Professional Skills And Qualities Required In Social Work Profession: An Ngo Perspective

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ABSTRACT
NGOs are committed to achieving their objectives and coming up with innovative solutions to address the needs of the developing world. Since the pandemic struck the entire world two years ago, the role has shifted to become more of a force for profound social change, which has been described as the new framework for leadership. The ability to innovate, create, solve problems, and work collaboratively through horizontal leadership with teams and individuals throughout the organisation are the key competencies. Global skills and competencies gap mapping processes have identified these skills and competencies. In light of the aforementioned, the current study aims to identify the effective abilities and characteristics of the social work profession in an NGO setting as well as the contribution of fieldwork practice to the development of these attributes.

Keywords: Skills, Quality, Social Work, NGO, and Profession.

Summary: The study explores the evolving role of social work professionals in non-governmental organization (NGO) settings, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the profession in addressing global challenges, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research aims to identify essential skills and qualities for social workers in NGOs and assess the im[1]pact of fieldwork practice on their development. Key findings include the significance of skills such as time management, communication, emotional intelligence, organization, critical thinking, problem-solving, active listening, teamwork, and decision-making. The study also highlights additional skills acquired during fieldwork, such as rapport building, teaching, planning, tolerance, conducting surveys, record-keeping, empathy, and innovation. Overall, the research contributes valuable insights into the evolving demands and competencies within the social work profession in the context of NGO settings.

DEFINITION OF KEYWORDS
1. **Skill:** "In Social work skills are defined as a variety of soft skills, such as organization and communication, and skills directly related to the job, like client evaluation".
2. **Quality:** "Quality is the ongoing process of building and sustaining relationships by assessing, anticipating, and fulfilling stated and implied needs".
3. **Social Work:** "Social work is an academic discipline and practice-based profession concerned with meeting the basic needs of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society as a whole to enhance social functioning, solve social problems, and promote social responsibility".
4. **NGO:** "A non-profit organization that operates independently of any government, typically one whose purpose is to address a social or political issue".

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5. **Profession**: "This is any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education".

INTRODUCTION:

The field of social work emerged from independent and humanitarian ideals. This profession's values are predicated on regard for the worth, equality, and dignity of every individual. Since social work's inception more than a century ago, the field has concentrated on addressing the needs of people and maximising their potential. Alternatives for Development. In the field of social work, a number of skills have been recognised as critical in 1987. These skills include self-management, communication, risk and safeguarding, and leadership, and they are deemed necessary for independent professional practice in all social work roles. The field of social work is dynamic and demanding, requiring a wide range of abilities and traits. Whether these abilities are natural or learned, social workers must continuously hone them throughout their careers to succeed in the field. These are not all-inclusive, but the following abilities are essential for social workers in general. For instance, self-management entails a variety of distinct skill sets, such as proactive self-improvement or awareness of professional norms and behaviour. These skills are also necessary for effective risk management, communication, and protection.

According to Bhuvan (1991), the acronym NGO refers to a non-governmental organisation that is not subject to governmental control. These organisations fall under the category of non-profits that promote social welfare. Generally speaking, an NGO is a collection of individuals with a background in civil society who come together to advocate for shared interests and particular issues facing members of the public. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have grown in significance in the development sector in recent years. NGOs play a critical role as a conduit between the general public, civil society, and the government.

Their diversity lies in the issues they cover as well as in the organisational form, structure, and culture. Alternatives for Development. 1987. Their involvement can be observed not only in the execution of government programmes but also in the creation of public policies and the upholding of social laws. Since these organisations operate in society and social workers interact with members of society, all of the aforementioned roles necessitate the work of a social work professional.

Professionals in the development sector and non-governmental organisations operate in demanding and difficult settings. NGO professionals must constantly be alert to adapt to changing circumstances, complicated and dynamic circumstances, and limited resources. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operate autonomously from governments and have been making a greater impact in the fields of welfare and humanitarian aid. This requires them to have dynamic personalities, strong leadership, and competent management abilities.

