



EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY HOSPITAL SOCIAL WORKERS: CASE STUDY AT KAMUZU CENTRAL HOSPITAL.

MPHATSO TC BANDA¹, MS. PACHARO MTONGA²

REG.NO: 19321252049

² GUIDE NAME

PROJECT REPORT

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ABSTRACT :

The study used Kamuzu central hospital as a case study to generate an in-depth framework of indicators to shed light on the practice of hospital social work in the Malawi in general, and in Kamuzu central hospital in particular. The study was justified by the fact that there are little empirical studies done on the challenges facing hospital social work practice and the issues affecting the social work profession in Malawi. Besides social work profession is not well developed across the country. In particular, the study focused on the type of challenges affecting hospital social work practice in the hospital. The sample size of the study was 12 participants. Data was collected through interviews by using interview guide. The study found that more women than men are involved in social work and other helping related work at the hospital. The social work practice at the Kamuzu central Hospital is limited in scope. This is because very few social workers are available and the types of services, they offer are limited to providing counselling services, and providing welfare service. Some of the key challenges affecting social work practice at the Kamuzu central hospital are lack of enough human and material resource, lack of recognition, lack of leadership positions. However, the study concludes that there is immense need for social work services. Based on these findings the study recommends that social work scope services should be enhanced in hospitals. Hospital management should take deliberate action to make social work practice stronger to include other services away from predominantly counselling roles.

Key words: challenges, hospital social work, hospital, Kamuzu central hospital.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN HOSPITAL SETTING: A CASE STUDY AT KAMUZU CENTRAL HOSPITAL.

1.1 Introduction

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people this is according to "IASSW (July 2014)". Social workers play a critical role in advocating for policies that reduce health disparities and improve access to health care, especially for vulnerable populations. Social workers in hospital settings, work with various patients, either outpatient. Therefore, this study is going to explore the challenges that are encountered by social workers in hospital settings.

1.2 Background of The Study

Dressler (2013) states that social workers assist other people to sort out problems in social functioning. Social workers are individuals who are concerned with the solution to or prevention of social problems. Some common vulnerable groups that social workers work with are the handicapped among many other categories of members of society. The objective of social work is to assist people to solve their serious personal problems and more importantly to empower people to deal with their problems more effectively in the future.

Pryce (D.H, 2015) stated that the evolution of social work has been context driven, this means that social work grows or takes shape as dictated by the prevailing socioeconomic conditions in a locality. A lot of factors have shaped the evolution of social work practice across the world. Among these countries that have shaped contributed to medical society is Malawi. The experiences of slavery, world wars, diseases like plagues, and poverty defined

the nature of social work. Hence as a response to given needs in this context, social work professionals including medical social workers stand up as true agents of social change to alleviate human suffering.

(F, 2016) Social work training in Malawi started with a community development certificate in 1964 at magomero college a government training institution. Later in 1978, the college introduced a certificate course in social welfare that produced social welfare assistants known as SWAs (Magomero archive files, 1980). In 2006, the first-degree program was introduced by the catholic university of Malawi. As of 2016 three universities offered degree programs. Despite this long history, social work has been fully professionalized. Social work in Malawi was essentially an urban phenomenon directed at migrants and juvenile delinquents, who posed a threat to urban living potts, (1986).

1.3. Problem statement

Hospital social work in Malawi is almost nonexistent because they're unrecognizable. In hospitals, there are not many social workers to act as intermediaries between the health fraternity and the patient as well as their families. Despite the need for more social workers to work in the hospital in handling victims of sexual assault as well as patients with fatal diseases or infections like HIV and AIDS as well cholera outbreaks. According to date 1, 483 cases and 58 deaths have been recorded with the case fatality rate at 3.9 percent (WHO, 2022) hospital social workers, in this case, are required to execute their duties in helping to reduce the number of cases that do not require medical attention.

It is an ongoing concern as this puts pressure on the few social workers that exist in different hospitals. In the case of covid 19, social workers were on the frontline of providing measures of safeguarding, supporting, and preventive services to promote the health and well-being of the individuals they assist including people of all ages (OMOROGIUA, 2020). Which affects them directly health-wise. This was a serious problem that failing to address will affect service delivery for available social workers and the urge for some quotas to pursue that program.

