

## Why Do We Need Social Workers in Jordanian Schools: Differences between Social Work and Counselling

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**Abstract:** The interviews were transcribed and later entered into a qualitative software program (Nvivo) for this was a qualitative exploratory study that intended to explore the differences between school social worker and the school counselor. It aims to determine the perceptions of school social workers. This study also intends to determine the role of social workers in schools and the services they could provide for the students. A semi-structured interview was developed by the researchers. Subjects were interviewed using a semi-structured process.

The basic questions for this study were: Is there need for school social workers? What are the roles of school social workers? What are the differences between the counselor and the school social worker? What are the common problems in schools that require a school social worker? Overall findings from the three groups indicated that school social workers have multiple roles, including intervention and integrating students with their classmates in the school, especially those who come from different groups like refugees. Also, their roles based on the participants' perspective involve linking the school with the resources in the community. Moreover, the role involves cooperation with all members in the school to solve students' problems and improve their academic achievement.

Also, participants indicated that there could be differences between the school social workers and counselors based on their roles since the social worker role is deeper and more comprehensive for the students' issues than the counselor. Some indicated there is no difference between the two roles while some did not recognize that a member in the school was called the school social worker.

In summary, the problems that require a school social worker are many but the same in most schools. The basic problems are dropouts, drug use and smoking, low academic achievement, and behavioral and emotional problems. The challenges and barriers that limit the existence of school social workers in the Jordanian community are many. All three groups agreed that policymakers did not pay attention to the importance of school social workers because of the economic factor. Most participants agreed that our culture has been changed and developed, and that parents nowadays are more aware of their children's school problems and they need someone professional to help deal with these problems.

**Key words:** School Social Work. Schools. Social Worker. Counselling.

### Introduction

Social work has played a significant role in addressing social problems, such as family problems, crime, unemployment, poverty, and refugees. Schools, as an accessible environment for social workers, are highly likely to inform social work of community needs (Yamano, 2011).

Social work links clients with services, resources, and opportunities which might provide them with the help they need. Social workers who have limited understanding of the impact of school discipline on their child clients may miss key opportunities for intervention and could severely limit the effectiveness of their practice (Cameron, 2006). School social workers need to participate in research which emphasizes their specialized knowledge, crucial skills, and ability to intervene in various ways and at many levels within a school district to help students succeed in school and graduate (Alvarez et al., 2013).

Whitley (2010) compares the social work and addiction counseling cultures to enable social work clinical supervisors to recognize and bridge the divide between these two professions. Social work supervisors who understand the beginnings of the social work and addiction counselor professions will be more likely to appreciate their own as well as the addiction counselors' perspectives, knowledge, and skills (Whitley, 2010). The social work profession in the United States was initiated by volunteers in charity organization societies who gained expertise in working with poor urban immigrant populations in the late 19th century. In contrast to social work, the addiction counseling profession has both self-help and professional origins. As identified later, the self-help alcohol, and later other drug recovery movements in the 19th and 20th centuries formed the foundation for addiction counseling (Whitley, 2010).

In Russia, the social work profession was established in 1991, the year that also marked the collapse of the Communist system (Currie, Kuzmina, & Nadyuk, 2012). In 2011, counseling officially emerged as a social work branch called social psychological help. In addition, government policies have called for the creation of training programs for substance abuse counseling, a specialty that may prove to be one of the fastest growing

areas in the next 5-10 years (Currie et al., 2012). Under consideration by the Ministry of Education and Science is the addition of actual practice in the skills of the profession, what American counseling programs term practicum and internship experiences. These work experiences in real life settings would supplement the purely theoretical curriculum traditionally offered in the past. Counselors trained through all the aforementioned venues might work in orphanages, schools, hospitals, substance abuse treatment centers, and churches, as well as for various types of charitable funds formed by businesses and other organizations, in order to help specific populations (Currie et al., 2012).

According to Al Gharaibeh (2012), social work aims to develop communities in order to solve the problems that are beyond the ability of individuals who suffer. Professionals assist people to choose the most appropriate means of effective participation in society by looking for the forces and the various factors that hinder growth and social progress, such as deprivation, unemployment, disease, and poor living conditions (Al Gharaibeh, 2012).

