Exploring a Cross-Sectional Analysis Defining Social Work Leadership Competencies in Social Work Education and Practice

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Abstract : As a profession, social work has much to offer individuals, groups, and organizations. A multidisciplinary approach to understanding and solving complex challenges and a commitment to developing and training ethical practitioners outlines characteristics of a profession embedded with leadership skills. This presentation will take an overview of the historical context of social work leadership, examine social work as a unique leadership model composed of its qualities and theories that inform effective leadership capability as it relates to our code of ethics. Reflect critically on leadership theories and their foundational comparison. Finally, a look at recommendations and implementation to social work education and practice. Similar to defining leadership, there is no universally accepted definition of social work leadership. However, some distinct traits and characteristics are essential. Recent studies help set the stage for this research proposal because they measure views on effective social work leadership among social work and non-social leaders and followers. However, this research is interested in working backward from that approach and examining social workers' leadership preparedness perspectives based solely on social work training, competencies, values, and ethics. Social workers understand how to change complex structures and challenge resistance to change to improve the well-being of organizations and those they serve. Furthermore, previous studies align with the idea of practitioners assessing their skill and capacity to engage in leadership but not to lead. In addition, this research is significant because it explores aspiring social work leaders' competence to translate social work practice into direct leadership skills. The research question seeks to answer whether social work training and competencies are sufficient to determine whether social workers believe they possess the capacity and skill to engage in leadership practice. Aim 1: Assess whether social workers have the capacity and skills to assume leadership roles. Aim 2: Evaluate how the development of social workers is sufficient in defining leadership. This research intends to reframe the misconception that social workers do not possess the capacity and skills to be effective leaders. On the contrary, social work encompasses a framework dedicated to lifelong development and growth. Social workers must be skilled, competent, ethical, supportive, and empathic. These are all qualities and traits of effective leadership, whereas leaders are in relation with others and embody partnership and collaboration with followers and stakeholders. The proposed study is a cross-sectional quasi-experimental survey design that will include the distribution of a multi-level social work leadership model and assessment tool. The assessment tool aims to help define leadership in social work using a Likert scale model. A cross-sectional research design is appropriate for answering the research questions because the measurement survey will help gather data using a structured tool. Other than the proposed social work leadership measurement tool, there is no other mechanism based on social work theory and designed to measure the capacity and skill of social work leadership.

Keywords : leadership competencies, leadership education, multi-level social work leadership model, social work core values, social work leadership, social work leadership education, social work leadership measurement tool