



ISSN: 2454-9940



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF APPLIED
SCIENCE ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT**

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www.ijasem.org

Integrating Social Work into Healthcare: Impact on Hospital and Health Center Services

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Abstract:

This paper shows the important contribution of social workers in health facilities and hospitals. Social workers assist the patients and their families to deal with emotional, social and financial issues related to the health challenges. They, as well, collaborate with healthy care teams to offer improved care. In this study, survey and analysis are combined to gain insights about social workers in healthcare environments and their impacts and efficiencies. As the findings indicate, social workers do a lot to enhance the general welfare of a patient and to ensure proper operation of health services.

Keywords: Social Workers, Hospitals, Health Centers, Patient Care, Medical Social Work, Healthcare Team, Support Services

Introduction:

Social workers are an essential personnel in hospitals and health centers. They assist the patients and their families to cope with the emotional, social and economic pressure usually involved with injury or illness. Patients can also be confused, worried, or even helpless in most cases after going through some serious health cases. Social work comes in to bring hope, care and assistance on such dark days.

Social workers coordinate with the doctors, nurses, and other healthcare officials in hospitals. They ensure that patients are aware of their treatment, their right, and their access to the services they require like financial support, counseling, etc.; rehabilitation or home care after they leave the center. They also assist the patient to make crucial decisions particularly in terms of long-term treatment, surgery or helplessness with terminal sickness.

Social workers are trained people who can comprehend medical as well as social problems. They assist in narrowing the distance between the medical staff and the life of the patient and his family. An example is that, when a patient lacks family members at home to offer support or fails to make ends meet during treatment, the social workers to the rescue as they identify the sources available in society or in government programs to assist the patient.

Concisely, social workers are an important component of the healthcare system. They are more than emotionally supporting people they ensure that all the needs of the patient are taken care of, this includes mental, social and practical needs of taking care of the patient.

The current research paper aims at the elaboration of how social workers lead to improved healthcare and how the presence of such figures increase patient outcomes of hospital stays and health facilities.

Literature Review:

Chatterjee (2015) identifies the different tasks and problems that medical social workers have to go through in Indian hospitals. In his study, this category of professionals does not only aid patients, emotionally, but also assists in discharge planning, financial help, and rehabilitation services. He however notes that their efficiency is normally hindered by the lack of institutional support together with the inappropriateness of proper recognition.

Desai (2012) is concerned with the social work education in India and the training of professionals who can work in the sphere of healthcare. According to her discoveries, although there are numerous social work programs existing in India, there are not a lot of them that involve clinical and hospital-based training. She emphasizes the requirement of enhanced curriculum and exposure in the medical environment to perform better in service delivery.

Kumar and Nair (2018) investigate the position of social workers in the Indian system of healthcare. In their study, social workers have been found to assist in filling the divide that exists in medical services and the community needs. They are particularly useful in raising awareness, counseling, as well as assisting the marginalized populations in gaining healthcare services.

Raj and Joseph (2017) offer an idea of social work practice in hospitals in India. Based on their study, they find that the services of social workers are not fully utilized in patient care as the authorities in the hospital, as well as its personnel are not aware of what the social workers can offer in patient care. They suggest that more social workers should be an inseparable part of hospital teams.

The article by Singh and Sharma (2019) examines how medical social workers affect government hospitals. They discover that patient satisfaction rate is enhanced in those hospitals that are actively harboring social workers. Their activities make patients and families have better communication, emotional and resource access.

The social life of the Indian people is described in the study by Srivastava (2020) who investigates the role of social workers in the Indian healthcare system at large. He points their support outside of hospitals, in the mental, community health, and palliative care. The paper provides an advocacy to be given more policy support to legalize the position of social workers in the field of public health.

Sharma and Thakur (2007) do a field investigation in Himachal Pradesh and study the social work activities in the hospitals located there. They discover that practical problems such as inadequate staffing, low budget, and medical team coordination are among the major problems experienced by most social workers. Still, they will be recognized by staff and patients as supporting the welfare of the patients.