Of note, school social workers are uniquely qualified to address the needs of students, families, schools, and communities. They intervene with many target groups, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, the school system, and the community (Illinois State Board of Education, 2007).

### **School Social Workers and School Counselors**

Building the capacity of schools through the delivery of professional development activities to school staff is an important aspect of school social work to support the academic and behavioral success of students (Kelly, et al., 2010). Moreover, school social workers' unique viewpoint in schools serving as key intermediaries between staff, students, administrators, and parents positioning them to take a lead role in improving a school's response to bullying involvement among students (Williford, 2015). It follows then that school social workers may correspondingly play an important role in staff training efforts (Kelly et al., 2010).

School counselors were careful to document that the improvement in student outcomes had coincided with involvement in these interventions but acknowledged that changes happen for many reasons, and this program was just one component of multiple efforts to improve student achievement at the school (Dimmitt, 2010). Oftentimes, social workers and counselors are interchangeable. However, they differ in addressing the issues related to the students. Social workers have multiple roles such as intervention, whereas counselors focus more on academic and school guidance.

Slaten and Baskin (2014) stated that school counselors need to have the ability to develop and maintain supportive relationships with student/clients. In addition, school counselors need to have the ability to foster and sustain healthy relationships with families in a school environment. They recommended providing coursework on counseling youth and proposed that counseling psychology students need the opportunity to have field experiences in school settings. School counselors need a working knowledge or rationale of the impact that parental divorce or separation can have on the lives of youth and their family system. Based on the established healing setting, confiding relationship, and working knowledge or rationale related to divorce/separation, the school counselor will apply this information to developing an intervention that most accurately meets the needs of their student/clients (Slaten & Baskin, 2014).

In addition, White and Kelly (2010) assured that school counselors should draw intervention effectiveness; implementing empirically supported interventions will increase not only the probability of support from fellow teachers and school administrators, but also the probability of attaining more positive and enduring educational outcomes. However, the school does bear some responsibility in promoting parent involvement in their children's education. Programs and interventions designed to promote increased parent participation, higher expectations, and more positive parent attitudes toward school and learning are well within the areas addressed by school counselors' training and expertise (White & Kelly, 2010).

Stone-Johnson (2015) found that counselors perceived that teachers' lack of knowledge about the role of counselors was used to shift work onto counselors. Because the territory of what counselors did was nebulous, teachers might recognize that this work was not clearly the counselor's role, but also perceive that it did not fall distinctly outside of the bounds of counselors' work. The loss of the school social worker, in conjunction with not knowing exactly what a counselor's role is in relation to social supports, resulted in counselors taking on additional work, in particular social work and student support. This dynamic created a form of marginalization of counselors as they were both left with undesirable work and kept from fully doing their actual work or engaging in shared policy enactment (Stone-Johnson, 2015).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education has played a major role in the attempt to solve social problems in our society. Social workers have made a significant contribution to developing education systems and student behavior. Educational legislations are one of the most important elements of the educational system in the Hashemite Kingdom. The Ministry of Education designs policies and takes appropriate procedures to achieve their goals since they are consistent with its goals. It has spared no efforts to reduce the percentage of illiteracy in the last few years and

still aims to reduce this percentage to reach 50% by 2015 (Managing Directorate of General Education and Students' Affairs Division of Non-Formal Education, 2007).

The educational system consists of a two-year cycle of pre-school education, followed by ten years of compulsory basic education and two years of secondary academic or vocational education. After this, students must pass a standardized nationwide examination (General Certificate of Secondary Education Exam, Tawjihi) to continue to higher education. In the basic education level, standardized textbooks are issued and distributed by the Ministry of Education (Pingel & Kröhnert-Othman, 2009).

Most needy families are uneducated; therefore, they do not know how they can get access to stakeholders at the state or institution level.

Schools in Jordan are interested in students' issues and care about their problems. Therefore, they have counselors who help students to make decisions related to their personal and academic life, and they meet with students individually or in groups. However, schools in Jordan still lack involvement of social workers. Due to the lack of social workers in schools, many issues in schools have not been resolved.

