



PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Social work education is considered as a practice oriented discipline. The students of this discipline are to apply their theory knowledge; concepts of chair shall work while addressing social problems or issues at the individual group and the community level in the field work. Social work education discipline is developing remarkably in the past few years in India. The present paper is the outcome of an empirical study of problems and challenges faced by social work students in the field work and academic course work. This study highlights the opinion of the students about teaching methods adopted, infrastructural facilities and curriculum. The study also highlights the perceptions of the students about social work education. The results of the study show that, majority of the students are facing many problems and challenges related to curriculum and fieldwork practice. There are some negative factors affecting the students such as inability of translating theory into fieldwork practice. Majority of the students are having a positive attitude towards infrastructural facilities provided by the institutes and teaching methods adopted by the institutes.

Keywords: curriculum; fieldwork; problems and challenges; social work education

1. Introduction

In India, the growth of accredited social work education continues to increase every year. The nature of social work education in India has historically, complied with the Eurocentric standards and governed by the incremental models of community welfare. The status of social work education in India especially the knowledge base is still debated and commented upon published work as well as in academic gatherings, such as seminars, conferences etc. the quality of social work education is related with many factors like quality of curriculum, institutional structure, quality of fieldwork practices,

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inability and competence of students, teachers, fieldwork instructor, their roles and responsibilities, skill and knowledge component developed and applied in the teaching - learning process, teaching methods adopted in the institutes etc.

The field of social work education started expanding with several deemed universities, Central, State and Private Universities and various colleges and institutions. All these institutions have started Bachelor's Degree (BSW), Master's Degree in social work (MSW), M. Phil and Ph.D. also. The major goal of social work education is that of imparting integration of social work knowledge, more so of multi-disciplinary knowledge, attitudes and development of people centred skills which include practical-based approaches and participation in the research work. Keeping all this in mind, it is important to identify the various problems, challenges or issues faced by social work students in the context of curriculum, field work practice etc., so that appropriate measures can be suggested to improve the quality of social work education.

2. Need for the Study

The current pattern of social work education in India has been adopted from the American model of social work education. Social work education emphasizes the initial preparation of qualified social workers and the provision of continuing education for social work practice, administration, education, training and research with the value framework of the profession. Social work education focuses on the development of critical consciousness in students through a process of critical pedagogy, so that students become aware of the social issues and problems of the society and are motivated to alleviate the social problems and issues. Keeping in view all this reality, there is a need to highlight major challenges, problems being faced by social work students which is required to be addressed collectively with a view to improve the standards of social work education and to enhance the recognition for fieldwork and research in social work education. It is also important to develop literature in consonance with the social work education.

There is hardly any study available in the context of social work education in India and problems and challenges are still being faced by students and will never stop therefore, it is important to explore the current scenario of social work education and to understand the opinions, perceptions of the students about it. Thus, the present study could be useful addition to the literature on the social work education which is particularly scarce in the Indian context.

3. Review of Literature

H. P. Jyoti (2015) highlighted the issues and challenges of social work education. Through the study author has focused on the admission procedure and method of teaching followed by the social work education institutions in Karnataka State. Author has also examined the infrastructural facilities such as library; hostel etc. to explore the course content is also one of the major objectives of the study. Author has collected the

primary information from the chairpersons, heads or principles of social work education institutes. Through the study author has found that majority of the social work education institutes are lack in human and physical infrastructure. Author has pointed out that the growth and development of social work education institutes is not evenly spread in Karnataka State. Author has also discussed on the recommendations of second review committee. Author has also pointed out that lack of infrastructure facility and lack of human resources will have a bearing on the declining quality of social work education.

S. Jaswal and S. Pandya (2015) have focused on the history of the social work education in India, through its Eco-centric influences, development of specializations and newer emerging areas. Authors have specific idea to look at the present and dominant trend of imagination and decolonization of social work profession in India - specifically its fear article under pinning's, contours and form in practice. This paper deliberates and decolonizes the efforts of social work education in the Indian context and conceptualizes the way forward. Through the study authors have focused on the contemporary scenario and changing nature of social work education. Authors have opined that, social work education in India today is at the juncture of becoming a material force. Authors have pointed out that, State withdrawal, global political economic dynamics spearheaded several people's struggles and structural issues and therefore, contemporary social work education has two great challenges of structural hegemony and cultural diversity.

