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A STUDY ON THE RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL WORKERS TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Public Administration is a dynamic field dedicated to continually improving the delivery of public services through a multidisciplinary approach. While administration as an activity has existed since the inception of society, public administration as a distinct discipline emerged in the late 19th century and has continuously evolved to serve society better. Good social policies require special knowledge and expertise; earlier, most public policymakers did not have direct experience from ground reality, so they lacked firsthand information. However, the paradigm shifted from the government to governance; in this regard, non-governmental entities, civil society, and international organizations have played a crucial role in the overall decision-making process and policy framework directly and indirectly. So, social workers are vital contributors to Social Policy and its implementation in macro and micro settings, especially in social welfare policy. They are acutely aware of the quality and quantity of services and other outcomes of policy implementation.

This paper explores the transformative impact of integrating the social worker role into public administration practices to establish a governance model prioritizing societal well-being and equity. The study delves into the multifaceted consequences of infusing social worker roles and values into bureaucratic structures, focusing on promoting human-centered approaches, pursuing social justice, fostering collaboration, upholding ethical standards, and implementing preventive strategies. This redefinition involves collaborative efforts between social workers and administrators for innovative approaches to address societal issues with moral considerations. The paper will discuss the theoretical

A STUDY ON THE RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL WORKERS TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL POLICY

debate on the role of the social worker perspective in the administrative context, helping to create a more effective, ethical, and responsive public service that meets the unique needs of communities.

Keyword: Social Policy, Social Work Principle, Administration Development, Social Justice

INTRODUCTION

According to social science literature, no fundamental change occurs merely because of government acts, but the country's conscience begins to rise and demands change because of civil society. Social policy is a subset of public policy, focusing primarily on societal well-being and welfare; however, public policy encompasses a broad spectrum, including economics, environmental policy, and foreign policy. Public Administration's main component deals with policies and trying to solve society's problems with quality service delivery. Public Policy has a longstanding history intertwined with Political Science and Public Administration. Still, its formal emergence as an academic pursuit occurred in the latter part of the twentieth century, ushering in new study dimensions. Initially, research on public policies was primarily conducted by scholars and students in public administration and political science. Policy is crucial in the administrative process, representing decisions on what actions should be taken, how, and when. Paul Appleby succinctly captures this essence by stating that "the nature of public administration is policy-making." As a field of study, public policy revolves around the actions taken to address social problems or achieve specific goals. Over time, there has been considerable advancement in comprehending the content and processes of public policies. (Garrett, 1993)

Public administrations represent the values and preferences of citizens, communities, and society. Some of these values remain constant, while others change with societal evolution. From time to time, a particular set of values becomes prominent, influencing the government's role and the practice of public administration. Social policy involves the examination of the social relationships essential for human well-being and the systems designed to promote such well-being. The social policies formulated by societies can be seen as expressions of how a particular society acknowledges and articulates the interdependence among its members. In the contemporary context, social policies have become vast, rapidly evolving components of government. Effective social service policy necessitates specialized knowledge and expertise. Earlier, many public policymakers lacked direct experience in social service or work, leading to a deficiency in firsthand knowledge. To address this gap, the involvement of helping professionals, clients, and consumers in the policy-making process could provide valuable knowledge and experience. A comprehensive understanding of social policy is crucial for practical engagement with social work values and navigating political and ethical considerations related to responsibility, rights, and the concept of a good society. (Azmat et al , 2014)

Social policy inherently involves the process of policy-making, a domain that has consistently involved elements of intuition and creativity. While grounded in hard evidence, technical theories, and logical analysis, Social Policy also necessitates a creative dimension, often requiring imagination and insight. This field is not solely about facts; it encompasses emotions as well. Effectively studying Social Policy demands commitment, the ability to empathize with others, and the skill to interpret the surrounding world. Social policy aims to maximize people's enhancement of a good life.

Consequently, its essence lies in engaging in theoretical discussions and establishing practical definitions regarding what constitutes a fulfilling life and the essential nature of human needs. "Social work's prime responsibility is to engage with people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being to further social change, social development, social cohesion, empowerment, and people's liberation." (Kshetrimaym, 2021) Social Policy serves as a lasting strategy for development across generations. Its most significant effects are seen in vulnerable or marginalized groups, urgent crises, and the overall quality of life. Social workers, acting as advocates for human and community well-being, carry an inherent duty to champion, enact, or modify social policies to combat social injustice and inequality, prevent circumstances that restrict human rights, and improve the quality of life for everyone. (Dilhani, 2017). According to Johnson (2004), the social work profession has moved from being a leadership community practice to serving in secondary roles and responsibilities for organizations or government bodies.