Hospital social workers face various challenges in their line of work that affect how they execute their duties. Since the health sector is one of the hard-hit areas social workers are at high risk of being affected health-wise. Hence social workers do not pay much attention to their clients about what is being asked of them. As stated by Charles Jesmin during an educational visit to Mulanje Vocational and rehabilitation center for the Blind cited (Luke, 2022) This study will look into these challenges faced by hospital social workers.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.4.1. Main Objective

- To explore the challenges encountered by medical social workers in social work practice at Kamuzu central hospital.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

- To identify the type of services provided by hospital social workers at Kamuzu central hospital.
- To find out the challenges hospital social workers face in their line of work at Kamuzu central hospital.
- To find out the strategies employed by hospital social workers in dealing with the challenges they face at Kamuzu central hospital.

1.5. Research Questions.

- What are the types of services offered by hospital social workers at Kamuzu central hospital?
- What are the challenges hospital social workers face?
- What are the strategies employed to deal with challenges faced by hospital social workers?

1.6. Significance of The Study

The study contributes to policymaking in determining effective measures to promote and create a better working environment for medical social workers. These laws can help social workers to defend themselves in handling their problems in case of defending their rights. They also help in practicing advocating for their client's legal rights when it comes to privacy. Medical policies help social workers to be passionate about their work and confident enough to operate freely without fear because they will know that they are shielded.

1.7. Structure of the Report

This study consists of 5 chapters that are divided as follows;

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 leads with the introduction of the study and then followed by a background of the study, then the problem statement which is followed by research objectives including the main objective and specific objectives, then research questions. The chapter has explained the significance of this study.

Chapter 2

The next chapter of the study contains a literature review in which various terms have been discussed guided by the 4 objectives and finally the chapter summary. The information was obtained from books, journals, newspapers, and internet magazines by various authors.

Chapter 3

This chapter presented the methodology that the research used to obtain data. The study used an interview guide. The sampling method, research design, data collection procedure as well as data presentation has been presented in this chapter as well.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents the findings of the study and analysis.

Chapter 5

The final chapter summarized and give a conclusion and recommendations for the study.

1.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the research topic and has tried to shade more light on what it is focusing on it has also given a background of the study, the problem statement as well as its main objective and specific objectives followed by research questions. The chapter has also given the significance of the study as well as the structure of the report.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is going to reveal what different scholars have written on the challenges that hospital social workers encounter in social work practice. Different scholars have revealed various factors to explain more about hospital social work. Social work is based on different expectations that individuals, groups, and societies have. Social work is a product of social interaction between individuals and their environments. This gives clues about how people behave toward every sex group and different individuals from various cultures to receive equal services.

Health social workers operate in a variety of environments and assume numerous roles in the design, delivery, and evaluation of care. Social workers facilitate linkages across organizational systems and professions to improve health care for both individuals and populations. This occurs in many settings, in several different ways, and at various levels of interdisciplinary collaboration. Health social workers need to be aware of these factors to most effectively provide services to Individuals and communities (browne, 2012)

2.2. Definition of terms

Social Work

Siddiqui (2015) defines social work as a profession providing help to persons in dealing with the problems arising out of their social functioning or interaction with their social environment

Hospital social work

According to Robert L barker (1995), as cited by Md. Mohiuddin (2019) hospital social work is defined as the social work practice that occurs in hospitals and other healthcare settings to good health, prevent illness, and aid physically ill patients and their families to resolve the social and psychological problems related to illness. He also stated that medical social work also sensitizes other healthcare providers about the social-psychological aspect of illness.

Hospital

Finch (2013) states that the term hospital usually means any institution both private and public maintained for the reception, care, and treatment of those in need of medical, surgical, or dental attention being an institution that is not carried on for private gain

2.3. Empirical evidence

2.3.1. Services Offered by Hospital Social Workers

Helping to reduce cases of malnutrition

According to a report by Tammy (2022) states that with the provision of various tools and training, hospital social workers help in the reduction of malnutrition among children. They do this by linking the caregivers with services that can prevent malnutrition. They also help with policies that can support programs in helping improve children's development and well-being. With the policies, it can help consistent capacity development and ensure that all children meet their potential.

Asses Physical and Psychological Needs

According to Pardasan (2021) in his study, he stated that the duties and responsibilities of a healthcare social worker vary from patient to patient because every case is unique. Social workers in healthcare must be able to adjust to a variety of needs. One of the core roles is to assess the patient's physical and psychological needs. Assessing the patient's needs is one of the duties of medical social workers. This involves discussions with the patient, doctors, nurses, and family members. This is done to get a thorough history of their health case.

Improving the Mental Health and Emotional Condition of The Patients

Dr. Syed Mahnz Hassan (2016) from the University of Punjab did research on medical social work practice. in her study, she also included the duties of hospital social workers. A social worker in this case is concerned with improving the mental and emotional condition of the patient to reduce stress, strain, or pressure. Social workers build a trustworthy relationship with their clients to ensure a safe environment for their client's well-being.