Traditional approaches to student interventions are being challenged by changes in educational guidelines. School social workers are now asked to work as consultants for students, parents, and teachers, providing support for students with family issues, and serving as liaisons between the school and family and linking students and families with community services (Boase, Yamona, & Massat, 2013). Jordanian Schools hire counselors not social workers. Culture and policies not help to exist social workers in schools. Also, school social worker is not familiar for the community.

### Key Terms

*Social Worker:* Social workers are professionals who possess a degree in social work from a school or program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (NASW, 2013).

*School Social Worker:* School social workers are a primary resource to teachers, parents, and students when students' behavior in the school setting becomes problematic (Mann, 2008).

*Counselling:* Counselling is a learning-oriented process which usually occurs in an interactive relationship with the aim of helping a person learn more about the self and to use such understanding to enable the person to become an effective member of society (Guez & Allen, 2011). Counselling is a relationship between a concerned person and a person with a need. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although sometimes it may involve more than two people. It is designed to help people to understand and clarify their views and learn how to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through the resolution of emotional or interpersonal problems. It can be seen from these definitions that counselling can have different meanings (Guez & Allen, 2011).

### Research Questions

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of school social workers. This study also intends to determine the role of social workers in schools and the services they could provide for the students. The research questions shaping this study are:

- RQ1- What are the roles of school social workers?
- RQ2- What is the difference between school counselors and school social workers?
- RQ3- What are the students' challenges that require school social workers?

### Population and Sampling

#### Population

The research population for this study is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the capital of Jordan – Amman and Al-Salt.

#### Sample

The purposive sample for this study included three groups. These included teachers (n = 13) 5 males and 8 females, aged (21 – 47), parents (n = 10) all females, aged (27 – 60), and social workers (n = 8) 3 males and 5 females, aged (22 – 37), totaling 31 participants. They were informed about the research study at the beginning of the discussion by introducing the purpose of the study. The purpose of this exact sample is to be suitable with the research questions, since the target for this study is to know the need of school social workers from the perspective of social workers, teachers, and parents.

#### Sampling Approach

The participants in the study reside in the cities of Amman and Al-Salt. This is a purposive sample. Sometimes the researcher may select the sample on the basis of his/her own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of the research aims based on the purpose of the study (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). This researcher used knowledge of the community to pick the sample of teachers, parents, and professional social

workers. These three groups can identify from their experiences in their job the problems in schools and the need of a school social worker in that community.

### **Data Collection**

A semi-structured interview was developed by the researcher. Subjects were interviewed using a semi-structured process. The interview questions were developed using the research questions as a framework, and they were open-ended. Responses for this study were recorded using field notes and an audio recording device, which were transcribed verbatim. The participants used their native language, Arabic, during the discussion. Then the recordings from the focus group discussions were translated to English. The researcher assistant organized the focus groups in this study because of the distance between the two countries. Participants did not get cash compensation but dinner and transportation were provided.

Qualitative validity was the guide for accuracy. The discussions were structured with prepared questions presented to each group in an identical way using a predetermined order. Were interviews recorded with digital voice recorders. As suggested by Hancock et al., interviews were recorded. Digital voice recorders are excellent for this and easier to use and less intrusive than tape recorders. Interviews may also be video-taped if details such as non-verbal signals are needed for the analysis (Hancock et al., 2009).

### **Procedure**

Focus group discussions were conducted via Skype using a recorder. In order to frame the interview in positive terms and consistent with the orientation toward strengths-based social work, the researcher began the discussion by asking participants about their opinion of school social workers and their roles. To ensure accuracy of the results, the researcher framed the question in a consistent manner with an emphasis on “what is the role of the social worker in schools.” Responses were recorded using a digital audio-recording device. Focus groups are often used to assess whether a new social program or social service being considered is really needed in a community. They allow the researchers to question several individuals systematically and simultaneously (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). While focus group research differs from other forms of qualitative research, it further illustrates the possibilities for doing social research face to face with those we wish to understand (Rubin & Babbie, 2008).

