# A study on the level of awareness of school principles on professional social work

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| A R T I C L E I N F O | A B S T R A C T |
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| | In this paper, we present a study to determine the level of awareness of school principles on professional social work in the city of Esfehan, Iran. The proposed study of this paper distributes questionnaire among eighty principle managers who work for different schools in this city. The first part of the questionnaire is devoted to people's personal characteristics such as gender, age, etc. and the second part is associated with the some questions about their awareness on professional social work. The study, for instance, finds that there is a meaningful relationship between job experience and gender and awareness when the statistical significance level is less than five percent but there is no relationship between the level of education and the awareness on professional social work. |
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## 1. Introduction

Professional social workers play important role on resolving many social issues in today's world. They contribute in different organizations such as educational systems, hospitals, etc. The primary tasks of professional social workers are case management by creating necessary links between clients with agencies and programs, which would meet their psychosocial needs, medical social work, psychotherapy, human services management, social welfare policy analysis, community organizing, advocacy, teaching in schools of social work, and social science research.

Professional social workers perform their duties in different environments of non-profit or public social service agencies such as grassroots advocacy organizations, hospitals, hospices, community health agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, and even the military. Other social workers may also work as psychotherapists, counselors, etc. These people normally work in coordination with other medical professionals such as psychiatrists or psychologists. Other social workers may choose

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to direct their focus and efforts on social policy or academic research towards the practice or ethics of social work. There are also controversial discussions on some of the areas that these people are working.

There are different social workers in the world and the national association of social workers (NASW) is the largest and the most well known membership organization of professional social workers in the world, which approximately has 150,000 members from 56 different parts. NASW contributes, develops and protects the practice of social workers and monitors its activities. According to what NASW members claim, as of 2005, approximately 40% of the NASW members' activities are focused on mental health practicing. Therefore, we can conclude that NASW members are primarily active in clinical arena but many social workers do not hold a degree in social work. There are some studies, which compare the relative strengths of university-graduated students with master degree and professional social workers to find job (Buchanan et al., 2007).

During the past few decades, there have been tremendous efforts on implementing professional social assistance for schoolchildren. Sandoval and Davis (1984) explained how professional social workers must perform their duties in schools.

Kubiszyn (1999) surveyed the trends, developments and empirical social worker support for the expansion of psychological practice to include school-based treatment and management of serious and chronic medical conditions.

Kourkoutas & Xavier (2010) discussed that an increasing number of learning, emotional, interpersonal, and behavioral issues in school-age children could affect their academic and social development. They explained that if such a problem exists among schoolchildren and it is not treated, properly it could increase the probability of more serious psychosocial and academic problems during adolescence. They suggested using professional social workers to help schoolchildren receive some psychological medication.

Cerezo and Pons-Salvador (2004) explained that many child maltreatment detections could be executed through the implementation of professional social workers. They performed a 5-year study to improve detection in two consecutive phases: The first one was to reduce the gap between the number of identified cases and the actual number of cases of child abuse by increasing detection; and the second one was to increase the likelihood of a broader spectrum of detection.

Meyer et al. (2004) discussed teachers' reasoning about school fights, contexts, and gender in public schools and provided some guidelines as how to use the help of principals and professional social workers on reducing the number of conflicts in public schools.

In this paper, we present an empirical study to measure the logical relationship between schoolchildren's officials and their awareness on professional social workers' responsibilities. The paper organizes a questionnaire, which contains two sections. In the first section, general information of the respondents are gathered and in the second section we collect their responses based on Likert (1932) scales and then analyze the results. The orientation of this paper first explains the questions and the framework of the survey in section 2 and then it discusses the results in section 3. Finally, concluding remarks are given at the end to summarize the contribution of this paper.

## 2. Proposed study

As we explained earlier, the proposed study of this paper aims to find possible relationship between different principals' characteristics such as age, gender, education and expertise as well as job experience. We have used the following formula to calculate the minimum number of sample size,

$$n = \frac{N \times z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times p \times q}{\varepsilon^2 \times (N-1) + z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times p \times q},$$

(1)

where $N$ is the population size, $p = 1 - q$ represents the yes/no categories, $z_{\alpha/2}$ is CDF of normal distribution and finally $\varepsilon$ is the error term. Since we have $p = 0.5$, $z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$ and $N$=7300, the number of sample size is calculated as $n$=80. Therefore, we have selected a sample size of 80 where there were 60 male and 20 female respondents. Table 1 shows some of the characteristics of these people in terms of age.