Another study conducted by Dr. Nulhaqim (2010) states that hospital social workers work in helping people to deal with their emotions. They work with people who have just been diagnosed with HIV or any other fatal diseases by assisting them in coping with the new revelation. They also help people with drug addiction emotionally and socially to overcome their addictions and to be mentally stable.

The Service of mental health social workers in crisis work is another article written by Lomax (2022). In this article, it is mentioned that hospital social workers help children, families, and adults with mental health difficulties. They help in these cases through the allocation of resources, they also remain agents of laws that support the rights of the patients. They do all this so they can support the mental well-being of the person to avoid stress and further depression.

Identifying Service Gap

Another study that explains the duties of hospital social workers was conducted by Zhuang (2020) at the Shanghai COVID-19 quarantine Centre for medical observation. This article states that social workers identify service gaps by figuring out the objectives of their work and noting the stress and challenges faced by residents and team members. When these hospital social workers were working in the quarantine Centre, they were required to play an essential role in fostering, preserving, and reinforcing collaborative partnerships. This was so to clearly describe the role and duties of their team members in executing their duties to the patients. Since 2010, medical social workers have integrated into the medical teams. The concern is to provide patients and their families with humanistic care and services.

Supporting Patients and Their Relatives

According to Lisa, Brianna, and Anne (2018) in their study of social work in health care, they also stated some roles of a hospital social worker. In this study, it is stated that social workers are said to support the patients and their relatives. This is done when they navigate complex health systems, coordinate multifaceted care plans, and provide patient psychoeducation on health and wellness. They also address behavioral health through a variety of treatment experiences. Social workers treat behavioral health through problems within traditional physical health care settings. Social workers in health care settings are also said to assist in the treatment of the whole person. This is so because social workers have multiple skills as well as they can multitask. They also have the skills in assessing as well as using evidence-based interventions.

All the roles and duties performed by social workers in the health care setting stated above by different authors from various articles clearly explain that hospital social workers work directly in contact with clients and patients. Due to this fact, hospital social workers are at high risk to be exposed to various contagious diseases and infections.

2.3.2. Challenges Faced by Hospital Social Workers

Lack of Funds

Dr. Hassan (2016) stated that hospital social workers encounter a lack of funds to support them in executing their duties to their clients. This is viewed as a challenge because hospital social workers need funds or money to handle some cases, in case they are required to follow up with a client or an outpatient. Hence lack of funding can affect hospital social workers in transportation when they need to follow up with their clients when they are discharged from the hospital.

National and International laws

Rugasa (2021), in their article, state that hospital social workers are met with a lack of policies that supports them in their line of work. These challenges limit the social workers to influence some decisions concerning their clients. This is a challenge that contrasts them to act in what they see as social work but it can contrast with the laws of the nation. Hence when going in contrary to these laws, they cannot be defended since there are no laws that support them.

Difficulties to Stay in Contact with Clients

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sarah Banks et al (2020) conducted a study on ethical challenges that social workers faced during the pandemic. In their book, they stated that it was difficult for medical social workers to stay in contact with their clients due to the lockdown. Fear of being affected by the virus also added up to lack of contact and conducting home visits. Hence due to this, they could not execute their duties in supporting the clients.

Role Conflict

Adewunmi (2020) stated that social workers in a hospital setting face the challenge of professional conflict with other medical personnel. This occurs due to arguments resulting from what is good practice and lack of recognition in the workplace. This is all because the roles played by social workers are often undermined. For example, some diseases are not pathological but require emotional help and this is where social workers come in to help. When they are executing these duties, they can be looked down on hence conflicts arise.

Limited Resources

An article written by Kumar (2019), states that hospital social workers experience the challenge of limited resources available in the hospital. In this case, when the required resources are not available, social workers are forced to refer the patients to other organizations outside the hospital to get help from there. The lack of such valuable resources tampers with the way social workers perform their duties.

Competition

Winnet (2014) states that hospital social workers in their line of work come across competencies from working colleagues, especially nurses. This is so since nurses, as well as psychologists, aim to look after the patients, as well as hospital social workers, aim at looking after and taking care of their patients and clients.

2.3.3. Strategies employed by hospital social workers in dealing with challenges they face

Identify organizational and system factors

Lombardi (2018), stated that this is done by identifying the system laws and regulations that impact the way social workers deliver their services to their clients. This can help them to prepare how to collaborate well with their environment and work colleagues. This can also help to further the recognition of social workers at the hospital since the system will support them. The system of the organization can help hospital social workers in dealing with the challenges they face by knowing how to respect others in support of the organizational system. Identifying organizational and system factors can help hospital social workers to integrate their services and skills properly in their field of operation.

