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Historical Overview of Social Work in Kerala: A Comprehensive Study of its Evolution

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Abstract: Findings will inform recommendations for improving social work curricula and bridging the gap between theory and practice in the field. Six instances were chosen at random from three colleges in the North, Central, and South areas of Kerala for the research. The subjects were chosen using a purposive sample strategy in the research. We gathered this information via in-depth interviews. The lack of certification and quality standards was seen by the participants as an issue. Many people still confuse social work with social service since there isn't an organisation that can speak for the field as a whole.

Keywords: Social Work, Kerala, profession and development

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INTRODUCTION

The field of social work is a recent development, rising to prominence in the early 1800s. "To help people to help themselves" is the central tenet and goal of social work. People, families, communities, and other groups are all considered "clients" (Braody & Nair, 1995). When compared to other helping professions, professional social work stands out for its focus on helping clients thrive in their natural settings. When it comes to helping clients take full advantage of opportunities for personal and systemic transformation, no one has the training and experience that professional social workers have. It is the responsibility of social work schools to ensure that its students are adequately prepared to enter the field. The distinctive pedagogy of social work education, which distinguishes it from other social science fields, is supervised field training (CSWE, 2008). Therefore, professional social workers are charged with the growth of both the social work profession and social work education (D'Souzam, 1978).

The educational system of a profession is crucial to the success of that career. In order to strengthen the theoretical and methodological foundations of the profession, it is crucial that relevant academic and practice domains work together. Curriculum and pedagogy play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of professionals by instilling in them the necessary skills, moral fibre, and knowledge to meet the high standards set by their chosen field. Inevitably, as a profession develops and evolves, it will face threats and obstacles. However, if it could be identified in a timely manner and addressed with suitable tactics and treatments, the profession would reach new heights and provide greater results.

If we want a profession or academic field to thrive in the future and adapt to the changing needs of our interconnected world, we need systems in place to monitor developments in the field, pinpoint problems, and find solutions. A worldwide movement, social work has its roots in democratic and humane philosophies. According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the fundamental

principles of professional social work include service, social justice, respect for human dignity and worth, competency, integrity, and the significance of human connections. "Social Work as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline" is how the field is defined in a 2014 global definition that was jointly proposed by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). The goal of social work education is to produce skilled social workers, and this goal is met via a wide range of interconnected professional activities (Bogo, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sundar Ramanathaiyer et.al (2018). This book had its debut in the year 2000: Kerala, India's unique development project has garnered a lot of attention from academics. There is a lot of literature on the program's "achievements" in areas including health care, communication, literacy, and demographic indicators. But beyond the surface, there are serious problems like persistent unemployment, government inefficiencies, mistreatment of women, and poverty and hardship among the elderly and other vulnerable members of society. An indigenous Keralan uncovered these issues in this book by extensive empirical investigation. Based on this information, the author of this piece wonders whether the Kerala model of growth is really worth trying to replicate. Stewart MacPherson and Sundar Ramanathaiyer credited the work in 2000. This is a copyright notice.

K.P, Mini et.al. (2021). An investigation of professional social workers' community practice in Kerala, Perceiving Community Social Work, 10, 440–447. Community social work encompasses all facets of social work practice that include intervening in or with communities, regardless of area or sector. It is a practice component of professional social work that focuses on communities as the context and target for interventions. A small-scale cross-sectional research was carried out among professional social workers in Kerala. The purpose of the study was to get a better understanding of community social work by looking at its unique characteristics, processes, models, and practice across various intervention and activity levels. Community social work in Kerala is mainly developmental, according to the findings. It focuses on the social and spatial aspects of the community, involves planning and organising processes, and tries to solve community problems with competence and capability through capacity building activities, usually at the neighbourhood or community level. Typically, it follows models of sustainable development and programme development. The paper outlines the main features of community social work as well as the most pressing concerns related to its practice.