The global setting brings with it new and impending challenges. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2021), the global economy is predicted to recover with growth of 5.3 percent, the fastest in nearly five (5) decades, as reported in the United Nations System (UN) Journal issue of September 15, 2021. The Millennium Development Goals were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals, which are new, more sustainable goals with defined targets and key performance indicators, as part of the UN Agenda 2030. The disruptive digitalization that has defined the past two years, especially during the COVID pandemic, has drastically accelerated our learning process and changed not just how we work but also how we behave, interact with others, and live our lives in general. Which models work best for societal impact? Social scientists and other experts have brought up important concerns regarding the current organisational and societal models in this new context, as well as how to guarantee the necessary impact that adds value.

In light of the aforementioned, the current study aims to identify the competencies and attributes that a social work professional needs in an NGO context. It also evaluates the contribution of fieldwork experience to the development of these competencies and attributes.

OBJECTIVE:
- To determine the effective skills and qualities of the social work profession in an NGO setting
- To assess of fieldwork environment in nurturing the skills and qualities required in the social work profession.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:
Some of the important research reviewed in the study are as follows.

Development of Social Work Profession in India:
An increasing level of professional awareness in India can be seen in the recent initiative to form a professional association for social workers. This shift merely represents the beginning of the profession of social work's evolution into a fully realised field. The success of this endeavour will primarily depend on how positive forces are generated to focus the energy of social workers in practice towards the crystallisation of their professional consciousness.

The need for social service was expressed in India, as it was in other nations, through the creation of social and religious institutions. Puran, 2005. It has only been acknowledged in the last century that social service professions need to be developed on a scientific foundation. This insight led to the realisation of how crucial it is to disseminate other countries' social welfare experiences.

Similar professional organisations in other nations must serve as a source of inspiration for the Indian social work profession, as well as a repository of knowledge and expertise. This is because a number of institutions have achieved international recognition; consequently, in order for the social work profession in India to receive the necessary recognition, it must be at the forefront of its field.

The Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work was founded in Bombay in 1936 as the first step towards offering professional training in the field of social work. Following its founding, the social work profession was observed to be developing in a slow but steady manner. It is crucial to remember that government and private institutions across the nation are beginning to recognise professional training. In order to support this cause, more professional schools of social work have recently been established by the Universities of Delhi and Baroda, which have acknowledged the profession.

Working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is just one aspect of social work; it also leads to opportunities in administration, management, and policy planning in both public and private sectors. Opportunities include employment in the corporate world, in the fields of education and research, medicine and healthcare, non-governmental organisations, and government**.**

NGOs in India:
The emergence and function of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in India have been influenced by multiple factors, including the oscillation between liberalism and stateism in the prevailing political outlook. The functions and purposes of these organisations have been varied in order to primarily serve the vast and diverse population of informal workers. The funding of these organisations has drawn a sizable amount from both domestic and international sources, which is used by this industry.

Population Foundation of India (1999): Highlighted the importance of Indian NGOs in influencing the perspectives of Panchayati Raj Leaders, community tradition dais, Anganwadi workers, and private practitioners to engage in the planning and execution of

projects. Previously, the voluntary sector's duties were limited to community mobilisation, awareness-raising, and capacity building. NGOs are no longer limited to their traditional areas of welfare, health, and education in the modern era. In addition, they are now accepting advanced technical assignments in a variety of technical domains, including drug abuse, consumer rights, forestry, watershed management, HIV/AIDS, human immunodeficiency syndrome, and environment.

In his study, Karpetis (2017): Stated that the narrative review shows how the skills suggested by the publications rely on the humanistic, behavioural, critical, managerial, psychodynamic, and eclectic theoretical perspectives. It also adds knowledge about the theories guiding social work assessments and interventions with children, adults, and families. He goes on to say that the study supports earlier findings in the literature, which contend that there is a lack of practice evidence or agreement regarding the definitions of core, specific, technical, interpersonal, listening, interviewing, helping, counselling, and micro skills, as well as that the theoretical foundations of social work skills are either lacking or underdeveloped.