Involving Social Workers in Leadership Roles

(workers, n.d) states that hospital social workers need to be involved in leadership roles for them to be in the loop of what is going on in the working environment. This can be done by encouraging social workers to pursue careers that will lead to becoming leaders in human services and clinical practice. This can also help the social workers to properly execute their duties to their clients since they are exposed to other pieces of training and have institutional insights. This can also highlight the crisis facing human services in the hospital.

Specialized Training

Hospital social workers need to be involved in specialized training to gain other skills. (S, 2013) these skills can benefit clients in getting better services at the hospital. This enhances the greater availability of social work managers and dominates the future workforce by increasing the number of social workers in the hospital setting. This also enhances the coordination of various services in the workplace.

Practicing Emotional Resilience

Sorour (2015), Medical social workers should be taught skills on emotional resilience. This is whereby they have to know how they can control their emotions and feelings. They also know how well they can handle their emotions around their clients. Practicing emotional resilience can also help medical social workers to avoid more stress among themselves.

2.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

System and ecological theory

Urbanus (2018) conducted a study at Goma provincial hospital on the challenges hospital social workers face. In their study, they applied the theory of system theory and ecological theory. The system theory explains how institutions operate to ensure that there is a coordinated order and unity at the working place to ensure that there is balance and functionality. The system theory in this case helped in explaining the institutional framework. By looking if those frameworks facilitate or hinder social work in Goma Hospital.

Ndolo (2018) While the ecological theory in this case states that individual behavior is a product of the environment or social setting. This theory came in handy to show how the environment influences the actions of the workers. This theory does not only explain the work environment but also the factors that should inform social work practice. ecological and system theories were used because they complement each other in such a way that they both explain systematic and individual behavior.

Ndolo (2018) This is so since the ecological approach behaviorist thinkers link individual behavior to a stimulus or drive in the working environment, in this case, the hospital. In this case, it is argued that individual behavior is a product of the environment and its natural entities. Hence if the environment is full of stressors and work pressure then these stressors act as triggers and reinforcement for a certain way of life. In this case, the system and ecological theory is only trying to emphasize the challenges that medical social workers face are system or institutional-driven.

2.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has simply outlined the various definitions that have been used in the study, for example, hospital and social work. The other that the chapter has outlined in the literature review as well as the theoretical framework of the system and ecological theory.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology that the research used. The research methodology is divided into several parts that include the research setting. The research setting involves the location where data was obtained. The research methodology also includes the population of people from which the researcher got the information. The sampling method is also another category of the research methodology whereby it explains how the researcher selected her population to obtain the required information. The sample size was also included in this chapter, whereby it determined the number of people sampled to provide the information. Another category is the research instrument, which includes the type of equipment that was used to obtain information and it also mentions the data collection procedure. The other category is the pilot study, whereby by it explains the feasibility of the study. Data analysis and ethical considerations have also been examined in this chapter.

3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Method

Igwenagu (2016), states that the research method is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods used in a field of study. Research methods explain how certain information was obtained from various participants.

Qualitative method

Mahajan (2018), the qualitative research method is the range of data collection and analysis measures that use purposive sampling and semi-structured as well as open-ended interviews. Qualitative research also involves collecting data that does not involve numbers or any calculations. But it focuses on getting insight and generating ideas. This study hence used qualitative methods for collecting data because it will address why and how questions. It will also enable a deeper understanding of the questions that cannot be put in numbers.

Research Design

Tesfaye (2018) states that research design is said to be the procedures used for collecting, interpreting, analyzing, and reporting the collected data of research. This is done to connect all forms of research processes and results.

According to Zukaуска Pranas (2018), Exploratory research design investigates a problem or situation that is not clearly defined. Therefore, this study used an exploratory research design since it will help the researcher to have deep information and understand his participant's views, experiences, and actions concerning the study.

3.3. RESEARCH SETTING

A research setting is the physical, and social environment where one is going to conduct their study. Henceforth, this study was conducted at Kamuzu central hospital.

3.4 STUDY POPULATION

A population is defined as a group of individuals of the same race living interdependently in an area according to Kika Tuff's article (2012). This simply means that a population is the number of people targeted to obtain the data. Henceforth the study targeted the hospital social workers found at Kamuzu central hospital, it also targeted volunteers at the hospital as well as internees who are doing social work practice.

3.5. SAMPLING METHOD

Adwok J (2015) stated that Sampling is the process of selecting a smaller group of participants to tell the researcher concrete and essential information representing the larger population. Sampling helps every researcher to know where he or she can get the necessary information. By making sure that the information represents every particular group of that particular study.

Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling is a technique for selecting a sample size nonrandomized method of selecting participants according to Showkat (2017). In non-probability sampling, there is a slim chance that an individual is going to be selected or picked. This study used nonprobability sampling, especially purposive sampling.

Purposive Sampling Method

According to Simon's article (2019), the Purposive sampling method is a type of sampling method where the researcher uses his judgment in selecting his participants. This is done when the researcher wants to gain more detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon. It does not involve making statistical inferences. Purposive sampling also involves knowing more about the opinion and experiences of the respondents. Henceforth the researcher used the purposive sampling method because the participants of the research are specific and small.

3.6. SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size is the step-in research where the researcher determines the number of participants or observers to include in the research process, Kaur (2021). This is done by choosing the people or individuals who will be representatives of the whole group. Henceforth, the study dealt with 12 individuals as its sample size.

3.7. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Birmingham (2013), Stated that a research instrument is simply a device that is used for obtaining or gathering relevant information in a project. The research used an interview guide, whereby included guiding questions. The researcher used these questions in obtaining the needed information. The interviews were very useful in this research because they helped to gain more insight into the perspective of the respondents on the topic and gain some ideas. A well-structured questionnaire for data collection was used.

Another tool that the researcher used is a recorder as well as a notebook that was used to take some notes.

3.7.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Kabir (2014), Data collection procedure is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest in a well-structured manner for one to properly give required answers to research questions. In this case, the letter that the university provided for the researcher was obtained to be presented to the hospital's director to ask for permission for the researcher to conduct the research and get the opportunity to speak to the respondents. When the director gave his consent, the researcher spoke to the respondents and explain clearly what it is that the research is all about so that there should be better communication and understanding in giving and receiving the information between both the researcher and the respondents.

3.8. PILOT STUDY

A pilot study according to the article by Lowe (2019), states that it is a small feasibility study conducted and designed to test various aspects of the methods planned for the larger confirmatory investigation. This simply means that a pilot study is only done to gain confirmation if the project is doable. The purpose is to answer specific research objective questions. A pilot study is efficient for the researcher in such a way that it may help to find the gaps that were not noticed in the previous studies. The researcher in this conducted a pilot study at Kamuzu central hospital.

3.9. DATA ANALYSIS

After the researcher had collected the data, she had to analyze the data for further interpretation, Ibrahim (2015). Data analysis is stated to be the process of describing data, testing hypotheses, and estimating measures of effect such as risk and survival probabilities as stated by Adams (2018). Data can be analyzed through tables, narratives as well as figures. This study analyzed its data by using the narrative method.

Narrative Analysis

According to Reissman (2011), States that narrative analysis is a method used to interpret research participants' stories, ideas, perspectives, opinions as well as attitudes. Narrative analysis can help in such a way that it gives the researcher an insight into the respondent's feelings and behaviors. This research used the narrative analysis method because it helped in exploring the ideas and attitudes of the respondents at the hospital. This is so in such a way that people shared the information through sharing stories.

3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Bearing in mind that every individual has their norms and values as well as beliefs, before the research, the researcher will first ask for permission from the director of the hospital to conduct the research at the hospital. The respondents will be assured that the information they will be giving is strictly for educational purposes. The respondents will also be assured of honesty and confidentiality.

3.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The section has outlined the research design and methods, research setting, study population, sampling method as well as sample size. It has also outlined the data collection instrument, pilot study, data analysis as well as ethical considerations that will be considered during the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges encountered by social workers working in a hospital setting. This section contains data on the findings of the research. That was obtained by conducting interviews with the use of an interview guide. The first part of the chapter includes demographic characteristics of the respondents and the response rate and the other part are findings from the research objectives and interview.

4.2. Response rate

In the foregoing study, 12 respondents were sampled for this study. A response of 100% was realized in this study since all respondents participated in the interviews and all questions were answered.

4.3. Demographics

This part of the chapter presents the basic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic information in this chapter will be made up of the level of education, age, and gender of respondents.

4.3.1. Gender distribution of respondents.

TABLE 4.1: Showing the gender of respondents

gender of respondent	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Females	8	66.7
Males	4	33.3
TOTAL	12	100

The table is illustrating the number of men and women who took part in the qualitative research process. The research targeted both genders because it is not only women who are interested in the social work field anymore. In this case, the researcher thought it wiser to interview both men and women about the challenges that are encountered by social workers in the hospital setting. The researcher found that more women are involved in the helping sector at Kamuzu Hospital.