Pottippara, Rashik. (2020). At Central University of Tamil Nadu, Rasique P is a second-year master's social work student. Background information: A lot of individuals have been affected by the flood that transpired in Kerala. When it came to handling the catastrophe, young people had been instrumental. Despite being prepared to intervene, they aren't always well-trained, which might make things worse. Rescue services and the support mechanism were the primary employers of the young. For the benefit of those impacted, they offered their precious time, physical assistance, and even financial backing. Social workers encountered difficulties, such as youths' lack of knowledge about how to handle crisis circumstances, but their willingness to do whatever was needed in order to include them in disaster relief services. They are prepared to operate in the rescue camps, but they lack the knowledge to manage them. There is a lot of money going into the rescue services, but they aren't sure what to do with it. Risking the

loss of loved ones—spouses, children, siblings, and even the home itself—those who choose disaster management are taking a very risky path. Purpose: Researching the difficulties social workers have while enlisting the help of young people in disaster rescue operations. This research aims to examine how young people participate in emergency rescue efforts. This quantitative research used a sample size of 50 people to examine the difficulties social workers have when trying to engage young people in disaster relief services, with a focus on the 2019 Kerala floods. Youth social workers that assisted with the 2018 Kerala flood rescue operations make up the study's sample population. The data is collected via a self-administered questionnaire. To gather information, we will conduct in-depth interviews.Findings: When it comes to catastrophe rescue services, today's kids are very helpful and supportive. However, their assistance and support is rendered useless due to a lack of adequate training. if emergency rescue services are the basis for government-sponsored training programmes for young people. This group is planning to host a benefit for members of that group. A growing number of catastrophes are occurring, and individuals are prepared to put in the effort necessary to find a solution. A bigger issue, however, is the incompetence and lack of training in disaster management. Given the current state of affairs, the research is quite pertinent.

V, Murale. (2018). This conceptual study explores how migrant workers in Kerala integrate into society. Its purpose is to ascertain the level of integration of migrant workers into Kerala society, as well as to study their attitudes towards the local population of Kerala and whether or not their economic contributions are being adequately acknowledged and accepted by the locals. This research takes a look at how migrant workers feel about locals in Kerala and how variables like daily pay, home state, marital status, and desire to stay in the state affect that feeling. In addition to measuring how Malay people feel about migrant labour, this research looks at how characteristics like gender, education level, and employment affect that sentiment. The study's primary objective is to quantify the extent to which migrant workers have integrated into Keralan society. It does this by applying the Ethnosizer model, which has two dimensions, and by categorising migrant workers' levels of integration into four categories: assimilation, integration, marginalisation, and separation.

Nepali, Som. (2021). The role of social workers as first responders to the epidemic cannot be emphasised enough. It would seem, however, that social workers in Kerala are oblivious to the breadth of their responsibilities. According to the research, social work professors need to take the initiative while interpreting their courses. Novel Corona Virus, also known as COVID-19, is a major problem right now, and this article explains how it's affecting everyone's life, especially their ability to learn. Every school has been shuttered due to the fast spreading COVID-19 pandemic, which has wreaked havoc on high-quality education. According to the UNESCO research, 1.6 billion children in 191 countries are impacted by the closure of institutions. Blended learning virtual classrooms were used by all educational institutions as a strategy to provide students with an alternate learning environment. The papers explore the effects of COVID-19 on the quality of education students get in Kerala, as well as the implications for social work. The study's results demonstrate that the COVID-19 has significant impacts on the classroom setting. It highlighted the significant disparity in access to quality education in Kerala. On the other hand, the state of Kerala has instituted laws to ensure that all children have access to a high-quality education using information and communication technologies. It has also encouraged social workers to play an active role

in meeting the educational needs of the majority of the children in the state. In contrast, social workers in rural Kerala provided education to children by implementing policies at the micro, messo, and macro levels.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Typically, when people think about qualitative research, they picture a technique where theory and classification are born out of data gathering and analysis. Instead of being something that comes before an inquiry, theory is expected to come after it in qualitative research. The research endeavour is held together by the research design. Designing a study "handles a logical problem rather than a logistical one." For this specific study, the researcher used sixteen examples. The remaining four members of the group focus on community development, while eight have expertise in medical and mental health social work. Because qualitative interviews provide a space for respondents to think critically about a range of topics, they may shed fresh light on social phenomena. Therefore, for the piolet investigation, six patients were selected from three separate institutions in Kerala. The three best social work schools in Kerala were used to choose the sample units based on their performance in the hiring process.