'Social workers play a crucial role in administrative practices for the policy-making process.' The paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the intersection between social work and administration practices for policy-making in the era of sound governance. This redefinition involves collaborative efforts between social workers and administrators and innovative approaches to address societal issues.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on Secondary data collected from a diverse range of credible and authoritative sources, including peer-reviewed academic journals, government reports, policy briefs, reputable newspapers, and publications from international organizations.

SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL WORK: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

"Social policies are how states and the various authorities seek to deal with social problems. These policies concern allocating material and symbolic societal resources in the social welfare field and influence individuals' well-being" (Gal, J., & Weiss-Gal, 2011). Social Policy is an academic subject known for embracing various approaches, making it highly attractive. It is inherently interdisciplinary, incorporating ideas and analytical methods

A STUDY ON THE RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL WORKERS TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL POLICY

from sociology, political science, and economics. Reisch (2014) underscores the significance of social policy by describing it as the foundation for social programs, typically manifested through governmental actions aimed at instigating transformations in specific areas. The guidelines refer to laws, public or private regulations, formal procedures, or normative sanctioned behavior patterns. Policy practice is a term introduced by Jansson in 1984. It is all about social workers creating and implementing new rules and guidelines. These activities are a crucial part of their job in various practice areas. Essentially, it focuses on social workers working to shape and carry out new policies and suggesting improvements to existing ones. The goal is to support policies at different levels within organizations, locally, nationally, and even internationally, that align with the values of social work (Gal, J., & Weiss-Gal, 2011, p. 12).

Traditionally, policy-making has been associated with politicians and expert planners. However, in contemporary times, a broader range of professionals plays a crucial role in this process. This includes educators, researchers, healthcare professionals, mental health practitioners, and social workers. The recognition of social workers has grown due to their distinctive attributes. The interdisciplinary nature of social work is one such characteristic, allowing social workers to view individuals holistically rather than in isolated components. Therefore, when engaging in macro-level interventions, it is essential to consider the person-in-environment perspective. This perspective is vital in translating policy-making theory into practical policy implementation. Secondly, research is as necessary as a secondary method of social work, professional practice, and reaching out to people. (Azmat et al., 2014)

Social workers do not have to be in political office or hold any positions of power to affect policy; social workers and students of social work possess skills and perspectives, including concepts, values, and beliefs, that are crucial in the policy-making process. These abilities and viewpoints are grounded in the historical context of social work and its hands-on experience directly assisting society.

THE SOCIAL POLICY IN SOCIAL WORK: THE 6 S FRAMEWORK

- Social concern and consciousness

The social work profession goes beyond direct client interactions, counseling, group services, and community event organization. It necessitates practitioners to possess a socially conscious mindset. Social workers must stay informed about the community and societal developments to fulfill their roles effectively. This involves a sharp awareness and sensitivity to changes in the community. Unlike other professionals like clinical psychologists or counselors, social workers uniquely require a compassionate sentiment for individuals in need and a genuine concern for broader societal issues. In essence, social

work encompasses individual circumstances and the more significant social and public problems impacting those individuals (Kam, P.K., 2012).

- Socially disadvantaged groups

Social work is a profession dedicated to assisting individuals in need, fostering a cycle of support where those helped can, in turn, assist others. With a longstanding commitment to serving impoverished and oppressed communities, the emphasis on the social dimension underscores the importance of prioritizing the most disadvantaged, crushed, and discriminated groups in daily practice. Social work encourages practitioners to feel a sense of discomfort when witnessing the challenges faced by these groups. In practical terms, if a social worker focuses solely on providing services without genuine concern for situations of the oppressed and vulnerable, they will not be regarded as a dedicated and respected professional in the helping field.

- Social Context

The third dimension of social work pertains to how it tackles individual issues. Social work goes beyond focusing solely on personal problems; it also assesses these issues within the broader social context. The problem is viewed in connection with the immediate social environment where it originates.

In social work, the term 'social' signifies that practitioners must embrace a perspective that considers the person within their environment or situation. This approach is crucial for comprehending and analyzing human problems in their specific social context (Miley et al., 2009). The unique contribution of the social dimension "constitutes the particular purview of the profession and makes it distinct from other helping professions" (Segal et al., 2007)

- Social Construction

It is not enough to tell social workers about the importance of the social context. Social workers need to apply a social construction perspective to assess the client's level of vulnerability. This perspective emphasizes that clients' issues are rooted in social factors, highlighting that social influences shape or determine numerous individual problems (Figueira-McDonough, 2007).