4.3.2. Age Distribution of Respondents

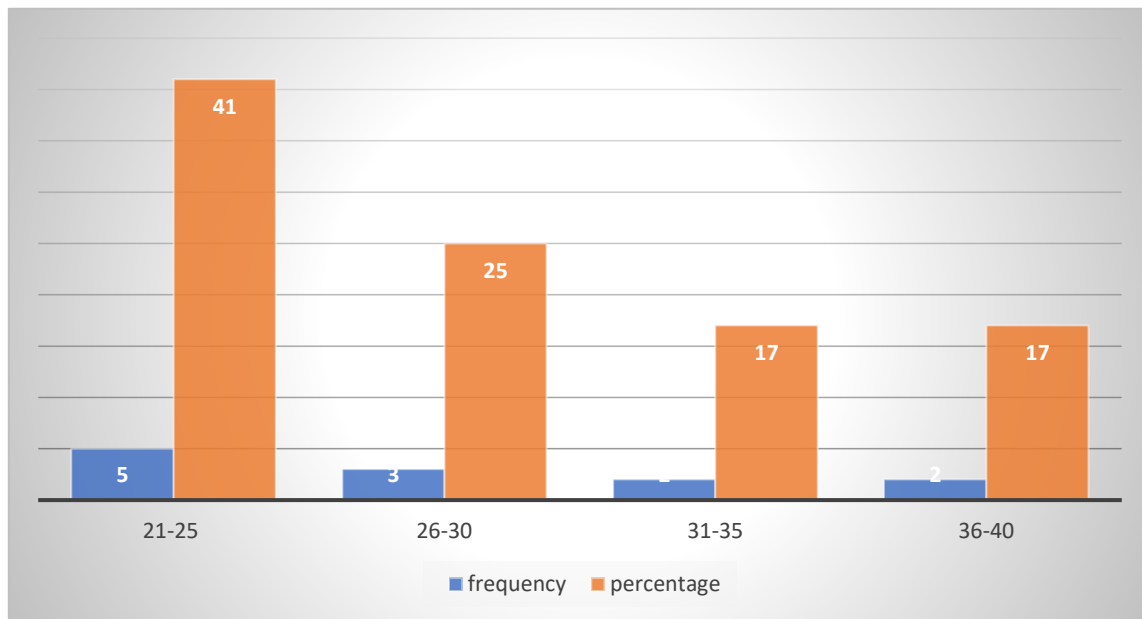


Figure 4:1. showing the age of the participants

The figure above has shown and demonstrated the age of the research participants. The study collected data from 12 respondents. The figure depicts the highest percentage rate of people ranging from 20 to 25 years of age, represented by 41%. Then 25% of the respondents were ranging from 26 to 30 years of age representing 3 people of the participants. 17% of the participants both presented 2 people ages 35 and 36 to 40 respectively. The researcher concluded that there is a higher number of young social workers at Kamuzu central hospital.

4.3.3. Education Distribution of Respondents.

The research engaged with different education levels. Table 2 below will show 6% have a degree. 3% of the respondents hold a diploma and 2% have a master's degree.

Table 4:2: showing education distribution of respondents.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MASTER'S DEGREE	3	25
FIRST DEGREE	7	58.3
DIPLOMA	2	16.7
TOTAL	12	100

4.4. Presentation of Findings

This section will explain and provide an analysis of the results from the data collected from the respondents through the use of an interview guide as a tool that was used to obtain information from the respondents. The interview guide had three objectives which targeted 12 respondents.

4.4.1. SERVICES OFFERED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN HOSPITALS

The respondents mentioned that social workers working in hospitals are those individuals that offer help in various areas that other professionals cannot. One of the social workers said that *“among those professionals for example lawyers, engineers, architects cannot be in some places that social workers can be. Even the other professionals also require the help of social workers in their fields. Just as hospitals also need social workers to be present for various duties”*. According to Siddiqui (2020), in his article which was indicated in the literature review. He stated that social work is a profession that provides help to persons in dealing with the problems arising out of their social functioning or interaction with their social environment. In this case, this definition is similar to the views and perceptions of the social workers whereby, they are both referring to social work as the profession that offers help to individuals.

Another social worker stated that *“social workers in a hospital setting are those professionals that help patients with their caregivers with their social care needs. These social needs may include supporting them to feel comfortable around others. These may include friends and family”*.

Counseling services

Majority of social workers who are working at the hospital are counselors who offer counseling services to individuals. They counsel individuals who are willing to undergo an HIV test and any other counseling service they might require. For example, a study in the literature review that was stated indicated that hospital social workers, help in the emotional well-being of people. These people may have just been diagnosed with HIV or any other fatal disease. Hence, they help them in adapting to the new condition according to Dr. Soni A. Nulhaqim (2012).