J. Dhemba (2012) has discussed about the issues and challenges related to the course content, training and fieldwork practice. Focus is also on the role of fieldwork in social work education and training. Author has also stated that as the social work curriculum is based on theory and practice, this may sound scary the provision of sound scary is critical as is fieldwork experience. The study is based on the current knowledge on fieldwork, including but not limited to the fieldwork curriculum, the management of fieldwork and the needs and challenges faced by students, fieldwork agency, fieldwork supervisors and training institutions. Author has attempted to establish the nature, form and content of fieldwork practice and to ascertain whether fieldwork is treated as being equally important to its very counterpart at the selected social work education institutions. Author has attempted to assess the requirements and challenges faced by social work education institutions, fieldwork agency is, supervisors and students on fieldwork. Author has concluded that, fieldwork in social work education is marginalized there are indeed very promising prospects of raising its effectiveness and quality of training will stop.

M. P. Chaugale (2010) has attempted study that very, methods and practice in the social work education especially in URCD specialization. This study paper is based on the information collected from social work student's facility, fieldwork supervisors and head of the Department etc. from 20 social work education institutions in Maharashtra. Through the study author has focused on the history of fieldwork training author has also attempted study the nature of your article and practical curriculum of our burn and rubble community development course in social work education in

universities in Maharashtra. Author has attempted to find out the relevance theory and fieldwork training in the agencies and also in the open community and the practice. Through the study, the author has observed that teaching methodology is traditional which is not yet improved. He has concluded that, institutions, fieldwork agency, faculty members and students should have coordination for professional preparation of the social work students.

F. Adaikalam (2014) has pointed out that social work education in India has experienced multiple realities given the cultural, geographical, physical, social, ethnic and linguistic differences. This situates social work education into a peculiar yet challenging milieu in its journey to ensure welfare of the people. Through the study author has provided an overview on the issues, challenges and concerns of social work education in India. Author has stated that, while engaging layers of social realities, social work tries to create academic rigour, tests out new models and demands a statutory professional system. Author has discussed the future concerns and challenges for the social work education in India.

4. Objectives of Study

The specific objectives set for the study are;

1. To understand the opinions of the students about curriculum of social work education.
2. To identify the challenges/problems facing by students in the fieldwork practice.
3. To identify the negative factors influencing on student's ability of translation of theory into practical work.
4. To understand the opinions of students about teaching methods adopted by the institutes.
5. To understand the opinions of students about the infrastructural facilities provided by their institutes.
6. To understand the overall perception of students about social work education.

5. Research Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and confined to the social work education students (pass out students). The study was carried out through Sample survey method. The survey has been carried out by preparing a questionnaire covering the relevant factors related to the curriculum, fieldwork practice, in social work education. The Sample of 300 passed out students of MSW / BSW from Tilak Maharashtra and Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University located in Pune city have been selected. As per the objectives of the study the research methodology is adopted which is descriptive and exploratory.

5.1 Selection of Sample

Three universities in Pune city have been selected for the study purpose. The pass out students from each university has been selected by getting their address from the social work education institutions affiliated to these universities. Therefore, in total 300 pass out students have been selected by using convenient sampling method.

5.2 Sources of Data Collection

The study is based on the primary and secondary data. Primary information has been collected through questionnaire for students and secondary information have been collected through various study papers, articles, published in various journals, periodicals and published books.

