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## " Evaluation the Social Worker's Practicing of Case Conference in Working with Individual Cases"

As a prerequisite for getting Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Social work

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# Summary

## 1- The study problem & importance:

Individual service, as a professional method, is practiced through a theoretical knowledge framework that links the theoretical foundations of therapeutic approaches used in interventions with clients, in addition to the various skills applied by individual service specialists. They acquire these professional skills through an educational process based on the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge (Abdul Latif, 2002, p. 30).

Individual service is one of the methods of social work; it is the scientific approach that addresses individual problems characterized by permanence, a human phenomenon accompanying human society. Thousands of social workers practice it across various types of services and social institutions, in addition to working with individuals and families. It involves processes aimed at developing the personality to adapt individuals to their social environment. Individual service has taken on the responsibility of solving problems that diminish individuals' potential and hinder them from fulfilling their social roles (Sulaiman, 2015, p. 246).

The school field is considered one of the richest areas of professional social work practice due to the high population density it contains, housing approximately 25% of the community's population, which includes students, and about 2% of the community's population, which are the workers in this field (Hassan, 2019, p. 28).

The school field is one of the areas where the profession of social work is effectively practiced, providing a rich environment with individual cases of diverse needs: from the need for behavior modification, skill development, alleviating the severity of problems, investing in abilities, to acquiring habits (Shalabi, 2021, p. 643).

Social work in the school context is one of the professional fields that aims to assist schools in enhancing their social functions and strengthening their relationships with the community and its institutions, with the goal of enabling students to achieve desired social growth and the ability to cope with life's challenges and adapt to its various changes using preventive, developmental, and therapeutic approaches (Al-Sarougi, 2009, p. 112).

School social work represents one of the efforts made to assist students in addressing their problems and developing their abilities and skills

through programs and methods used by trained and qualified social workers. The school social worker performs their professional roles using principles and technical methods as part of an integrated system that aligns with the school's overall program. The school social worker engages with students, parents, and teachers in all situations related to the educational process.

School social work is considered an educational mission before it is a profession, focusing on helping the student as an individual case and as a member of society to achieve balanced and integrated personal growth. Therefore, it serves as a tool for the development of the student, the group, and the community. It also helps in socializing the student, training them for life and positive human interaction, providing them with experiences and knowledge to prepare them for a better social life, modifying their behavior, and equipping them with the ability to achieve healthy social adjustment (Mohamed, 2022, p. 114).

As one of the major and significant fields in the social work profession, school social work is a pioneering area in the early practice of social work in many countries around the world. It is also one of the most widespread fields in various regions, as schools of different types, grades, and levels exist in many governorates and areas (Abu Al-Nasr, 2017, p. 45).

The administration of school social work offices was established within the education directorates based on Ministerial Decision No. (173) of the year (1992). Its primary goal is to provide individual services and work with cases that are difficult for the school social worker to handle. The formation of school social work offices includes a selection of distinguished social workers who possess experience and skill. These offices aim to collaborate with schools to address student problems and provide the necessary resources to resolve them, as well as to plan, monitor, and implement preventive, developmental, and therapeutic programs for students (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 6).

Social workers represent an important human resource and active members in most community institutions, whether social work plays a primary or secondary role in these institutions. They are responsible for carrying out their duties.

Through their professional activities and practice in various fields, social workers are the tools through which the goals of social work are achieved by adhering to its philosophy, principles, and practical methods.

The social worker is the professional responsible for practicing the social work profession and is the means through which its objectives are realized. Therefore, they continuously need to acquire more knowledge, skills, and experiences that refine their professional identity, enabling them to manage their responsibilities more effectively and contribute actively to improving professional practice (Radwan, 2021, p. 49).

The social worker participates in decision-making processes within the school, which is the essence of their professional role. In addition to working within a supportive team at the school, the social worker's intervention is essential in directing educational inputs to enhance the school's effectiveness in achieving its goals. The social worker also plays a role in the administration council, the general assembly, and committees (Abu Al-Maati, 2000, p. 187).

However, the practicing social worker in the school environment faces multiple issues when dealing with students, which requires them to be equipped with knowledge related to human behavior and to develop and refine their existing skills to address these challenges (Mahmoud, 2017, p. 58).

This was confirmed by a study (Al-Sisi, 2005, p. 8) indicating that social workers encounter obstacles that create job-related stress, hindering them from achieving the goals of school activities. The study identified some of these obstacles that impede the social worker's role in achieving the objectives of school activities related to the educational system, family, local community, students, and the social worker.

Particularly, students in educational institutions have diverse needs and various problems, which necessitates the presence of a professionally trained social worker who can apply the skills they have learned to real-life cases. This equips them with the art of dealing with different systems to meet those needs and assist students in resolving their issues (Rashed, 2021, p. 8).

Social workers face challenges in dealing with individual cases in the school setting due to a lack of knowledge and skills related to working with individual cases, which requires the social worker in the school environment to adapt and develop their expertise accordingly.

