



Fayoum University
Faculty of Social Work
Fields of Social Work Department



Mechanisms to Functional Integration between the Social Worker and the Palliative Care Team for Patients with Cancer

A Thesis Proposal for MA Degree in Social Work

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Summary

Mechanisms for Achieving Functional Integration Between the Social Worker and the Palliative Care Team for Cancer Patients

1. Research Problem:

The importance of functional integration between the social worker and the palliative care team for cancer patients is crucial in improving the quality of life for patients and their families. This integration helps provide comprehensive care that meets psychological, social, and spiritual needs alongside medical treatment. The social worker plays a vital role in supporting patients emotionally, enhancing their ability to cope with the disease, and offering family counseling to help them manage the emotional and social challenges posed by the illness.

Moreover, the collaboration between the social worker and the medical team contributes to coordinating efforts and developing individualized care plans that meet the diverse needs of patients, reducing their sense of isolation and anxiety. This cooperation also facilitates access to community resources and services, such as financial support, legal counseling, and mental health services, thereby enhancing the quality of care and ensuring greater comfort for patients at various stages of treatment.

2. Study Objectives:

Primary Objective 1:

Assessing the reality of functional integration between the social worker and the palliative care team for cancer patients.

Sub-objectives:

- Identifying communication and coordination channels between the social worker and the palliative care team.
- Determining the central management role between the social worker and the palliative care team.
- Examining the impact of mutual relationships between the social worker and the palliative care team on cancer patients.
- Identifying functional support between the social worker and the palliative care team for cancer patients.

2:Primary Objective:

Identifying the obstacles preventing the achievement of functional integration between the social worker and the palliative care team.

Sub-objectives:

- Determining the challenges faced by the social worker when interacting with the medical team.
- Identifying obstacles to functional integration related to professional training.
- Exploring hospital-related barriers that hinder functional integration.

3. Research Questions:

Main Research Question 1:

What is the current state of functional integration between the social worker and the palliative care team for cancer patients?

Sub-questions:

- What are the communication and coordination channels between the social worker and the palliative care team?

- What is the role of central management between the social worker and the palliative care team?
- How do the mutual relationships between the social worker and the palliative care team impact cancer patients?
- What is the extent of functional support between the social worker and the palliative care team for cancer patients?

Main Research Question 2:

What are the obstacles preventing the achievement of functional integration between the social worker and the palliative care team?

Sub-questions:

- What challenges does the social worker face when dealing with the palliative care team?
- What barriers to functional integration stem from professional training?
- What hospital-related challenges hinder functional integration?

4. Key Study Concepts:

- Functional Integration
- Palliative Care
- Cancer

5. Research Methodology:

A. Type of Study:

This study follows a descriptive research design aimed at describing the research problem, identifying its characteristics, and determining key aspects. Descriptive studies are particularly suitable for this topic, as they focus on analyzing respondents' perspectives on the mechanisms

for achieving functional integration between social workers and the palliative care team for cancer patients.

B. Research Approach:

Given the study objectives, the descriptive approach was adopted to analyze the phenomenon in question. This approach systematically collects, classifies, and analyzes data. The study relied on:

- Comprehensive social survey of social workers in cancer centers in Fayoum Governorate.
- Comprehensive social survey of the medical team, including doctors and nurses practicing palliative care at the Oncology Institute in Fayoum.

C. Study Domains:

- Geographical Scope: Fayoum Oncology Institute.
- Human Scope:
 - A complete survey of social workers at the Fayoum Oncology Institute (20 social workers).
 - A complete survey of the palliative care medical team, including doctors and nurses (35 doctors and 39 nurses).
 - A sample of academics and practitioners specializing in palliative care (7 faculty members and 7 doctors).
- Time Frame: The study lasted approximately one year, from May 2024 to March 2025.

D. Research Tools:

- Data Collection Tools:

1. A scale for evaluating the palliative care team at the Oncology Institute in Fayoum.

2. A scale for social workers working in palliative care programs at the Oncology Institute in Fayoum.
3. An interview guide for experts, academic specialists, and practitioners.

- Data Analysis Tools:

The study used appropriate statistical methods for analysis via the SPSS-V27 software, including:

1. Pearson correlation coefficient
2. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient
3. Weighted frequency
4. Weighted score
5. Percentage weight
6. Weighted mean
7. Arithmetic mean
8. Standard deviation
9. Relative strength
10. Percentages
11. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)
12. T-test

6. General Findings:

A. Functional Integration Between the Social Worker and the Palliative Care Team:

- There is variation in communication and coordination levels between the social worker and the palliative care team, depending on hospital policies and the availability of clear communication mechanisms.
- Central management plays a significant role in organizing

collaboration, but there is inconsistency in role clarity between both parties.

- The relationships between the social worker and the palliative care team directly affect patient comfort. A positive relationship enhances psychological and social support, while a lack of cooperation may lead to feelings of isolation among patients.

- Functional support between the social worker and the palliative care team improves the quality of care provided, but there is a need for enhanced collaboration, particularly in decision-making regarding care plans and integrated psychological and social support.

B. Barriers to Functional Integration:

- Social workers face challenges in dealing with the palliative care team, such as a lack of awareness among some team members about the social worker's role in patient care.

- Some social workers lack adequate training in palliative care, impacting their ability to work efficiently within the medical team.

- Many hospitals do not have clear policies supporting functional integration, such as the absence of coordination meetings and formal collaboration protocols between social workers and medical teams.

7. Recommendations Based on Findings:

- Strengthening communication mechanisms between social workers and the palliative care team through regular meetings and shared communication platforms.

- Providing specialized training programs in palliative care for social workers to enhance their competence in working with cancer patients.

- Establishing clear institutional policies within hospitals to regulate functional integration between social workers and the medical team, ensuring precise role definition.



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