Gates, (2015): Asserts that obtaining professional competencies requires both formal education and on-the-job training. He makes it clear in his paper that the idea of competence has come under fire because it can lead to a technical and bureaucratic approach to social work practice, which runs counter to a holistic view that values critical thinking and autonomy. This is understandable in an organisational framework that places a higher value on strategies and structures than on the unique and person-centered development of each individual.

According to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), Social work skills and qualities are greatly enhanced and with modernization, technology has made various work easy tasks to perform. As part of the requirements in any professional field having computer literacy is now a must. The development in the technology sector has made other professional fields such as social work adapt to modernization. An example of a skill is The Digital Capabilities Statement a practice framework that outlines the knowledge, skills, and values that social workers should have in order to use digital technology in practice with adults, children, and families in England.

Pamela Singla: In her paper, "Digitalization, Social Work, and Youth in an Indian Perspective," the author noted that as technology advanced and became more apparent in India during the 21st century, social workers' roles changed as well. It is undeniable that social media and information technology have the ability to connect, access, and generate new opportunities, thereby changing social work practice. Nonetheless, social workers in India aren't thought to be particularly willing to embrace ICT and social media in their work. While social workers are attempting to adapt technologies to their needs, this is not a very common practice as technology-impacted services are still in their infancy in India. Online client counselling, online parental counselling, and online counselling are all reported. Social workers can reach out to communities, groups, and individuals who may not otherwise be able to access their services due to distance or lack of access to communication technology and social media skills (Ferguson, 2006).

RESEARCH DESIGN:
In the present qualitative research, an effort has been made to explore the requirement of professional social work skills and qualities while working with Non- Government Organizations. For the collection of data, both primary and secondary sources of data were used and the interview schedule was the main tool of data collection along with observation and discussion method.

A total 71 number of students of two programs i.e. Masters of Social Work and Masters of Human Resources Management were selected purposely for the study.

For the analysis of data simple percentage was used and the data set comprises the experiences and lessons learned from their fieldwork while working in an NGO setting.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION:
Theme wise major findings of the study are as follows.

➢ **Time Management:**
The findings of the study show that the majority i.e. 40 out of 70 respondents feels that time management is one of the essential skill and quality required for social workers. The respondents stated that fieldwork, report writing, and various assignments helped them to acquire and develop the skill. It is also found that time management skill somehow helps them in prioritizing, delegation, decision-making, goal setting, multitasking, problem-solving, strategic thinking & scheduling. The majority of the respondents agreed that it is a very essential skill and quality since they need to deal with people especially while working with NGOs and it allows one to be productive and efficient at both the organization and personal levels.

➢ **Communication:**
The finding of the study shows that 54 respondents out of 71 feel that communication skill is also equally significant in social work practice because they help social work to learn how to communicate with different client system while working with NGOs.
Social workers must communicate in many different ways and with many different people. It can be clearly stated that it is of paramount importance to ensure to incorporate the proper communication which may help in building a relationship.
The respondents stated that during the fieldwork students were able to understand the importance of both forms of communication (Verbal & non-verbal).

➢ **Emotional Intelligence (EQ):**
Emotional intelligence is one of the most important skills required by a social worker. A total of 20 respondents out of 71 mentioned the skill as an important one. According to the respondents, it may include high levels of self-awareness, empathy, and sensitivity to others, and in many ways, it helps the social workers to make balancing in what they know (e.g., symptoms of a certain mental illness) and what they intuit (i.e., reading between the lines of what is said).

➢ **Organization:**
In the study, 15 out of 71 students were able to point out that organization is a skill they learned during their field work practice while they were placed in an NGO setting. In addition to helping clients, through the organization skills the social workers learned about case management services, such as billing, maintaining collateral relationships, making phone calls, and networking with other service providers. It is also observed from the discussion that providing clinical case management and psychosocial support requires a great deal of organization and the ability to prioritize according to the urgency of a client's needs. All the above mentioned can be achieved through organization skills only.

