Exploring Technical Job-specific or Domain-departmental or Horizontal Competencies : A Study on Professional Social Workers

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Abstract

   This study presents a comprehensive examination of technical job-specific or domain-departmental, or horizontal competencies crucial to the practice of the Job of professional social workers. Social workers play vital roles, such as Advocate, Broker, Case manager, Counsellor, Educator, Mediator, and Networker, Administrator, Facilitator, Mentor, Mediator, and Program Developer, Community developer, Community organizer, Policy analyst, Policy Developer, Researcher, and Social planner. The study utilizes a blended methodology that integrates qualitative methods such as job analysis and quantitative methods such as a survey. Conducted within Maharashtra State, India, the research employed a random sampling technique to gather insights from 665 social workers. Data collection involved a seven-point Likert scale survey administered online, focusing on sixteen identified competencies. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed prominent levels of agreement among participants, with agreement percentages between 80.00% and 82.57%. The findings illuminate the critical importance of these competencies, categorized into six highly agreeable, nine moderately agreeable, and one low agreeable group. Notably, competencies related to i) Identifying the Real Problem & Development Opportunity ii) Adhering to Professional Values & Ethical Principles iii) Conducting Monitoring and Evaluation & Making Changes Accordingly iv) Adapting Proper Helping Process as an Intervention v) Selecting the Proper Social Work Method vi) Using Appropriate Attending, Furthering, & Counselling Skills garnered the highest consensus. Despite the rigorous methodology, limitations such as potential biases and regional focus acknowledged. Recommendations for future research include deeper exploration of competency clusters using Exploratory Factor Analysis This approach promises to advance our understanding of competency dynamics, guiding targeted interventions, HR processes, education and training, and policy formulations in the field of social work.

   Keywords: competencies, competency mapping, technical job-specific competencies, domain-departmental competencies, horizontal competencies, professional social workers

1. Introduction

In 1973, McClelland, D. C., published a research paper titled "Testing for Competence Rather Than for Intelligence," challenging the prevailing emphasis on intelligence testing and advocating for evaluating competencies. His objection is such that, "The key issue is obviously the validity of so-called intelligence tests. Their use could not be justified unless they are valid" [1]. Nearly two decades later, in October 1991, Barrett, G. V., & Depinet, R. L., published "Reconsidering Testing for Competence Rather Than for Intelligence," critically evaluating competency testing. They emphasized that, "If McClelland's concept of competency is to make a

contribution to the field of psychology, he must present empirical data to supporting his contention" [2]. Currently, competency-based education is increasingly adopted globally, with organizations integrating competencies into HR processes. Competencies are characteristics of a person leading to superior performance in both work and life. Competency mapping is matching process with that of the job requirements, organizational needs as well as Individual and societal aspirations. Social workers play vital roles such as Case manager, Counsellor, Educator, Mediator, and Networker, Administrator, Facilitator, Mentor, Mediator, and Program Developer, Community developer, Community organizer, Policy analyst, Policy Developer, Researcher, and Social planner. Their duties

encompass diagnostic, preventive, interventions, and rehabilitative actions, all aimed at helping, empowering, and enabling those they serve. This research aims to identify fundamental competencies crucial in the job of social work, with objectives to identify competencies essential for effective social work practice.

2. Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this study represents a comprehensive integration of qualitative methods such as job analysis and quantitative methods such as a survey, strategically amalgamating their respective attributes to comprehensively explore the critical competencies pertinent to the job of a social worker. The research design encompasses both pure and applied research models, striving to uncover fundamental competencies essential to social work roles in various contexts. Conducted within Maharashtra State, India, the research targets social workers as the primary population, employing a robust random sampling technique to ensure the representation of diverse perspectives within this group. Employing a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (Score 1) to "Strongly Agree" (Score 7), facilitated participants in expressing their agreement with competency-related statements. An online mode of data collection chosen to enhance participant accessibility and streamline the data gathering process. The study's sampling size was carefully determined at 665 individuals. Upon completion of data collection, descriptive statistical procedures applied to analyse the gathered information, calculating mean values and percentage agreement scores. Ethical considerations remained central throughout the study, meticulously ensuring participant confidentiality, securing informed consent, and adhering steadfastly to ethical guidelines governing data collection, analysis, and reporting.

3. Result and Discussion:

The comprehensive assessment of Technical Job Specific or Domain-departmental or Horizontal Competencies has unveiled invaluable insights.