Coding the data was used to come up with the results of the study. The first step in processing qualitative data involves coding. Coding requires a more refined system than a set of manila folders. The concept is the organizing principle for qualitative coding (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). The researcher read and coded responses one question at a time across all participant interviews. Figure 4 is a diagram of some of the nodes or critical words from the interviews that were found in the open-coding process.

The results presented in this chapter are based on the data collected from three Jordanian groups: social workers, parents, and teachers. Focus groups were conducted with 31 participants to gather their perspectives on the need for school social workers. The participants spoke in their native language which is Arabic, then the researcher translated their interviews into English.

### **Data Collection**

To answer the questions about the role of school social workers, the differences between school social workers and counselors, the common problems that require school social workers, and the challenges that limit and banned the existence of school social workers in the Jordanian community, a qualitative study was designed. The study design was case study to identify phenomena through the perspectives of the participants, actors in a situation. It helped that the social workers, parents, and teachers have a deep understanding of the reasons for not having school social workers in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Three focus group interviews were conducted for this study. Since the sample population was in Jordan and the researcher in the United States, Skype was used for those discussions with the aid of a research assistant in Jordan. The research assistant received training for these group discussions. Transcriptions of the audio-taped recordings were done to find the themes. The researcher used Nvivo software for data analysis.

### **Demographics**

The study consisted of three groups. The first group was parents consisting of 11 females age 27-60, all housewives including two retired from nursing and teaching. The second group was teachers age 21-47 consisting of five males and eight females. The third group was social workers who were currently working in different organizations. This group was age 22-27 and consisted of five females and three males. The native language of all three groups is Arabic. Most of them live in Amman, the capital of Jordan, and the others live in Al-salt city.

## **Discussions**

There were three main themes that emerged: the roles of school social workers, common problems that required school social workers, the differences and similarities between school social workers and school counselors, there were subthemes under each theme.

### **The Differences between School Social Workers and School Counselors from the Perspective of Social Worker**

#### **Main Theme**

#### **The Differences between School Social Workers and School Counselors**

The First main theme of this study was the differences between school social workers and counselors. Subthemes under this theme include the similarities and differences between the two groups in their roles. The counselor focuses on students' thinking; however the social worker focuses on referral of cases.

#### **Subtheme: Similarity in the Roles**

Participants mentioned that having both counselors and social workers in the school is important. Social workers and counselors are supposed to work together. They complete each other to benefit the students.

I don't agree that the social worker eliminates the counselor role in school, both are perfecting each other. Everyone is important in the school. The counselor also has a degree and training to work in the school and we can't deny their roles and importance.

#### **Subtheme: The Difference in the Roles**

Participants speculated how school social workers may deal with a crisis which suddenly happened, for example the effect of a recent curriculum change, by using various resources and methods. However, counselors have a defined and limited program, as well as do all teachers, that they could not exceed. Also, school social workers are supposed to plan programs for all members in schools, while counselors deal with only student problems. Furthermore, social workers learn how to intervene, which means not just helping students to solve their problems but also improving students' skills.

I think there is a difference between social worker and counselor, the social worker has a deeper role. In the same time I believe both important in school. Social worker could have tasks that the counselor did not do it.

Another participant mentioned that the basic difference between social worker and counselor is function of the intervention:

The counselor has degree in counselling not intervention like the social worker. The social worker study to learn how to intervene. And the intervention means that I do not just working on solving problem but also help to develop the student' skills.

#### **Subtheme: The Counselor Focuses on Students' Thinking**

Social worker participants pointed out that the counselors focus more on the students' thinking when they deal with their problems, and counselor do not pay attention to the students' social issues which could affect their school problems. One social worker said: "The counselor work on psychological biological for person, it focus on what this person think what are you doing not what is your problem or what are your relationships."

#### **Subtheme: Social Worker Referrals**

One of the roles which makes the difference between social workers and counselors, as one social worker mentioned, is that counselors just work with the students in the school, but social workers refer the students to other organizations. In some cases, some refer students to drug cure organization in the local community.