➢ **Critical Thinking:**
According to Glaser, (1941), critical thinking is the ability to think critically, as conceived in this volume, involves three things: an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences, knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and some skill in applying those methods. In the data set received it was found that 30 out of 71 respondents stated that they learned the skill of critical thinking and it is a continuous process.

➢ **Problem Solving:**
Problem-solving is the act of defining a problem; determining the cause of the problem; identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives for a solution; and implementing a solution. Keeping in view the importance of the skill in the profession efforts were made to know the importance of the skill and it was found that 23 respondents out of 71 mentioned that problem-solving is an essential skill and they learned it during their field

work. It was also observed that a combination of time management and problem-solving are essential ad valuable to a social worker in any setting.

➢ **Active Listening:**

Active listening is an essential skill required for social workers. The study shows that out of 71, 29 respondents mentioned that active listening is a good and necessary quality to have. This means reflecting back on what clients say and being engaged in every conversation so that they know you understand them. Good listening establishes trust and respect early on, so clients will feel comfortable confiding in you. Most importantly, active listening not only builds a therapeutic alliance, but clients also feel seen and understood by you. Feeling visible and affirmed is a core component of any therapeutic alliance in any practice setting.

➢ **Team Work :**

Teamwork is another skill required for Professional Social Workers and when it was inquired from the respondents about the importance of the skill it was found that out of 71 Respondents, 15 respondents stated that is very much essential to have teamwork in order to achieve the objectives of the NGOS/organization. As per the respondents, teamwork helps in making the work more easy and enjoyable as well.

➢ **Decision Making:**

Decision-making is the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions. The study reveals that out of 71 respondents 20 respondents mentioned that decision-making as one of the skills they learned during their fieldwork practice during their placement in an NGO setting. Decision-making is a key element in the social work profession.

➢ **Other Skills and Qualities acquired by the Social Work Professionals:**

Some of the other important skills mentioned by the respondents that they acquired during their fieldwork placement in an NGO setting are as follows.

1. Rapport Building
2. Teaching Skills
3. Planning and Implementing Skills
4. Management Skills
5. Tolerance
6. Conducting Surveys
7. Record Keeping
8. Empathy
9. Learning Maps
10. Mentorship
11. Organizational Performance Indicators
12. Entrepreneurship skills
13. Innovation
14. Advice Network
15. Learning Questionnaires
16. Advocacy
17. Effective reading

CONCLUSION:

In the above paper, the discussion was on skills and qualities in the social work profession in an NGO setting. The paper answered the objectives of the question and made elaborate views on the skills and qualities of a social worker in an NGO setting. Evidence gathered clearly showed essential skills in the profession such as Time Management and Behaviour component which will help social work professionals to succeed in a variety of Methodologies for different sets of situations and conditions. It is safe to conclude that the skills and qualities acquired by the students during their fieldwork in an NGO setting can be transcended and applied in the different settings of the community and the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Some of the important recommendations of the study are as follows.

1. Role of the Institutions/Department:

In acquiring professional skills and qualities all the departments or institutions offering social work education need to play an important role. First of all, it should be ensured that there must be a proper learning environment in the intuition so that students can learn the necessary skills. Secondary appropriate learning opportunities should be given to the students so that they can learn the basics of skills and can apply them appropriately during their fieldwork practice.

2. Role of the Field Work Supervisors:

The fieldwork supervisor needs to play a vital role in helping and training students in order to acquire professional skills and qualities. From time to time the fieldwork supervisors need to give required assignments, case studies, and field-based presentations so that students can demonstrate the skills and necessary directions may be given if required.

3. Role of the Fieldwork Agency:

The fieldwork agencies also need to play an important role in acquiring professional skills and qualities by providing opportunities and exposure to the students. The skill-based assignments need to be given to the students so that they can demonstrate the theoretically learned skills in the field.

4. Roles of the Student:

The student's quality of the auger to learn may play an important role in acquiring professional skills and qualities. They must be kept asking and posing questions whenever required so that they can learn and demonstrate the skills through different activities/assignments.

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