A comprehensive and adequate understanding of various scientific knowledge, along with the acquisition and practice of professional and ethical skills and values related to working in the school field, is essential

for the continuous participation of the treatment team in intervention processes with individual cases (Bashir, 1985, p. 34).

This aligns with the study by Sarhan (1995), which aimed to identify the most important pathways for the professional development of social workers and to recognize the obstacles that hinder their engagement with those pathways. The study concluded that the desire among social workers to achieve their cognitive and skill development is weak, which affects their professional performance. Therefore, there is a need for organizations to organize programs and training courses for social workers to ensure continuous professional growth and provide the necessary knowledge and skills to improve their performance.

Thus, social workers practicing in the school setting must address several issues when dealing with individual cases within the school. This requires them to enhance their theoretical and scientific knowledge and to innovate social methods that assist cases in refining and developing their existing skills (Rayan, 2005, p. 75).

Working with individual cases necessitates educating social workers and supporting their social innovation in various work environments, which serves as a strong motivation to build a comprehensive model through accredited training programs that ensure early intervention with individual cases, in addition to coordinating efforts to achieve the best levels of social service (Zerden, 2018, p. 65).

This was also highlighted in the study by Awad (2013), which indicated that social workers have weaknesses in dealing with individual cases due to inadequate use of modern therapeutic methods and a lack of attention to listening and evaluating interviews, as well as limited participation in specialized training courses as a means of enhancing their knowledge.

The case conference emerged from the belief that the opinions of the group are more valuable than those of the individual, and that collective effort is more effective than individual effort. Based on this, some social workers discuss individual cases with their team, feeling that certain cases would benefit from being discussed with others in a planned manner.

The best way to achieve this is through a case conference, as noted in Anwar's study (2021), which aimed to identify the determinants of social workers' use of case conferences in the psychological field. The results indicated a low readiness among social workers to use case conferences in the psychological field, as well as a lack of capacity to perform the required

tasks during and after the conference, along with various obstacles that hinder their ability to utilize case conferences.

This was confirmed by the study conducted by Abdul Halim (2001), which aimed to evaluate the social security services provided to beneficiary families in one of the Egyptian villages. The study concluded that the assistance provided by social security does not meet the basic living needs of the heads of families. It also revealed the presence of difficulties and obstacles faced by social security clients in their service acquisition processes, including complaints about the number of documents required to qualify for the service and the difficulty in obtaining some of these documents.

The case conference is a procedure used in social work or social institutions in general, and specifically in the school context. It allows the team to discuss the individual cases presented to them with the goal of addressing a client's problem, achieving objectives related to dealing with the problem, and establishing an appropriate intervention plan. It also involves determining suitable methods and monitoring and following up on the work, as highlighted by Holland (2000), who emphasized the necessity of equipping social workers with the knowledge and skills required to handle individual cases through case conferences.

The case conference provides an opportunity for the team working with an individual case to exchange information, opinions, and experiences, discuss treatment plans, and modify them according to the requirements of the situation while developing alternative plans. This aligns with the findings of Kelly (2014), which confirmed that working with a team facilitates the exchange of information and experiences, discussion of treatment options, and serves as an educational and training opportunity. It helps to manage problems and alleviate their symptoms, acting as a means to improve knowledge and skills in their management.

The case conference plays an important role in implementing and managing individual cases, as it allows team members from different specializations to reduce differences in their perspectives and agree on professional intervention plans that suit the nature of the cases The Individual Case Study.

This aligns with Kelleher's (2017) study, which emphasized a conference that reduces differences of opinion among various disciplines

and enables them to reach an agreement on a professional intervention plan for the cases presented to them.

Based on the theoretical literature presented, the current study's problem is represented in "identifying the obstacles facing social workers in conducting case conferences when working with individual cases in schools."

## Second: Study Concepts:

1. Concept of Evaluation.

2. Concept of Case Conference.

3. Concept of Working with Individual Cases.

## Third: Study Objectives:

1. To determine the extent of social workers' practice of the components of case conferences when working with individual cases in schools.

2. To identify the difficulties faced by social workers in practicing the components of case conferences with individual cases in schools.

3. To reach mechanisms for activating the components of social workers' practice in case conferences when working with individual cases in schools.

## Fourth: Study Questions:

1. To what extent do social workers practice the components of case conferences when working with individual cases in schools?

2. What difficulties do social workers face in practicing case conferences with individual cases in schools?

3. What mechanisms are necessary to activate the components of social workers' practice in case conferences when working with individual cases in schools?

## Fifth: Methodological Procedures

## 1. Study Type

This study follows the evaluative research model.

## 2. Research Methodology

The term "methodology" refers to the approach or strategy a researcher employs to investigate the problem at hand. It serves as the foundational framework guiding the study.

In alignment with the current study's objectives, this research adopts an evaluative methodology, utilizing comprehensive social survey as one of the primary methods in descriptive studies. This approach is distinguished by the following characteristics:

- Focus on current conditions.

- Detailed description of the studied units.

- Accurate representation of the studied units, whether through a full census or a representative sample reflecting the characteristics of the phenomena or individuals under investigation.

