implementing the recommended strategies, the North Sumatra Provincial LKS can improve the skills of social workers and the quality of social services provided to the community. This will ensure that social workers have skills tailored to the local needs and socio-economic conditions of the local community so that the services provided are more professional and integrated and positively impact the community, especially for vulnerable groups. Effective implementation of competency standards contributes to improving social work in North Sumatra province and brings significant benefits to society at large.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the competency standards of social workers in North Sumatra province's social welfare institutions are enough to meet local needs and situations. Differences in social workers' education and experience have been shown to improve their abilities. Nonetheless, obstacles such as limited resources, logistical difficulties, and a lack of skills and experience among social workers must be overcome. This study demonstrates that obtaining and utilizing resources to support adopting competency standards presents considerable problems. Human resources, funding, facilities, and technology must be expanded and disseminated across the province. Uneven distribution of social workers and funding constraints are significant impediments to improving service efficacy. The social worker competency standards model described in this study provides a more comprehensive method incorporating information technology, an interdisciplinary approach, continuing professional development, policy support and advocacy, and continual monitoring and assessment. Implementing this model, with continued support from various stakeholders, is expected to significantly improve the quality of social services and the welfare of all communities in the province of North Sumatra.

Biographies

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Authorship and Contribution Level

Husni Thamrin Contributed to the conceptualization and design of the study. Responsible for data collection through in-depth interviews and observations. Conducted initial data analysis and prepared the first draft of the manuscript.

Subhilhar guided the study design and methodological approach. He assisted in the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data and reviewed and revised the manuscript for intellectual content and coherence.

Heri Kusmanto supported the development of the research framework. I was advised on interpreting findings related to the social and economic impacts of street begging exploitation and contributed to the final review and approval of the manuscript.

Hatta Ridho was critical in reviewing the existing literature and drafting the research methodology section. He oversaw the overall research process to ensure academic rigour, offered critical feedback on the manuscript, and suggested necessary revisions.

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