When I was student I was scared to go to the counselor of my school. Because in our mind that no one goes to the counselor unless there is a problem. The social worker here to continue the counselor job. For example social worker has to referral the student if need.

### **The Differences between School Social Workers and School Counselors from the Perspective of Teachers**

#### **Main Theme**

#### **The Differences between School Social Workers and School Counselors**

The other main theme for this study is the differences between school social workers and school counselors. The subthemes under this theme are differences in the role, social worker more superior than counselor, social worker role more comprehensive, and social worker works outside and inside the community of school.

#### **Subtheme: Differences in the Roles**

Participants pointed out that the social worker and counselor are different in their roles in the schools. The social worker role goes further than the counselor because the social worker role includes all kinds of issues related to the student but the counselor focuses more on academic issues.

The differences on the powers and roles, the social worker roles are wider. But counselor focus on the educational system. The counselors do not communicate with parents but social workers do.

Teachers pointed out those counselor roles are limited, and they cannot have intervention in all cases because they are not allowed to from the administration. The social worker has eligibility to intervene, and this intervention would be in all methods, individual and group. Participants also presented that for the most of the counselors, if the teachers do not give them issues to deal with, they will not do work. They do not do more than what teachers or administration asks them to do.

A lot of problems we ask the counselor to intervene she excuse that she can't it's not her eligible or it is not from my specialize so I imagine the social worker role is wider and superior than counselor and he/she can face any kind of student' problems.

***Subtheme: Social Worker More Superior Than Counselor***

Teachers pointed out that the counselor is interested in the problem just as long as they have the data. Otherwise, the social worker looks at the problem deeply to find out the roots of reasons and the best solutions.

Specialist word means specializing in his/her work, social worker in this meaning perform work clearly and accurately. But the counselor may go over the problem and give solutions simply. Social worker search the problem from all aspects.

***Subtheme: Social Worker Role More Comprehensive***

Teachers pointed out that the counselor usually works on simple issues that do not exceed the school, such as awareness sessions and academic counseling, but they do not deal with serious issues as the social worker does.

Social worker has formal role, social worker could specialized in studying phenomena that counselor cannot because counselor focus on the academic area just. Also social worker work with the issue immediately but do not follow up. Social worker roles are more comprehensive.

***Subtheme: Social Worker Works Outside and Inside the Community of School***

Teachers mentioned that counselors are afraid to deal with many issues because they do not have the eligibility to work with organizations in the community. Social workers can work inside the school and also contact the organizations in the local community.

Counselor work inside the school just, but social worker expanded to work inside school and with the local community outside school. Social worker has relationships with the organizations in the community, social worker is superior.

**The Differences between School Social Workers and School Counselors from the Perspective of Parents**

**Main Theme: The Differences between School Social Workers and School Counselors**

The third main theme for parents group is the differences between school social workers and school counselors. Parents in this study have different opinions about the difference between school social workers and counselors. Some see they have the same roles, while others believe their roles are totally different, since social worker roles are more effective and comprehensive. Subtheme under this theme are social worker roles are wider and more comprehensive, counselor role is not effective, counselor roles are more theoretical, but some mentioned that social workers and counselors are the same.

***Subtheme: Social Worker Role Is Wider and More Comprehensive***

Parents imagine that social worker work could be farther than a counselor. They believe that the counselor's job is limited to just inside the school but the social worker role is wider since social workers can work with the students and their families.

I imagine the counselor supposed to work with the students who have bad behavior and study problems, we do not have the social worker you talk about, and I did not know there is school social worker before this discussion.

***Subtheme: Counselor Role Is Not Effective***

Parents noted that the counselor' role is not effective in the school from their experience of their children. Parents complained that they do not feel the school pays any attention to some problems. Instead of

listening to the students and trying to help them, schools follow the way of punishment after the problem is happening.

One day my daughter in third grade came home early right after lunch break, when I asked her why you here early, she answered all the school go home early today, but I knew there is something wrong. Next day I went to the school and I talked to the counselor, she was glad that I am worry about my daughter they gave my daughter warner as punishment, but I don't feel the counselor has effective role in the school, she does not sit with the student and have discussion with them or give them awareness sessions, they just punish them without discuss the sequences of this behavior.