DATA ANALYSIS

The venn diagram clearly shows that all the necessary components for becoming a professional social worker are offered by the three schools of social work. These components include exposure visits to different organisations, a block placement and field work practicum to learn about the work that social workers do, workshops to enhance their careers, and association activities, among other things. One thing that the researcher noticed was common throughout all the institutions in this survey was that the respondents cited the availability of resources and libraries as a distinctive aspect. The researcher made notice of the fact that these schools of social work provide students with an opportunity to hone the documentation skills necessary for the field.

"He was able to better grasp the significance of 'role clarity' and 'plan and organise programmes' thanks to his association."

Respondents from College 1 highlighted the PIME method, mentorship, resource availability, and permanent faculty as the college's distinctive features. Even at the assisted college level, the lack of permanent instructors remains the biggest obstacle for the majority of MSW students. The respondents from College 3 highlighted their college's strengths in areas such as self-study, extracurricular activities, professional and personal life guidance and supervision, and programme funding mobilisation, while those from College 2 praised the course material on time management, instructors' accessibility and supervision in both the classroom and the field, and overall quality of their college experience.

Figure 1: Venn diagram depicting the nature and particularities of MSW course studied by the respondents

coaching, etc. They made notice of the college administration's desire to host conferences for students, teachers, and professionals on a national, international, and even global scale.

CASE X: "The person who has had the most impact on shaping my identity is my mentor. Whether it was a good or negative event, personal or professional, I used to tell my mentor "

This is Case P: "He was empowered to confront any challenge by virtue of the street play and field work interactions."

IN THIS CASE: "Association helped him to 'plan and organise programmes' and to understand the importance of 'role clarity.'"

I had a hard time keeping track of time when I was getting my Master of Social Work degree (CASE L). I didn't realise how important it was to learn to manage my time well until I had a job. Now that I'm an expert at it, I feel accomplished whenever I see other people working so hard and under so much stress.

there are a number of best practices that well-established schools of social work have adopted. These include: taking part in college-level association activities; attending workshops to enhance professional skills during and after the course; receiving mentoring or even becoming attached to a mentor; and developing research orientation and documentation skills while pursuing a Master of Social Work degree.

Based on the data shown in the figure, it is evident that the majority of the respondents had more than three years of experience and that the majority of them graduated before 2015 (more than three years after graduation). We may see that 5 respondents have fewer than 3 years of job experience when we compare the years after graduation with years of experience.
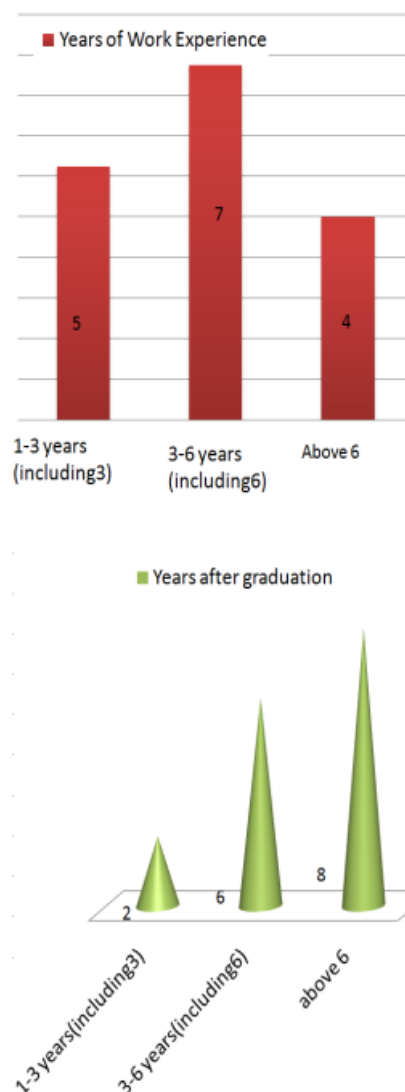
Figure 2 & 3 graphs depicting the years of work experience and years after graduation respectively