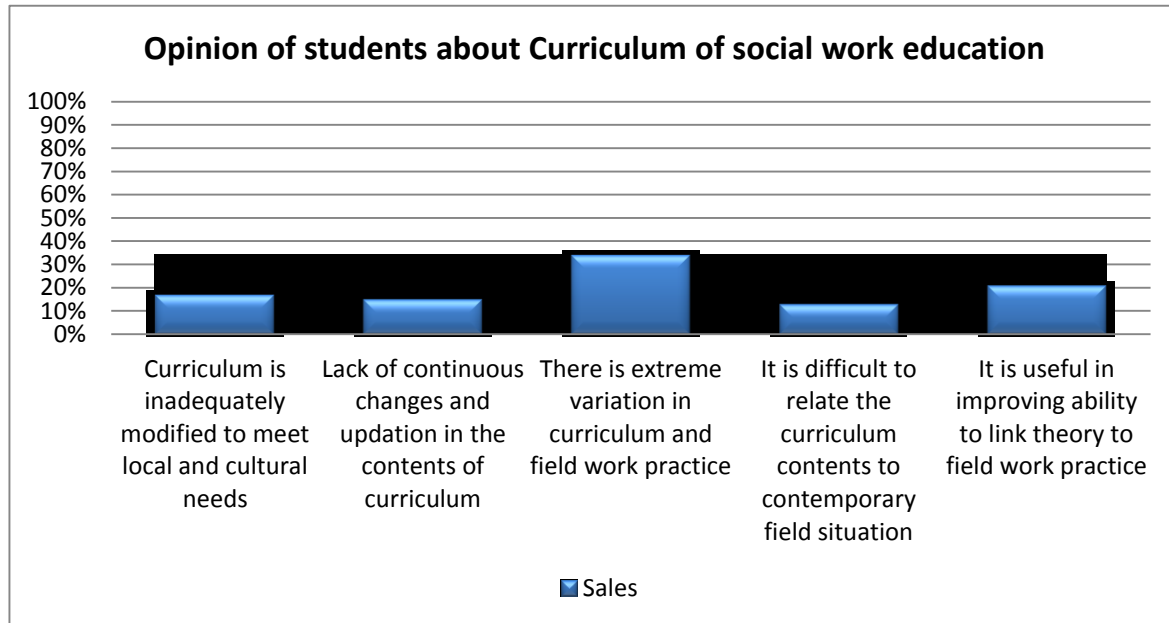
5.3 Limitations of the Study

The present study is restricted only to the selected universities located in Pune city. The reluctance on the part of few students to provide accurate information regarding curriculum and fieldwork practice is limiting factor. The results of the study are situational and cannot be generalized.

6. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Opinion of students about Curriculum of social work education

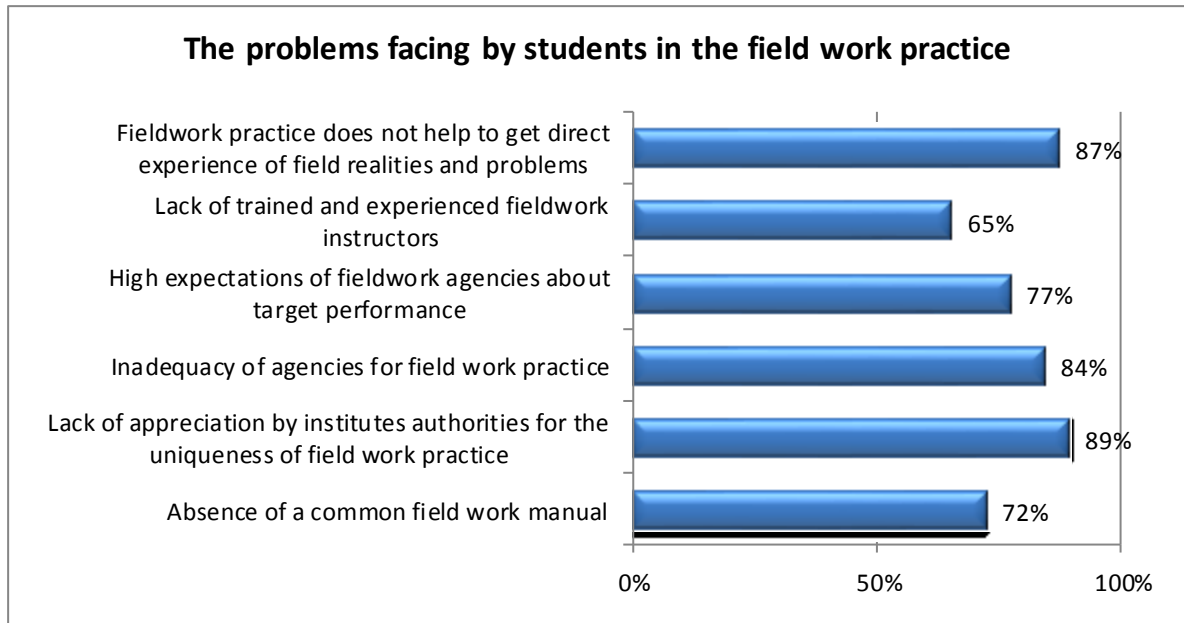
Opinions	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Curriculum is inadequately modified to meet local and cultural needs	51	17%
Lack of continuous changes and updating in the contents of curriculum	44	15%
There is extreme variation in curriculum and field work practice	102	34%
It is difficult to relate the curriculum contents to contemporary field situation	40	13%
It is useful in improving ability to link theory to field work practice	63	21%
Total	300	100%