Accordingly, the researcher will apply the comprehensive social survey method to:

- All social workers in preparatory and secondary schools in Fayoum City (Fayoum Center) and
- School social service offices in Fayoum Governorate.

Additionally, the researcher will use the comprehensive social survey method for cases where the case conference approach was applied in:

- Preparatory and secondary schools in Fayoum City (Fayoum Center) and

- School social service offices in Fayoum Governorate.

### A. : Research Method Used:

The term method refers to the manner or approach the researcher relies on to study the problem at hand, serving as the main foundation that determines the overall framework of the study.

In line with the type of current study, this research relies on the comprehensive social survey method as one of the main methods used in descriptive studies. It differs from other methods by focusing on:

1. Present conditions.

2. Detailed description of the studied units.

3. Accurate representation of the studied units, either through comprehensive enumeration of these units or by designing

representative samples of the characteristics of the phenomena and individuals on which the study is based.

In light of the above, the researcher will use the comprehensive social survey method for all social workers working in preparatory and secondary schools in the Center of Fayoum, Fayoum City, and in the school social service offices in the Fayoum Governorate.

The researcher also employed the comprehensive social survey method for the cases that utilized the case conference approach in the preparatory and secondary schools in the Center of Fayoum, Fayoum City, and in the school social service offices in the Fayoum Governorate.

## B. : Study Tools:

The researcher relied on various tools that align with the nature and type of the methodological strategy used in the current study to achieve its objectives, ensuring the credibility, accuracy, and adequacy of the targeted data. Thus، The current study relied on the following tools:

### . Data Collection Tools:

A. A form titled "Determining the Level of Practice of Social Workers in the Components of Case Conferences When Working with Individual Cases in Schools," applied to social workers in preparatory and secondary schools in the Center of Fayoum, Fayoum City, and school social service offices in the Fayoum Governorate.

B. A form titled "Determining the Level of Practice of Social Workers in the Components of Case Conferences When Working with Individual Cases in Schools," applied to individual cases of students in schools who underwent case conferences in preparatory and secondary schools in the Center of Fayoum, Fayoum City, and school social service offices in the Fayoum Governorate.

### . Data Analysis Tools:

Statistical treatments help highlight the research significance, clarify comparisons, and determine the correlational relationships between variables. The researcher used a set of statistical methods that are suitable for the nature of the current study, which include:

1. Frequencies and percentages.
2. Standard deviation.

3. Arithmetic mean.

4. Overall reliability coefficient (Alpha).

5. T-test.

6. One-way ANOVA.

7. Frequency columns.

**C. : Study Areas:**

1. **Spatial Area:**

   The spatial area of the study encompasses preparatory and secondary schools in the Center of Fayoum, Fayoum City, and all school social service offices in the Fayoum Governorate, which include:

   - The School Social Service Office at the Directorate of Education in the Sufi area.

   - The School Social Service Office in the West Administration.

   - The School Social Service Office in the East Administration.

   - The School Social Service Office in Atfsah Administration.

   - The School Social Service Office in Senours Administration.

2. **Human Area:**

   The human area of the study consists of a sample of (250) social workers working in preparatory and secondary schools in the Center of Fayoum, Fayoum City, and school social service offices in the governorate, using a comprehensive survey.
   Individual cases of students whose names are registered in the school social service offices, totaling () individuals, will also be included using the comprehensive social survey.

3. **Temporal Area:**

   The temporal area of the study is defined as:

   - **The First Period:** The theoretical preparation period for the study.

   - **The Second Period:** The period for conducting the field study.

## Sixth: Study Results:

The general results of the study indicated the existence of obstacles that hinder social workers from practicing case conferences when working with individual cases, which are as follows:

1. Lack of incentives for social workers to continue working with individual cases.

2. Weak role of the school in cooperating with the social worker in dealing with individual cases.

3. Difficulty for social workers to obtain sufficient information about the case conference.

4. Dominance of one of the participating professional specialties over the case conference.

5. Social workers suffering from a lack of teamwork skills during the case conference.

6. Social workers suffering from inadequate training on case conferences.

7. Increased administrative burdens placed on social workers.

8. Lack of cooperation from the family of the case with the social worker to complete the treatment plan.

9. Insufficient incentives for social workers to perform their role with interest.

10. Significant ambiguity surrounding the case conference for academics specializing in social work.

11. Weak cooperation among members of the case conference.

12. Lack of agreement among case conference members on treatment plans for the case.

13. Failure to define the role of each member of the treatment team for the case.

14. Weak interest from the treatment team in the case.

15. Shortage of experienced social workers in the case conference.

16. Poor responsiveness of cases to carry out the required tasks.

17. Lack of understanding by the family of the case regarding the problems the case is facing.

18. Low confidence of the case in the social worker's ability to provide assistance.
19. Weak responsiveness of the case to the social worker and other conference members.
20. Lack of effective authority granted to the social worker by the institution.
21. Complexity in the administrative hierarchy that hinders the practice of the case conference.
22. Absence of a suitable place for the social worker to conduct the case conference.
23. Difficulty in providing the requirements for conducting case conferences in social institutions (school social service offices).