- Social Change

A STUDY ON THE RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL WORKERS TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL POLICY

Social work should extend its focus beyond individuals, families, or groups and include communities and society in its efforts to bring about change. Acknowledging that individual and social issues stem from social factors and that problems are socially constituted, social workers are responsible for an obligation that other professionals may not share. That obligation occupies the community practice concern, social structure, policy, and political action. Social work involves working with a person to improve their life in a given society. Social workers must make that society a better community where that person can live and thrive. When an organization effectively adopts positive changes, the overall quality of life for individuals living there improves. Social work's essence lies in preventing issues and fostering development, transforming struggling communities, fixing social problems, and influencing policies. Therefore, social workers should view themselves as active contributors to improving society and helping it progress (Bernstein, A.J., 1995).

- Social equality

The last vital aspect of social work is working towards fairness for everyone. Social workers should passionately oppose any form of unfairness, exclusion, or violation of people's rights. Their job is to be committed to getting rid of unequal treatment, putting an end to exploitation, and breaking the cycle of oppression. Social workers aim for a society with equal rights, opportunities, and resources. Striving for social equality makes social workers more mindful of injustice caused by inequality and widespread acceptance of practical thinking. It also allows social workers to emphasize the significance of human value and dignity. Embracing the concept of 'different but equal' is crucial in social work ideology. Advocating for equality is essential to ensure that differences and diversity are acknowledged and that society thrives. This is vital to confront and eliminate social discrimination and oppression in social work (Solas, J., 2008).

Table .1 helps to understand social work's primary and secondary practices in society and administration.

Primary /direct social work practice	Secondary/indirect social work practice
Social Case Work	Social Research
Social Group Work	Social Welfare Administration
Community Organization	Social Policy and Action

TABLE 1: DIRECT AND INDIRECT SOCIAL WORK METHODS, SOURCE – ROCHA, C.J. (2007)
ESSENTIALS OF SOCIAL WORK POLICY PRACTICE. NEW JERSEY; JOHN WILEY AND SONS,
PAGE NO.2

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL POLICIES IN ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES.

- **Advocacy and Policy Development:** Social workers engage in advocacy efforts to influence policy development. They ensure policies are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the population's diverse needs. This involves collaborating with policymakers, participating in policy research, and providing input based on their frontline experience (Cox et al., 2019).
- **Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Social workers facilitate community engagement and empowerment, ensuring that the voices of marginalized or vulnerable groups are heard in the policy-making process. By actively involving communities in decision-making, social workers help create policies more reflective of the actual needs and aspirations of the people they are designed to serve (Jansson et al., 2008).
- **Implementation and Evaluation:** Social workers are instrumental in implementing policies once policies are established. They work on the ground, delivering services, coordinating programs, and meeting policy goals. Social workers also contribute to the evaluation of policies, providing feedback on their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement (Rocha, C.J. 2007).
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Social workers collaborate with professionals from various disciplines, such as healthcare, education, and law enforcement, to address complex social issues comprehensively. This interdisciplinary approach helps create holistic policies that consider the interconnected nature of societal challenges (Bourgon, 2007).
- **Ethical Decision-Making:** Social workers bring a solid moral foundation to administrative practices. They prioritize social justice, human rights, and the well-being of individuals. Social workers navigate complex ethical dilemmas, ensuring that policies and procedures are aligned with moral principles and do not perpetuate injustices (Bernstein, A.J. 1995).
- **Crisis Intervention and Social Support:** Social workers play a vital role in providing immediate assistance and support in times of crisis or emergencies. They help design and implement emergency response policies that address the unique needs of affected populations and contribute to the overall resilience of communities (Beddoe, L. 2020).
- **Research and Data Analysis:** Social workers engage in research and data analysis to inform evidence-based policy decisions. By gathering and analysing data on social issues, they contribute valuable insights that guide policymakers in designing effective and targeted interventions (Rocha, C.J. 2007).

CONCLUSION

A STUDY ON THE RELEVANCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WITH SOCIAL WORKERS TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL POLICY

This paper discussed the role of social workers in the administration of social policy making and overall. In the contemporary social Policy landscape, redefining administrative practices is paramount for addressing evolving societal needs. This paper explores the pivotal role of social workers in reshaping administrative approaches to foster more inclusive, equitable, and responsive policies. As dedicated advocates for social justice and well-being, social workers influence policy development, actively engage communities, and contribute to implementing and evaluating social policies. The study's findings show that social workers are policy actors who offer diverse inputs into a complex policy formulation process. Furthermore, social workers actively engage in research and data analysis, providing evidence-based insights that inform policy decisions. This multifaceted role positions social workers as integral contributors to developing and implementing policies that positively impact individuals and communities.

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