As per the collected information, 17% of respondents have opined that, the curriculum of social work education course he's in adequately modified to meet the local and cultural needs. According to them, curriculum of social work in India is still westernized and seems to be saying the components of indigenized social work practice. In the opinion of 15% respondents, there is a lack of continuous changes and competition in curriculum contents to meet the current requirement of the society and therefore, according to them, the current curriculum of Indian social work education appears to be requiring changes and updating of its contents, as per the today's changing social, cultural situations. Majority of respondents (34%) have opined that, there is an extreme variation in two days' social work education, curriculum and the actual fieldwork practice this happen due to mushroom growth of private social work education institutes are fish not having the capacity of increasing fieldwork ability and increase the actual fieldwork experience of the students. Therefore, students are facing difficulty in relating the curriculum content is and contemporary feel situations stated by 13% respondents. In this context, 21% respondents have opined that due to poor fieldwork practice it is not useful in improving ability to link theory to fieldwork practice.

Table 2: The problems facing by students in the field work practice (multiple responses)

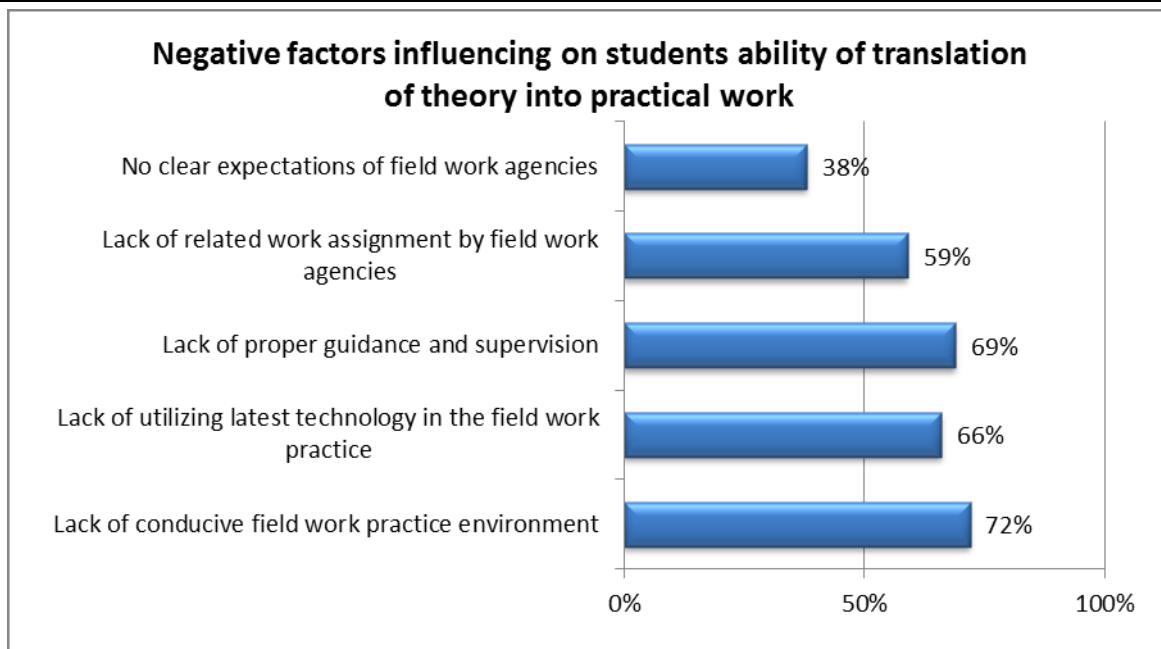
Problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Absence of a common field work manual	216	72%
Lack of appreciation by institutes authorities for the uniqueness of field work practice	268	89%
Inadequacy of agencies for field work practice	253	84%
High expectations of fieldwork agencies about target performance	232	77%
Lack of trained and experienced fieldwork instructors	197	65%
Fieldwork practice does not help to get direct experience of field realities and problems	262	87%