Thereby in this study as well it is clear that hospital social workers in other countries work as counselors to support those individuals with fatal diseases and help them in various means. In this case, the services offered by hospital social workers in this study are similar to other studies conducted before. The respondents said, *“We offer counseling services to the youth, adults, and any other individual that is looking for counseling services in that category”*.

Social welfare services

Some of the respondents for example at the central hospital said that social workers at the hospital offer welfare services, whereby they work in the welfare department. In this case, social workers who work in this department make sure that the well-being of the people is taken care of. They also make sure that patients are treated well without any bias or discrimination, for example, by making sure that patients are fed. The hospital social workers also make sure that the patients are provided with a place to sleep by accessing bedding as well as beds to sleep on.

The hospital social workers make sure the patient's guardians are provided a place to sleep as well as shelter. The respondents said that *“We make sure that the less privileged individuals have access to the necessities and resources, for example, we make sure that they can access comfortable bedding and a conducive environment for their well-being”*.

The respondents stated that when performing their duties or when doing the work that is required of them, the social workers are supervised during all that. The respondents said, *“We are supervised using various methods. These methods require the supervisors to follow up their write up. The supervisors also do random checks during working workers”*. Another response that was provided was that *“I preferred to be supervised through the use of following up what I write because the random checking can invade the privacy of the clients and other individuals since they might just come in the room and find the client and us sharing sensitive information which is a deprivation of their privacy”*.

4.4.2. CHALLENGES FACED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN HOSPITAL SETTINGS.

The respondents gave various responses about the challenges that they face in a hospital setting and below are those answers.

Lack of recognition

The social workers said that they are not mostly recognized like the other professions in the hospital. o respondent said that *“as social workers who are working at the hospital we are not recognized as a profession to be found working at the hospital, we are just considered as mere individuals in the hospital but doctors are the ones who are considered and recognized”*.

An article was written by n, (Adewunmi, 2020) on a study that was conducted at Ilon. Supports the statement that hospital social workers are not recognized in the hospital setting. The study states that doctors consider themselves as superiors because they are involved in decision-making at the hospital. The study also states that the doctors also try to influence how the social workers do their work and this is not taken well by the social workers at the hospital. The study continued to say that the respondents said that this affects them emotionally which is not effective in their line of work.

The respondents said that this challenge can affect the social workers in their line of work in such a way that social workers do not have much confidence working with others. This can be done by hospital departments including doctors as well as nurses. The respondents also said that this can also affect the social workers and how they interact with their clients and other individuals.

Lack of enough human resources and material resources.

The respondents expressed their views by saying, *“The challenge that we as social workers working in hospitals face is that we are lacking resources like human resources to conduct our duties properly. The lack of human resources results in overworking and being exhausted since a few social workers are working in hospitals. And lack of materials affects our working abilities because we are not able to support our clients properly”*. The respondent added to say that the lack of enough human resources is most of the time the source of their challenges and can lead to stress and exhaustion.

We are expected to attend to a lot of clients but yet there are a few of us also, and most of the time we do not manage to attend to them since every individual has their issues and we might not know how much time they might require hence it is not effective to us and our clients”. Social workers at Ilon also experience the challenge of a lack of resources. The study states that due to insufficient manpower, they are mostly exhausted because they have to attend to thousands of patients. The study continued to say that social workers in a hospital setting lack resources they do not have computers to store the data of their clients Adewunmi (2020).

Lack of leadership positions

The respondents stated that another challenge that they face is that they are not considered for leadership positions. In this case, they are not able to influence or have a say in decision making and they are mostly left out. The respondents said that to handle this problem, they work together and depend on each other to reduce pressure on themselves.

Language Problems

The most common language that is used they said is Chichewa which enables better understanding. Most of the respondents said that they have not experienced language problems during the period that the social workers have been working. One of the respondents said that *“I once experienced a problem when there was a client who spoke Chitumbuka and I could not understand them. So, I handled that by bringing in someone to act as a translator for us so we could be able to understand each other properly”*.

Role conflict

The respondents stated another challenge of role conflict. The respondents said that *“there's a role conflict between the hospital social workers and the medical practitioners on the roles we perform at the hospital towards the patients and the clients”*. Adewunmi (2020) in his study, he states that for

instance, in the United States of America, he found out that many of the challenges faced by social workers in hospital settings are professional conflicts with other medical personnel which are due to divergent approaches to patients' illnesses. Similarly identified interprofessional conflicts between doctors, nurses, and social workers as a major challenge in the US.