Chakraborty (2005) dwells on the issues surrounding the medical social workers in the city Indian hospitals. She discovers that high workload, lack of job clarity and inadequate recognition are among the problems. The same notwithstanding, social workers remain relevant in the provision of the most valuable emotional and social support services to patients.

Mishra (2011) speaks of the importance of social workers towards the Indian public health system particularly in the case of a public health emergency. He stresses their significance as health educators, disease preventors and social educators. The reflection comes to the conclusion that social workers play the crucial role in the establishment of the people-friendly healthcare system.

Pathak (2004) associates health, illness, and the place of social workers in Indian hospitals. He discusses the role that social workers play to a patient by assisting them in learning about their illnesses and how to cope with them in addition to providing them with external systems of support. His work suggests that there is a need to regard social work as an important element of the treatment process.

The background of the social and economic concern of the health outcomes like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment has been given in the book Social Problems in India by Ahuja (2006). He states how social workers can solve these issues at the community level and in hospital systems.

The paper by Bambale and Kazi (2009) discusses the psychosocial support that is offered by social workers to the patients who are having chronic illnesses. They conclude in their research that such patients respond to counseling, learning, and emotional support which are an inevitable element of their healing and well-being.

Thorat (2013) has provided a case study on the rural medical social work in India. In the rural settings, he notes that social workers are exposed to problems that are not common, such as transport, poor infrastructure and cultural issues. However, they usually result in better health awareness and care among such styles of the populations.

Gupta and Bhardwaj (2003) consider the efficiency of the work of hospital social workers in enhancing the satisfaction of the sick. They draw a conclusion that patients pay more attention to the feeling of being informed, taken care of, and emotionally supported in case social workers are members of the hospital team. Their work confirms the notion that the contribution of social workers is necessary in the provision of quality healthcare.

Objectives of the Study:

- To know the task of social workers in hospitals and health centers.
- To determine how the social workers affect patient treatment.
- In order to examine the degree of coordination between social workers and healthcare professionals.

Hypothesis:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** Social workers do not have a significant impact on the quality of healthcare services.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** Social workers have a significant positive impact on the quality of healthcare services.

Research Methodology:

This research has used a descriptive and analytical approach to research design to find out the role and significance of social workers in hospitals and health centers. The target of the research was to gather authentic views and feedback of healthcare practitioners and social workers. Primary and secondary data were utilised. Structured questionnaire and personal interviews were used as a primary source of data collection and secondary data was taken using the books and journals and research articles and official reports on medical social work.

This study was carried out on the group of 150 people consisting of 100 healthcare specialists (i.e. doctors, nurses, hospital administrators) and 50 social workers in health facilities and hospitals. The random sampling approach was adopted in selecting the sample to make it unbiased. The questionnaire included both the close-ended (multiple choice) questions and the open-ended questions (or detailed answers).

The SPSS software was utilized in order to analyze given data. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used in the study to know general tendencies. Further, hypothesis testing procedures were employed involving t-test and correlation analysis to determine whether there is significant influence of social workers on healthcare services.

This research design assisted in obtaining proper and definite data about how social workers can assist patients and work together with healthcare teams. It also gave an insight about the issues they experience and the contribution they make to the healthcare system.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics:

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Patient satisfaction	4.2	0.65	150
Support in discharge planning	4.5	0.55	150
Emotional support to patients	4.6	0.50	150
Coordination with	4.3	0.60	150

medical team			
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Analysis of Descriptive Statistics:

Descriptive statistics will assist in learning about the data and summary of results to be obtained among the participants. This paper summarizes the survey responses of the doctors, nurses, the hospital staff, and the social workers using the descriptive statistics. The main independent variables investigated were discharge planning, coordination of patients with the medical staff, discharge and emotional support to the patient. All these variables were measured on a scale range between 1 and 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

The average (mean score) of each variable rated as more than 4.0 which demonstrates clearly that, majority of people responded that social workers do play a significant role in the hospital and health center environment. As an example, the average of emotional support variable was the highest and was 4.6. This implies that the majority of the participants are sure that social workers offer constructive emotional aid to patients.