Fieldwork practice is very important component of social work education. Fieldwork practice is related essentially with training for social work practice. In the fieldwork practices majority of students facing various problems. 72% respondents have opined that, absence of a common field work fact is manual is major problem. In the opinion of 89% respondents, lack of appreciation by institute’s authorities for uniqueness of fieldwork practice is a drawback in fieldwork practice. 's apart from this lack of adequate fieldwork agency is also one of the major issue which creates problems in fieldwork practice of the students stated by 84%. High expectations of fieldwork practice opined by 77% respondents. Lack of trained and experienced fieldwork practice instructors is also a major issue in the fieldwork practice opined by 65% respondents. Actually, fieldwork practice plays an important role in developing students scale, knowledge and competencies and giving experience of field realities. In this context, it is 7% respondents have negatively responded. According to them, fieldwork practice is not helped to students to get direct experience of field realities, issues and problems facing by society.

Table 3: Negative factors influencing on student’s ability of translation of theory into practical work (Multiple response)

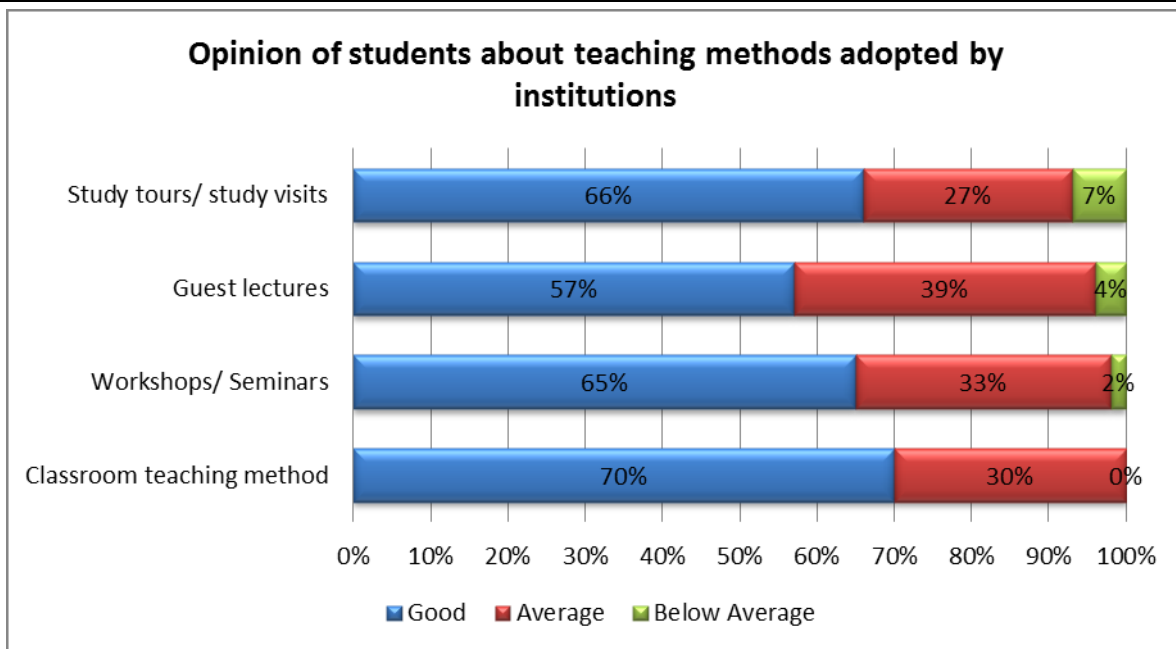
Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Lack of conducive field work practice environment	215	72%
Lack of utilizing latest technology in the field work practice	198	66%
Lack of proper guidance and supervision	207	69%
Lack of related work assignment by field work agencies	178	59%
No clear expectations of field work agencies	113	38%



The above table indicates the factors that negatively affecting on the student's ability of translation of theory into practical work. 72% respondents opined that, lack of conclusive fieldwork practice environment is the major negative influencing factor. 66% respondents have opined that lack of utilizing latest technology in the fieldwork process is a major hindrance in improving the ability of students. 69% respondents have opined that, absence of proper guidance and proper supervision by the fieldwork instructors made a negative impact on the student's ability. 59% respondents have stated that, fieldwork agency is assigned them irrelevant work or job which is not related to their course work. This also negatively impacted on the student's ability. Fieldwork supervisors or instructors are responsible to develop a student's field work ability of translating theory into fieldwork practice 38% respondents have stated that lack of clear expectations of fieldwork agencies he's also one of the major negative factors.