**Subtheme: The Social Worker and Counselor are the Same**

Some parents think that the social worker and school counselor are the same. They were surprised that there is a member in school named social worker. Parents think that both social worker and school counselor are different just in the name. At the end of this discussion, they were appreciative and hopeful of the schools in their community having a school social worker. One parent said, "All I know is that social worker is the same of the counselor who work in schools to solve students' problems. I think social worker the same of counselor just different on the names".

**Subtheme: Counselor Roles Are More Theoretical**

Parents referenced that social workers deal with the history of the student's issue, which helps them to know the basic reasons for a problem and find the best solutions. Otherwise, the counselor does not do this because parents believe the counselor does not follow up with the student and that their role is more theoretical than functional.

Social worker need to determine what the students' problems from the students themselves, if the student has the same problem since a long time ago and no one solve it, the behavior did not change, then someone has to work on this. I did not feel that counselor could make any changes, counselor roles is more theoretical. There is no follow up with the student.

**The Role of School Social Workers**

**Social Worker Themes**

**Main Theme: The Roles of School Social Workers**

The main theme is the role of social workers at schools. Under the main theme there are subthemes which include intervention and empowerment, improved academic achievement and social and emotional, integrating the student into the school; safety; networking between school, family and the social organizations in the community; and training and guiding the teachers and parents.

**Subtheme: Intervention**

Participants reported the main role for school social workers was intervention, individually or in groups. Some participants believed that school social workers need to intervene to solve problems in typical models. As social workers, they seek to improve the quality of human life by the intervention. One social worker reported that he sees similarity in the role of social work in all its different fields.

The role is social worker is similar in all the fields of social work. It is about how I make intervention with individuals, groups, and communities to develop the community and moreover recognize the phenomena and find solutions for this problem. We need to develop the community at all by developing the members of this community.

**Subtheme: Improved Academic Achievement and Social and Emotional Perspective**

The social worker participants pointed out that the greatest role of the school social worker is improving the academic achievement for the students by intervention and collaborating with the teachers and parents. School social workers interact deeply with the students on social and emotional issues which could affect the students' academic achievement. Relatedly, a member of the focus group noted the following:

Social worker supposed to be have knowledge about everything could help to improve the student to get rid of his/her problems with her/his teachers, families, and partners which lead to improve the academic achievement and this will reflect positively on the relationships between the students and their friends, teachers even families. A lot of our children hate schools because of the uncomfortable environment in schools.

**Teachers Themes**

**Main Theme: The Roles of School Social Workers**

The teachers group in this study pointed out that school social workers have multiple roles in the school. Those roles include linking the school and local community, linking the teachers with students, social worker is the source of confidence, social worker working with teachers and parents, and guidance counsellor.

The school social worker is supposed to work with all these members in school to alleviate students' problems which help to offer a safe environment for students. The result of those roles is that students will have a great academic achievement which will reflect all the community since the students represent a huge slice of society.

#### **Subtheme: Linking the School and Local Community**

Some participants noted that the school social worker has an important role in the school and that no one else could do it. This role consists of connecting the school with other organizations in the community when it is needed. Since the social worker has knowledge about the organizations in the community and about their locations and services, he will be the best person to connect the school with suitable organizations, in some cases such as drug use. One teacher said, "The role of social worker is linking the school on the local community and its organizations which could serve the school and the students."

#### **Parent Themes**

##### **Main Theme: The Roles of School Social Workers**

The main theme from the research of the parents' perspective is the role of school social workers. Subtheme under this theme includes intervention, psychological adjustment, focusing on the student's problem, social worker contacting the student's parents in need, social worker links the teacher with the community, social worker is supposed to organize more activities for the students such as field trips, and cooperate with all members in schools besides the home visit.

##### **Subtheme: Intervention**

Participants pointed out that the social worker in school has a role in the intervention in some student issues like confusion, hyperactivity in the class, family issues, and every problem which could affect the academic life.

The role of social worker is solving students' problem, such as student dropout or if there is a student late of school, in this case social worker could make case study and have individual intervention, call this student and have conversation to find out the reason for this then social worker could contact the parents to deal with this.