Table 3.1: Competencies Showing Agreeableness Mean Scores and Percentages

Technical Job-specific or Domain-departmental or Horizontal Competencies			
Sr. No.	Name of the Competencies	Mean of Agreeableness out of Seven (7)	Percentage of Agreeableness
1	Adhering to Professional Values & Ethical Principles	5.77	82.43
2	Concept Clarity on Social-service, Social-welfare & Social Work	5.64	80.57
3	Selecting the Appropriate Level of Practice & Practice-wise Roles	5.63	80.43
4	Choosing Appropriate Models & Approaches	5.60	80.00
5	Selecting the Proper Social Work Method	5.74	82.00
6	Using the appropriate Attending, Furthering & Counselling Skills	5.74	82.00
7	Using the Tools & Techniques of RRA / PRA / PLA	5.68	81.14
8	Capability to perform PESTEL Analysis	5.72	81.71
9	Working with the other Professionals	5.59	79.86
10	Identifying the Real Problem & Development Opportunity	5.78	82.57
11	Diagnosing & Deciding the Appropriate Intervention Plan	5.69	81.29
12	Adopting proper Helping Process as an Intervention	5.75	82.14
13	Adopting proper Enabling Process as an Intervention	5.67	81.00
14	Adopting proper Empowering Process as an Intervention	5.63	80.43
15	Business Acumen of Agency & Strategic Decision Making	5.66	80.86
16	Conducting Monitoring-evaluation & Making Changes Accordingly	5.77	82.43

3.1 Technical Job-specific or Domain-departmental or Horizontal Competencies: The mean scores, ranging between 5.60 and 5.78, indicating a robust consensus as follows.

3.1.1 The competencies falling under the Highly Agreeable Group (Mean 5.78 to 5.74, Percentage 82.57 to 82.00) are such as: i) Identifying the Real Problem & Development Opportunity ii) Adhering to Professional Values & Ethical Principles iii) Conducting Monitoring-evaluation & Making Changes Accordingly iv) Adapting proper Helping Process as an Intervention v) Selecting the Proper Social Work Method vi) Using the appropriate Attending, Furthering & Counselling Skills.

3.1.2 The Competencies falling under the Moderately Agreeable Group (Mean 5.66 to 5.64, Percentage 80.57 to 80.86%) are such as: i) Capability to perform PESTEL Analysis ii) Diagnosing & Deciding the Appropriate Intervention Plan iii) Using the 'Tools & Techniques of RRA or PRA or PLA iv) Adopting proper Enabling Process as an Intervention v) Business Acumen of Agency & Strategic Decision Making vi) Concept Clarity on Social-service, Social-welfare & Social Work vii) Selecting the Appropriate Level of Practice & Practice-wise Roles viii) Adopting proper Empowering Process as an Intervention ix) Choosing Appropriate Models & Approaches

3.1.3 The Competency falling under the Low Agreeable Group (Mean: 5.59, Percentage: 79.86%) is such as: i) Working with other Professionals

4. Conclusion:

The comprehensive assessment of Technical Job-Specific or Domain-Departmental or Horizontal Competencies has provided invaluable insights into the essential elements vital for the practice of professional social workers. The mean scores, indicative of agreeableness on a seven-point scale, coupled with the percentage of agreement, highlight the perceived significance and consensus among respondents regarding these competencies. Within the spectrum of these competencies, a robust consensus is evident, with mean scores ranging from 5.60 to 5.78 and agreement percentages of 80.00 to 82.57. The competencies falling under the Highly Agreeable Group demonstrate particularly strong consensus among respondents, emphasizing their critical importance. These competencies include Identifying the Real Problem & Development Opportunity, Adhering to Professional Values & Ethical Principles, Conducting Monitoring-Evaluation & Making Changes Accordingly, Adapting Proper Helping Process as an Intervention, Selecting the Proper Social Work Method, and Using the Appropriate Attending, Furthering & Counselling Skills. Similarly, competencies falling under the Moderately Agreeable Group underscore their significance, although to a slightly lesser degree. These competencies, such as Capability to Perform PESTEL Analysis, Diagnosing & Deciding the Appropriate Intervention Plan, Using the Tools & Techniques of RRA or PRA or PLA, Adopting Proper Enabling Process as an Intervention, Business Acumen of Agency & Strategic Decision Making, Concept Clarity on Social-Service, Social-Welfare & Social Work, Selecting the Appropriate Level of Practice & Practice-wise Roles, Adopting Proper Empowering Process as an Intervention, and Choosing Appropriate Models & Approaches, contribute significantly to professional social work practice. Conversely, the competency falling under the Low Agreeable Group, Working with Other Professionals, also recognized as important. Moving forward, it is essential to continue fostering these competencies through targeted interventions, professional development initiatives, and collaboration among professionals to further elevate the practice of social work.

5. References

1] McClelland, D. C. (1973). Testing for competence rather than for intelligence. American Psychologist, 28(1), 1.

2] Barret, G. V., & Depinet, R. L. (1991). Reconsidering of Testing for competence rather than for Intelligence. American Psychologist, 46(10), 1020-1021.