Table 4: Opinion of students about teaching methods adopted by institutions

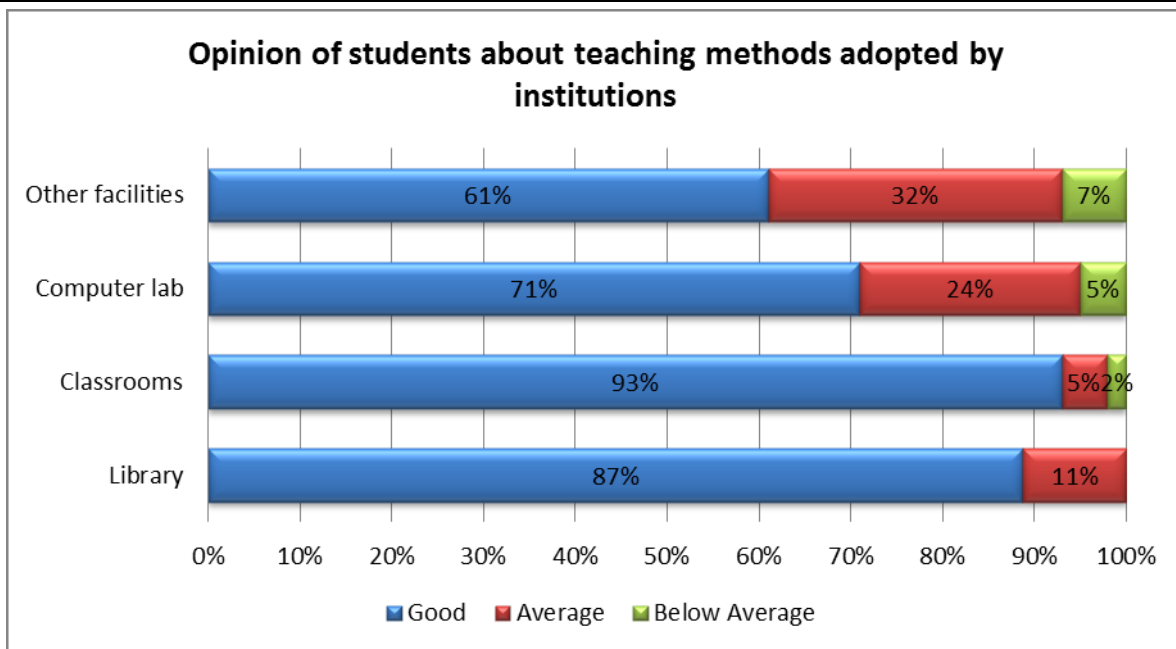
Methods	Good	Average	Below Average	Total
Classroom teaching method	209 (70%)	91 (30%)	-	300 (100%)
Workshops/ Seminars	195 (65%)	99 (33%)	05 (2%)	300 (100%)
Guest lectures	171 (57%)	118 (39%)	11 (4%)	300 (100%)
Study tours/ study visits	198 (66%)	81 (27%)	21 (7%)	300 (100%)



The teaching methods followed by the social work education institutes are wary in the selected institutes. Through this study, an attempt has been made to understand the opinions of the students about the various teaching methods followed by their social work education Institute. Majority of the respondents (70%) have opined that, traditional classroom teaching method is good and in the opinion of 30% respondents it is at average level. In the opinion of 65% respondents, workshops, seminars conducted by the Institute's very good in the opinion of 33% respondents the workshops and seminars where at average level and 2% respondents have opined that workshops and seminars are below average. These read below average 57% respondents, have opined that guest lectures where at average level, which were not useful for them to improve their ability in fieldwork practice as well as in understanding the conceptual theories in the social work education. 4% respondents negatively responded in this context. In the opinion of 66% respondents, study tours or study visits conducted by their institutes where good and help them to improve their grasping ability. 32% respondents opined that study tools and study visits where at average level and only 7% respondents have opined that study tours and study visits where below average.