**Table 1**
Personal characteristics of the respondents

| Age | Freq. | % | Cum. | Job Experience | Frequency | % | Cum. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 30 | 8 | 10 | 10 | Less than 5 | 10 | 12.5 | 12.5 |
| Between 30 to 40 | 19 | 23.8 | 33.8 | Between 5 to 10 | 22 | 27.5 | 40 |
| Between 40 to 50 | 21 | 26.2 | 60 | Between 10 to 15 | 28 | 35 | 75 |
| Over 50 | 32 | 40 | 100 | Over 15 | 20 | 25 | 100 |
| Total | 80 | 100 | | | 80 | 100 | |

As we can observe from Table 1, all participants were at least 30 years old; they hold a minimum of 5 years experience, and over 75 percent of the participants had from 5 to 15 years of job experience. Table 2 shows the respondents' area of working and their educational learning skills.

**Table 2**
Personal characteristics of the respondents

| Area of work | Freq. | % | Cum. | Educational level | Freq. | % | Cum. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Science | 33 | 41.3 | 41.3 | 14 years | 26 | 32.5 | 32.5 |
| Experimental Sciences | 32 | 40 | 81.3 | 16 years | 49 | 61.3 | 93.8 |
| Physics and Mathematics | 11 | 13.7 | 13.7 | More than18 years | 5 | 6.2 | 100 |
| Technical Science | 4 | 5 | 5 | | 80 | | |
| Total | 80 | 100 | | | 80 | 100 | |

Next, we analyze the results based on the information we have gathered from the people who participated in our survey. Note that the Cronbach alpha (Cronbach, 1951) for the questionnaire was 85%, which validates the result of our study.

## 3. The results

In this section, we present details of our survey on the relationship between schoolchildren principles' awareness and professional social workers. The first question compares the respondents' gender with their awareness. Table 3 summarizes the results of our survey.

**Table 3**
Comparison between respondents' gender and their view on professional social workers

| Gender | Mean | Standard deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 4.31 | 0.344 | 2.54 | 0.013 |
| Female | 4.19 | 0.093 | | |

As we can observe from Table 3, for $p \leq 0.05$, there is a meaningful relationship between the gender and their perception on professional social worker. Table 4 summarizes our survey on whether there is any relationship between principles' perception and their job experience in terms of different levels of job experiences.

**Table 4**
Comparison between respondents' job experience and their perception on professional social worker

| Job experience | Mean | Standard deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 5 | 4.55 | 0.231 | 8.34 | 0.001 |
| Between 5 to 10 | 4.15 | 0.280 | | |
| Between 10 to 15 | 4.18 | 0.283 | | |
| More than 15 | 4.43 | 0.258 | | |

As we can observe from Table 4, for $p \leq 0.05$, there is a strong relationship between the job experience and principles' perception on professional social worker. Table 5 shows the details of our experiments on whether there is a meaningful difference between the level of principles' education and their perception of professional social workers.

**Table 5**
Comparison between respondents' educational levels and their perception on professional social worker

| Educational level | Mean | Standard deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 years | 4.30 | 0.229 | 0.233 | 0.793 |
| 16 years | 4.28 | 0.325 | | |
| 18 years and more | 4.20 | 0.111 | | |

The results indicate that, for $p \leq 0.05$, there is not any meaningful relationship between the principles' educational levels and a good perception on professional social workers. Table 6 summarizes our survey on whether there is any relationship between principles' perception and their specialties.

**Table 6**
Comparison between respondents' job experience and their perception on professional social worker

| Area of work | Mean | Standard deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Science | 4.35 | 0.338 | 11.68 | 0.001 |
| Experimental Sciences | 4.11 | 0.191 | | |
| Physics and Mathematics | 4.61 | 0.160 | | |
| Technical Science | 4.17 | 0.598 | | |

It is clear to observe that there a strong relationship between the area of work and their awareness on professional social works responsibilities. The results create motivation to verify whether there is any relationship between different kinds of job experience. Table 7 summarizes the mean of differences between each pair of our job experiment.

**Table 7**
Comparison between respondents' job experiences' mean and p-value

| Areas of work | Mean-difference | p-value |
|---|---|---|
| Social and experimental sciences | 0.240 | 0.001 |
| Social and mathematical sciences | 0.259 | 0.005 |
| Experimental and mathematical sciences | 0.500 | 0.004 |
| Mathematical and technical sciences | 0.441 | 0.004 |

As we can see, under 5 percent statistical significance, there is a meaningful difference between different kinds of specialty and their perception on professional social worker's jobs.

## 4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented a study to learn about schoolchildren perception on professional school workers' responsibilities in terms of what they could do in schools and how they could contribute to society. The study selected a sample of 80 people from schools' principles and distributed a questionnaire among them. The results of questionnaire were analyzed in terms of the relationship between their personal characteristics such as gender, age, job experience and background knowledge with their perception on professional social workers' abilities to contribute to their work. The results indicated that some personal characteristics such as gender, age and job experience play important role on people's perception but background knowledge has no impact on people's awareness. This study could be extended to other cities in Iran and the results could build some experience in national level, which could be used for setting better regulations in the country.

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