Employment History

In their careers, the 16 respondents worked 38 different occupations. There are 38 total positions, including 3 in the medical field and 35 in the CD industry. Twelve people filled out the survey, and all of them had experience in project management or coordination, as shown in the pie chart. Five people were involved in child line or DCPU work, while five others were programme managers or coordinators. The data clearly shows that community development settings account for the vast majority of social work occupations in Kerala that respondents were involved in. The majority of the responders come from medical and psychiatric backgrounds, but it's evident that they have experience working in community settings outside of their specialisation. This is because community development was a prominent topic in their MSW course.
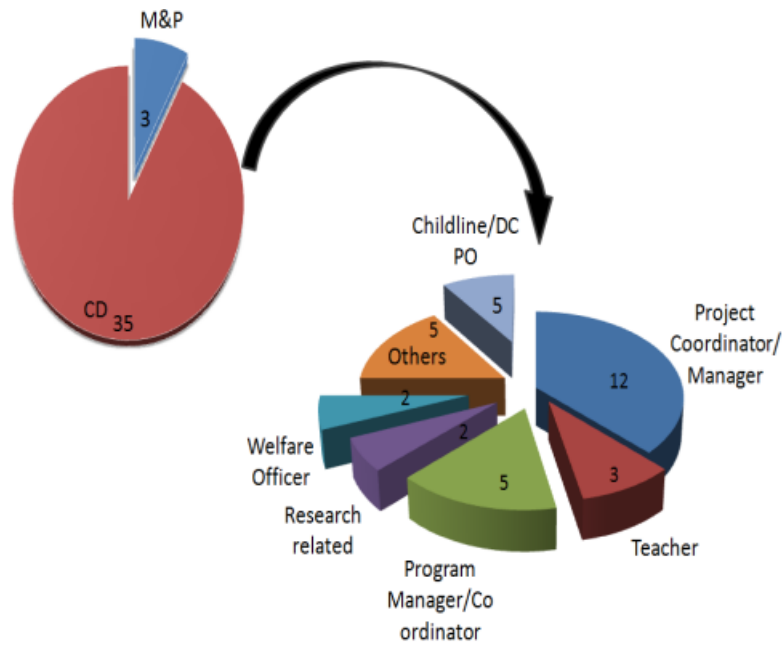
Figure 4: Pie charts representing the past employment of respondents

Current employment status of the respondents

Half of the 16 respondents had backgrounds in medicine or mental health, while the other half are community development professionals. Their present job, however, shows signs of a departure from specialisation. Out of the twelve, eleven are still working in the community, while two are in the medical field. Four of the participants are now enrolled in PhD programmes, while two more are pursuing PhDs part-time. Out of the eleven individuals that worked in the community setting, two were instructors and six were project managers or coordinators. Evidently, there is a growing trend of social workers working in project settings.
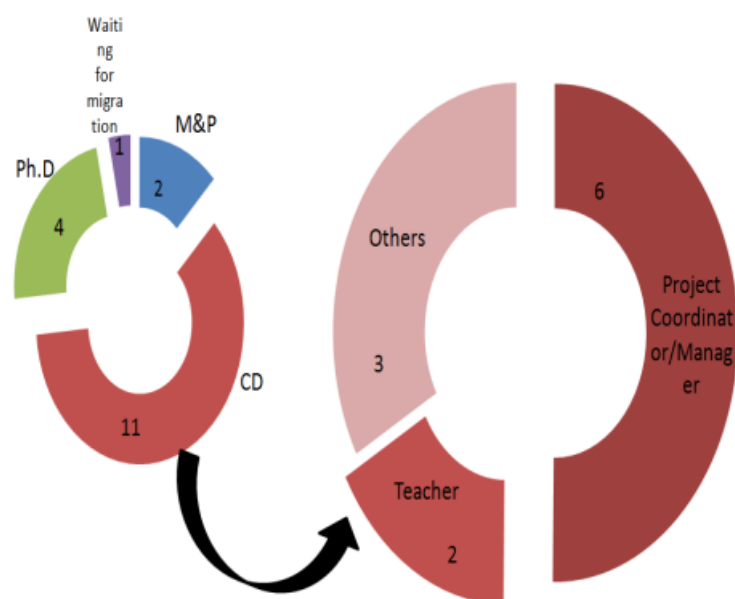