Early intervention to prevent childhood bullying may reduce other adverse outcomes later in life (Kim et al., 2011).

##### **Subtheme: Psychological Adjustment**

Parent participants indicated that the school social worker has different roles based on the different issues related to the students. Those issues and problems could affect their thinking and concentrating on the teacher's homework. The social worker is supposed to deal with all these problems.

Social worker has multiple roles since the problems are different in the school. The noticeable problem that student come to the school under stress and uncomfortable because of the problem in their home. According to the academic achievement issue, social worker need to do psychological adjustment for the student, because when the student is nervous or worry this will affect his/her achievement negatively.

##### **Subtheme: Social Workers Contact the Student's Parents in Need**

Parents suggested that the school social worker is responsible to call and invite the parents for meetings. Many cases need family intervention, and social workers are supposed to contact the parents to discuss issues related to their children. In some cases, it is best for students and parents to have a home visit which is done by the school social worker. The social worker can organize meetings with the parents to discuss their children's problems and interests.

Social worker could deal with the family parents, solve problem between the student and his/her parents. For example child labor and poverty push some children to work then this will lead to the low of academic achievement. Usually parents blame the school for their children low academic achievement, here social worker supposed to be intervene with the parents, for example, link this family with the social services to offer them amount of money which let them do not force their child to work and focus more on his study.

#### **Problems that Required School Social Workers**

##### **Social Workers Themes**

Social worker participants considered that the school social worker is important and essential for the school based on their experiences and knowledge about the social work profession. The roles of the social worker included the intervention and linking the school with other organizations in the community. Overall the roles that the school social worker can provide ensure a safe environment for the students.



**Main Theme: Common Problems that Required School Social Workers**

Participants reported that there are common problems that required social workers in Jordanian schools. Subthemes under this theme include dropouts and bullying; integrating different students with regular students; and smoking; adjusting curriculum; and emotional issues.

**Subtheme: Dropouts**

Social worker participants remarked that the most frequent problems in the schools are dropouts and bullying. Some male students usually leave school after lunch break. Bullying is also a problem, especially for Syrian refugees.

Drop out the basic problem, no adjusting specially for the refugees, bullying. There are mixed of citizen without trying to make all those students close to each other. Another issue that Syrian refugees do not have their rights in the education because of their certificates and paper work and their data incomplete. And this require social worker to deal with such dangerous problem.

**Subtheme: Drugs and Smoking**

Participants focused on the problem of drug use and smoking because they are phenomena in many schools. These problems were more prevalent in the male schools, but now are occurring in female schools. Students especially in the middle and high school smoke and use drugs. Moreover, students influence their friends to use drugs.

Social worker in school must work with the student directly through make study with each one having drugs and find the reasons, who their friends. So social worker need to study each point then has plan and strategy. Isolate drug user because we don't want this affect others. Change school policy which serve student. Then social worker work with the family and school to solve this problem. The reason could be disintegration of the family. Also contact the organization for rehabilitation to intervene on this problem. Social worker should link all these institutions to alleviate this problem.

**Subtheme: Adjusting Curriculum**

Participants related how school social workers could have worked with a crisis that happened recently, involving changing the curriculum. This issue has become a worry for teachers and parents. Recently many culture and religious concepts have changed and are reflected in school curriculum; and people in the school community do not agree with those changes. School social workers could make a difference here by advocating in the name of those parents and teachers. One participant said, "Even the curriculum do not suitable with the ability of all children. The curriculum supposed to suitable with individuals. We recently has problems with the change of these curriculum which make problems for teachers and students."

**Teachers Themes**

**Main Theme: Common Problems that Required School Social Workers**

Participants reported that there are common problems that required social workers in Jordanian schools. Subthemes under this theme include dropouts and bullying; integrating different students with regular students; and smoking; adjusting curriculum; and emotional issues.

**Subtheme: Integrating Different Students with Regular Students**

Participants pointed out that we need school social workers to integrate the different groups of students such as refugees, with the regular students. Also one participant gave an example of those groups who need to integrate with other students in the class. Also, students with disabilities need special treatment from the social worker. Social workers may be the only members in the school who have the resources to properly inform students in need of their rights in an academic environment.