4.4.3. STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE IN HOSPITAL SETTINGS.

Working with the administration

The majority of them said that they work hand in hand with the administration to meet their needs and solve their problems. This helps them to promote and give good services to the clients. The respondents also said that working with the administration helps to keep the department in the loop as to what is going on in the social work department. The respondents said that this is effective because it promotes transparency and trust because the complaints made by the social workers are answered. This creates a better working environment.

The respondents answered that *"the administration supports us by promoting a supportive working environment for us social workers to make sure that we do not feel left out in the hospital or feel unseen"*. This can help in the professional development of the social work department. The other respondents said that the *administration also supports the social workers by providing necessary resources to sustain the working ability of the social workers for example transportation during fieldwork*.

Reporting cases using the right channels

Other respondents said that reporting their issues by following proper channels is also a strategy. Which creates a better working environment for everyone. The respondents said that this method used in solving the problems that social workers face promotes their working capability. In such a way that it enhances their working ability to effectively address the challenges they encounter. They also said that using these strategies, fosters positive interactions with clients, and their colleagues and it improves client outcomes and satisfaction. The respondents also stated views and suggestions that can help in solving the problems that they face by working as a team and depending on each other.

Practicing self-control and patience

Some social workers responded that controlling themselves and being patient with their clients. They said that it is important to do so since they can avoid stress among themselves, this is whereby they know how well how to handle their emotions around their clients. This can be agreed in the article of Sorour (2015), where he also states that hospital social workers should control their emotions around clients to engage properly with them.

One respondent stated that *"social workers should prioritize self-care and seeking help from colleagues when necessary. This can help to promote their well-being and prevent overworking. Improving communication between the social workers and the administration in what they are doing"*.

4.5. Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has outlined the demographics of the study. It has also analyzed the data findings of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. introduction

This chapter has outlined the conclusions and recommendations that will be explained based on the research findings and results that were obtained during the data collection. The chapter outlines the summary of the findings, the conclusion of the findings, as well as recommendations for the study, and areas of further study. The study focused on exploring the challenges that social workers face working in hospitals.

5.2. Summary of Research Findings

The main objective of the study was to explore the challenges that social workers working in hospitals encounter at Kamuzu central hospital.

Summary of the Demographic Findings.

The demographic characteristics of the study aimed at establishing the general background of the participants. The study demographic data was based on active participants and the study consisted of 12 respondents. The respondents consisted of different ages ranging from 21 to 40 with the highest level being the ages ranging from 21 to 25. It also looked at the education levels of the participants consisting of those who have master's degrees, first degree, and a diploma as well. The demographics also consisted of gender variance of the participants which indicated that there were more female participants compared to male participants.

The study also found out the type of services that are offered by social workers in the hospital setting at Kamuzu central hospital. The study found that the services that social workers who work in hospitals offer are counselling services. They offer these services to various individuals who are looking for counselling services. For example, who wants HIV testing advice and any other advice that may be in line with the services that they are offering? Another type of service that they offer consists of welfare services that ensure that individuals are looked after and are being offered better services to sustain their well-being.

On the other hand, the study also wanted to find out the challenges that social workers working in hospitals face. The study found that these social workers encounter a lack of enough human resources since social workers are few in number that are working in hospitals. They also experience a lack of recognition in the hospital department which can affect their working ability. These challenges can lead to overworking and can affect them personally and professionally as well.

The study wanted to find out the strategies that are used by social workers in dealing with the challenges that they face. The study found that the strategies that are used are reporting to the necessary individuals. The respondents also work together as teamwork to give good services. The study also found that the social workers work hand in hand with the administration in persecuting their duties. With also the support of the administration they can obtain the resources needed in their line work.

5.3. Conclusion of the study

The study was looking at the challenges encountered by hospital social workers. It had 12 respondents of various educational backgrounds, age differences, and gender differences. The study has concluded that there are more females in the social work field at Kamuzu central hospital based on the demographics. It has also concluded that social workers in hospitals are few in number compared to other fields. The study has also found out that social workers in hospital settings experience various challenges but they are not major problems that cannot be solved or taken care of. The study was important in such a way that it gives insights that social workers in this field experience challenges which also can apply in various fields that social workers are involved in.

5.4. Recommendations

- There is a need to introduce social work curriculums in tertiary colleges to train professional hospital, social workers.
- NGOs should advocate for social workers to be recognized in the medical field by the government as well as every other field.
- Social work scope services should be enhanced in hospitals.
- Hospital management should take deliberate action to make social work practice stronger to include other services away from predominantly counselling roles.

5.5. Areas for Further Study

Any researcher can explore more on the challenges that social workers face when working in a hospital setting. This will generate more knowledge and a deep understanding of the effectiveness of solving hospital social work challenges.

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