Figure 5: Doughnut charts showing the current employment of respondents
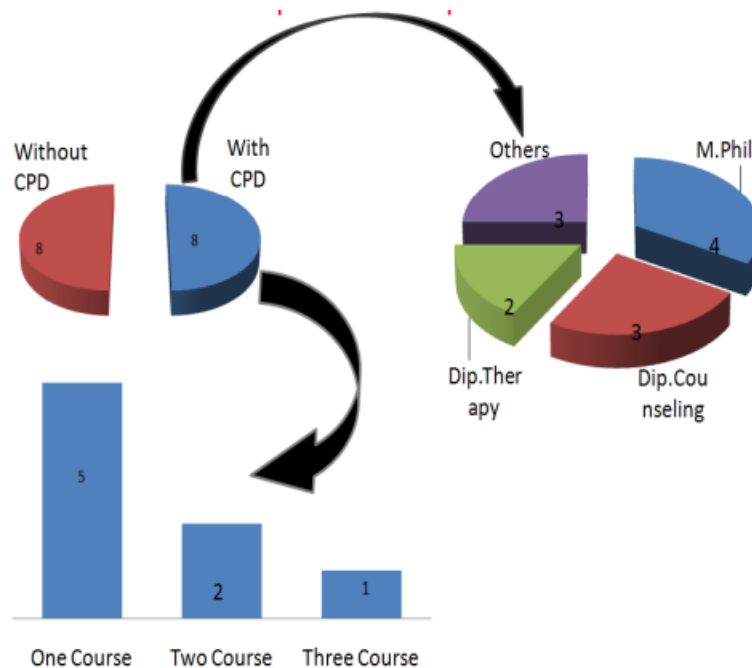
Continuous professional development

Figure 6: Pie chart and bar chart depicting continuous professional development of respondents

Respondents who took their commitment to CPD seriously made up half of the sample. Out of the 12 courses, 5 respondents took an extra one after finishing their social work degree, and several took more than one. Four people filled out the survey had Master of Philosophy degrees, three had diplomas in counselling, and two had diplomas in treatments such as NLP. Those social workers who put their all into their fieldwork practicum experiences were better able to contribute to their profession in the years that followed. They were also resourceful in adapting the fundamental techniques to their own contexts. Documentation and social work administration were two areas where this was particularly relevant. These were useful in non-governmental organisation (NGO) contexts because of the emphasis on documentation. Research was given little attention as very few people dared to incorporate it into their field of work.

Application Social Work Methods

Fifteen people made effective use of the two main approaches, community organisation and social group work, as shown in the figure, while fourteen people made use of social case work throughout their careers. Social action was obviously the strategy that the respondents used at a below-minimum level.
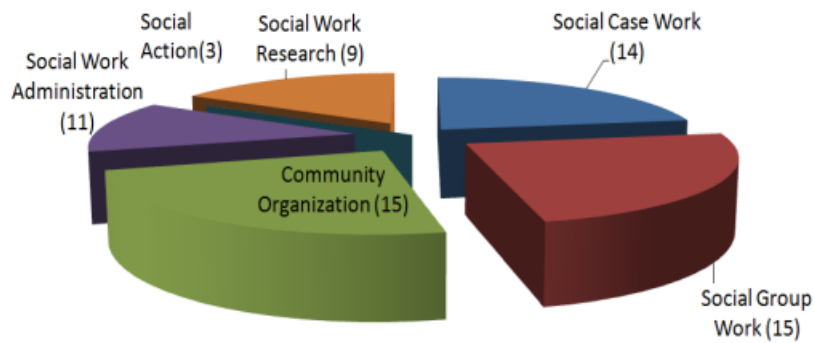
Figure 7: Pie diagram depicting the Application of Social Work Methods

Things I Learned During My Field Work Practicum: How to Build Relationships, Communicate Effectively, and Coordinate Programmes and Field Actions.