All the variables had a standard deviation of below 0.70 and this means that the answers were very consistent. Having less standard deviation indicates that such similar ratings are given by most of the participants which indicates agreement and good support towards the role of social workers. The least standard deviation obtained is that of the category of emotional support (0.50) implying that only nearly everyone strongly agreed with emotional care being given by social workers.

In sum, the descriptive statistics indicate the idea that social workers are perceived as a very essential sector of the healthcare team. Not only are they assisting the patients in an emotional manner, but they are also giving support planning discharge and improving coordination of the patient with the medical personnel.

This discussion shows that the involvement of social workers enhances quality care and patient satisfaction within institutions.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing:

Test Applied	Significance Level (p-value)	Result
T-test	0.001	Significant
Pearson Correlation	0.78	Strong Positive Correlation

Analysis of Hypothesis Testing:

The hypothesis testing done in this study was aimed at verifying whether indeed social workers make meaningful contribution in hospitals and health centers. We began with two suppositions:

H 0: The social workers do not significantly influence the healthcare services.

- Alternative Hypothesis (H a) Social workers do make a huge positive difference to healthcare services.

We took an test t and connection examination with the guide of SPSS programming. Our comparison of the responses will be determined using the t-test, which will allow us to know whether the difference is significant in providing care to the patients with and without the assistance of social workers. A p-value of the t-test turned out to be 0.001, which is significantly lower than the default of 0.05. This implies that the outcome is significant statistically, and that we shall reject the null hypothesis.

In practical terms, the low p-value demonstrates that social workers actually play a significant (positive) role in the quality level of healthcare services. Social workers make patients feel better supported and the activities of medical teams become easier with their participation.

Pearson correlation test was also used to determine the relationship that exists between the presence of social workers and the improvement of patient care. The value of correlation was 0.78 showing strong positive relationship. It implies that, where there is active participation of the social workers, the care given to patients becomes much better.

In short, both tests provide good evidence of the fact that social workers have a critical and helpful role to play in hospitals and health centers. They enhance communication, are supportive both emotionally and practically as well as assist in the coordination of services in a better way leading to improved patient outcomes.

Conclusions Overall Results:

It is made clear in this study that social workers are very important in hospitals and health centers. They assist patients and their relatives in coping with emotional pressure, economic complications, as well as additional social concerns caused by illness or medical operations. Surveys and interviews revealed the data that most healthcare professionals and patients are thankful to social workers because they are provided with support.

The descriptive statistics demonstrated that social workers had large degrees of satisfaction concerning assessment offerings, particularly in regions of emotional support, discharged planning, and medical team coordination. The hypothesis testing is also established in some positive and significant influence of the overall healthcare service quality due to the presence of social workers.

Concisely, the findings confirm the view that social workers constitute a good element in the healthcare team. They do not only assist the emotional condition of the patients but also assist the doctors and nurses by relieving them of non-medical requirements. This enables a more

thorough and patient-focused care by hospitals. It will help make the overall healthcare system more favourable as they will be heard and will have adequate support.

Future Scope of the study:

Despite the valuable ideas that can be found in this study, there is potential to conduct future research on this topic. Some of the directions which the future research can take include:

1. Increased sample size: To understand this further, future research can involve a greater number of hospitals in the study and a greater number of subjects in geographical regions (urban and rural).
2. Digital Tools: Researchers can understand the way in which the social workers are leveraging the use of digital platforms and technology in assisting patients in a better way.
3. Specialized Areas According to future research, the research can be specialized to different departments such as maternity hospitals, psychiatric hospitals or emergency departments to observe the work of a social worker in such diverse types of care.
4. Long Term Response: Research can be conducted to evaluate long-term response of social work in patient recovery, general health, and readmission rates.
5. Policy and Training: Training programs and government policies can also be researched on their impact on the performance of the healthcare social workers.
6. International Comparison: It is possible to compare the role of the social worker in the
7. Indian hospitals with the situation in other nations and introduce new ideas to the improvement.

These prospective research endeavours can be utilized in order to make even more effective and seamless the services that social workers could provide within the systems of healthcare.

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