Table 5: Opinion of students about the infrastructural facilities provided by social work education institutes

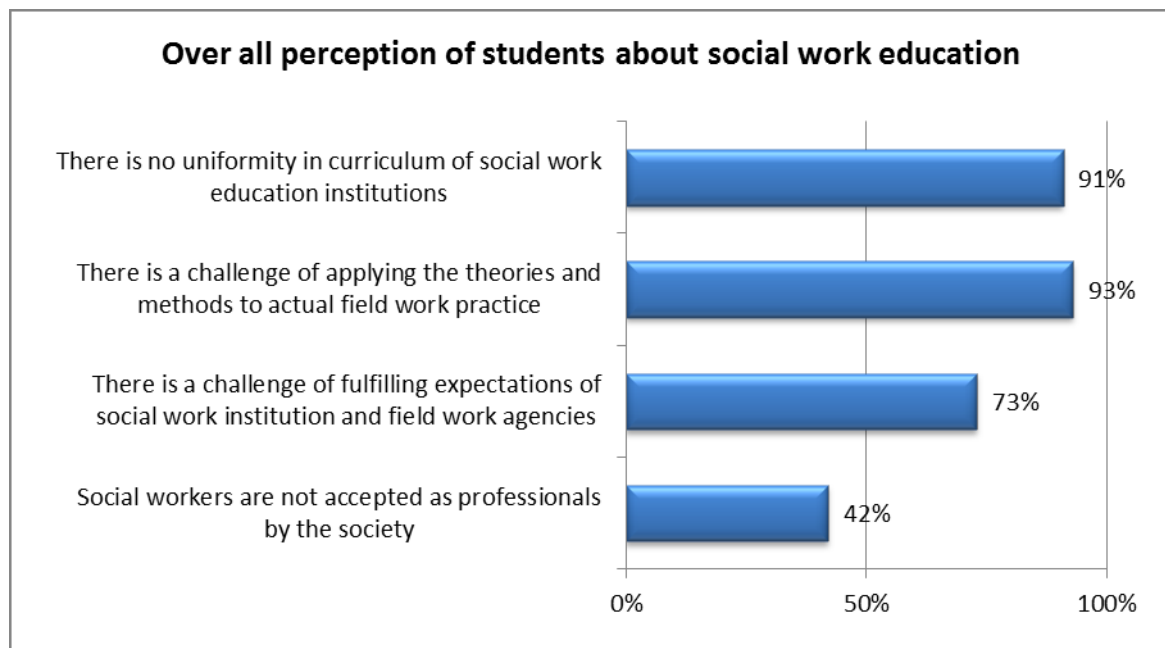
Facilities	Good	Average	Below Average	Total
Library	267(87%)	33(11%)	-	300(100%)
Classrooms	279(93%)	15(5%)	06(2%)	300(100%)
Computer lab	213(71%)	71(24%)	16(5%)	300(100%)
Other facilities	182(61%)	97(32%)	21(7%)	300(100%)



The above table depicted the opinions of students about the infrastructural facilities provided by their institutions. Library facility available in the Institute has bearing on the quality of education of any faculty. The UGC (University Grant Commission) mentioned that, collection of books is very meagre and there is a recipe of having own collection of books as books are very costly and majority of students cannot afford them. As per the collected information, 89% respondents have stated that the library facility available in their institutes is good and there is an adequate number of books available for them. 11% respondents have stated that library facility available for them he's at average level. According to these respondents, there is no sufficient member of Germans and periodicals. Physical infrastructure has also bearing on the quality of education, such as classroom, toilets, restrooms, reading room etc. as per the information provided by the respondents in the context 93% have opined that, the number of classrooms available in their institutes are good. In the opinion of 5% respondents, classrooms in their institutes are at average level and only 2% respondents have stated that, quality of classrooms is below average level. In the opinion of 71% respondent's computer lab facility available in their Institute is good, 24% have stated that it is at average level and 5% have stated that it is at below average level. The other physical facilities are reading room, restroom, drinking water, hostel; toilets etc. are stated by 1% respondents. In the opinion of 32% respondents all these facilities are at average level and according to 7% respondents these facilities are at below average level. Availability of good infrastructure facilities is likely to affect positively on the teaching and learning process and overall quality of education.