Time management, networking, communication, resource mobilisation, programme coordination, social interaction, rapport building, etc. were among the many skills that respondents said they learned from their field work practice and are now putting to use in their careers. However, 50% of those who took the survey said they aren't currently putting their documentation skills to use since their work doesn't need it. When asked about their experience with action research in the classroom and the workplace, most respondents claimed to be unfamiliar with the concept.

Figure 8: Funnel chart showing the application of learning from field work practicum and acquired skills

Acquisition of Specific Skills- Networking and Resource Mobilization, Documentation, Time Management and Communication

Time management, networking, communication, resource mobilisation, programme coordination, social interaction, rapport building, etc. were among the many skills that respondents said they learned from their field work practice and are now putting to use in their careers. However, 50% of those who took the survey

said they aren't currently putting their documentation skills to use since their work doesn't need it. Both in their academic and professional lives, respondents claimed to be unfamiliar with the concept of action research.

Co-curricular activities: exposure visits, placements, mentoring, workshops and association activities

We aimed to learn if the respondents' institutions reaped any benefits from implementing extracurricular activities here. Participation in extracurricular activities, such as field trips and mentorship, was useful for the majority of respondents. While 100% of participants said that bock placement helped their careers, 10% said the workshops had no impact on them, and 10% said the association events had a positive impact on them.
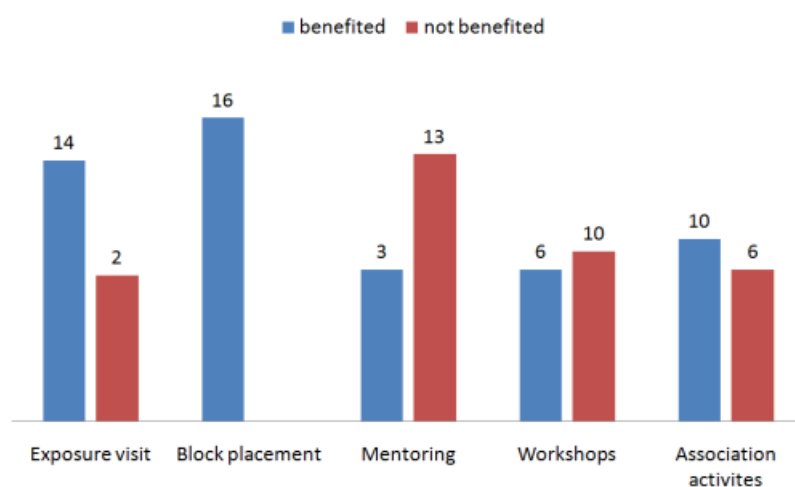

Figure 9: Bar charts showing the application of co-curricular activities

Many students in the MSW programme were dissatisfied with the workshops offered because they believed they failed to adequately address the skills that were most important to them. They were very in favour of holding workshops with the aim of teaching related and specialised skills.

CONCLUSION

The researcher hopes to leave young professionals in Kerala with some food for thought as this study comes to a close. Because social work is a helping profession, it's crucial to choose people who can "empower individuals to help themselves" and have the correct spirit. If this isn't in place, apathetic people will enter the field and see social work as a job instead of a calling. This outlook is borne out in their dedication to the profession and their eagerness to further their careers. The number of social work schools in Kerala has skyrocketed in the last two decades. One of the main threads is the quality of education and supervision, as the majority of social work schools are private. Another problem with social work education is that many of the instructors and guest speakers have little to no real-world experience in the area.

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