Table 6: Overall perceptions of students about social work education (Multiple responses)

Perception	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Social workers are not accepted as professionals by the society	127	42%
There is a challenge of fulfilling expectations of social work institution and field work agencies	219	73%
There is a challenge of applying the theories and methods to actual field work practice	278	93%
There is no uniformity in curriculum of social work education institutions	273	91%



To understand the overall perception of students about the social work education process is one of the important objectives of the present study. In this context, 42% students have stated that social workers are not accepted as professional is by the Society. Many students have stated that, during their fieldwork they come to know people think that, social work can be done by anyone who is willing to help more people and for that purpose there is no any requirement of special education course and training programmes. The expectations of social work education in institutions and fieldwork agencies are at variance and therefore, there is a challenge of fulfilling expectations of both of these stated by 73% respondents. In the opinion of 93% respondents, there is a challenge of applying the theory and methods to actual fieldwork practice due to the gap between theory and practice which arises because of different ethics and agenda of social work institutes and fieldwork agency. This negatively effects on the integration of theory knowledge and the fieldwork practice of the students. In the opinion of 91% respondents, lack of uniformity in curriculum of various social work education institutions creates a hindrance in the entire social work process in India.

7. Major Observations and Conclusions

1. On the basis of the collected information, it is found that, there is a wide gap between social work education, curriculum and actual fieldwork practice because today's social work education curriculum is still westernized in nature and not having the indigenized field work practice.
2. It is also found that majority of the students are facing various difficulties in relating to the curriculum contents and to contemporary field situations.
3. It is found that, there is an absence of appreciation by the institutes, authorities for the unique of fieldwork practice. Students are facing the challenges which arise due to high expectations of fieldwork agencies regarding work target and performance.
4. It is found that, fieldwork at this is not helpful for students with a view to get direct experience pertaining to field realities and problems faced by society; due to lack of trained and fieldwork instructors.
5. It is found that absence of common fieldwork practice manual in the Indian social work education institutions.
6. On the basis of the collected information from the students, majority of them are facing the problem of inadequacy of fieldwork agencies.
7. There are several factors negatively impacting the student's inability of translating of theory into practical work. Such as lack of conducive fieldwork practice environment, lack of proper guidance, lack of using latest technology etc.
8. It is found that majority of the students are satisfied with the facilities provided by their institutions. It is found that every selected social work education institutes have their own library with sufficient number of books and journals. Students are also satisfied with computer lab facility and other physical facilities like restrooms, classrooms, toilets, drinking water, hostels etc.
9. It is observed that, majority i.e. 80 of the students is satisfied with the study tours/study visits, guest lectures. According to the student's study tours or visits in rural areas, or rural camps are very useful for them for getting exposure to rural life and the problems being faced by a group of people.
10. Through the study, it is found that, overall perception of the students about social work education is good. As per their perception, a major challenge that students are facing in the fieldwork is that the significance of their contribution in the social work is not recognized by the Society. The students are facing the challenge of applying theory knowledge and methods to actual fieldwork practice

7.1 Conclusion

Social work education has experienced multiple realities due to differences in addition, culture and geographical, physical, social and ethnic variations. Because of these differences in India, social work education is still facing various challenges. These

challenges come from the fact that social work has not contributed enough to develop theory and practice pertaining to India. It is observed that the major challenge in Sweden is contextualizing curriculum to present social reality with evidence-based practice and it is not considered seriously by the government.

Through the study an attempt has been made to take an overview of the social work education functions with reference to curriculum, fieldwork, negative factors influencing the student's inability of translating theory and knowledge into practical work etc. on the basis of collected information in the context it is concluded that social work education students are facing various challenges and problems during their academic course work and fieldwork practice.

7.2 Suggestions

1. There should be initiation by the government for creating awareness about the importance of a social worker among the people through media advertisements.
2. There is a need of review by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for the social work education in India and take necessary steps to enhance the quality of social work education.
3. There should be necessary actions taken by the UGC to bring uniformity in the curriculum throughout the country.
4. Proper measures should be adopted by the institutes to regulate the quality of teaching, learning process, exam and fieldwork performance of the students.
5. Fieldwork instructors should be thorough with the course content so that they can be at a similar pace with classroom teachers.
6. Assessment tool of fieldwork should be reviewed and updated regularly.
7. Social work institutes should tie up with various government and NGOs so as to train the social work students in fieldwork practice mainly to assess them in applying theory, concept in actual fieldwork practice.

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