We need social worker to work with disability in schools and integrate them with regular students. Without social worker who help adjusting and integrate those student even help the regular student to accept them without problems or teasing. The mental health (disability) children will have problems affect their academic achievement.

**Subtheme: Drugs and Smoking**

Participants focused on the problem of drug use and smoking because they are phenomena in many schools. These problems were more prevalent in the male schools, but now are occurring in female schools. Students especially in the middle and high school smoke and use drugs. Moreover, students influence their friends to use drugs.

Social worker in school must work with the student directly through make study with each one having drugs and find the reasons, who their friends. So social worker need to study each point then has plan and strategy. Isolate drug user because we don't want this affect others. Change school policy which serve student.

Then social worker work with the family and school to solve this problem. The reason could be disintegration of the family. Also contact the organization for rehabilitation to intervene on this problem. Social worker should link all these institutions to alleviate this problem.

***Subtheme: Emotional issues.***

Social worker participants pointed out that school social workers could deal with all students' issues which include student emotional problems. They went on to say that other school members may not pay attention to students' emotional problems, especially teenagers who need special treatment at this age, as mentioned in this statement.

In my opinion social worker here prove his/her importance because when the social worker studied the major and loved it then he will be good prepared and has acknowledge about the physiological and social for the phenomenon. So he/she will determine what the best way to intervene each problem, social worker will make change because he specialized in this field.

**Parent Themes**

**Main Theme: Common problems that require school social workers.**

Participants presented multiple school problems they as parents are suffering from. Those problems including dropouts, low academic achievement, issues in the class such as teacher's behavior against the students, school budget and facilitators, bullying, drug use and smoking, and emotional issues which required a professional to deal with and reduce.

**Subtheme: Dropouts**

Dropping out is the common problem that all groups in this study agreed existed and needs to be solved or at least decreased in the schools. Parents pointed out that the most important problem is dropping out of school and students escaping schools.

Most of the student does not like school, this guide us that there is something wrong in the school, could be related to the teacher or administration. Why when school start we feel how our children bothering. Because they do not like school, they do not feel it is comfortable. The teacher has to have a good manner when dealing with the children and has the ability to work with the student positively, our schools will improve as a result. I am mother and I feel sad when I see the student walk to the school, they just want get good grades, some of them dropout. If the administration wise then all members in the school will deal with students accurately. Even the counselor does not help students.

**Subtheme: Low Academic Achievement**

Low academic achievement and studying issues are common problems in the schools. Parents suggested that both the counselor and the social worker are supposed to collaborate together, as well as working as a team with teachers, parents, and the administration of the school to find out the reason for low academic achievement for each student and based on this a plan to treat it.

Low academic achievement is a problem, may be the reason is the teacher because the teacher just want give the class to all the students in the same way without any consideration of the individual differences. In my opinion the teacher is most important than counselor because the teacher contacting with the student most. If there is cooperation between the student, teacher, school administration and the counselor, then it will be a perfect school. When the teacher make activities help the student to love the school, he/she will encourage the student to come school and success. The behavior of teacher in the class is one of the most important issue. Social worker and counselor supposed to be in schools together to deal with those issues.

**Subtheme: Bullying**

Bullying is a phenomenon that occurs in most of the schools, either physically or verbally. The school social worker, as parents suggest, could prepare more training sessions and discussion groups including parents and students to alleviate the bullying problems. One parent noted, "Since we suffering from bullying in many schools in many schools in our community. I think school social worker should prepare awareness seminars about the bullying and mistreatment, also contact both teachers and parents for this issue".

**Results**

Analysis across the three focus groups found that there are similarities and differences in their perspectives.

The three groups indicated the most common problems in the schools that require the existences of school social worker. On the other hand, teachers group mentioned family violence problems.

In addition, social workers, teachers, and parents focused on the same main barriers that limited school social workers in the Jordanian community.

The most important part at the end of each focus group was that all of them had hope and would appreciate if the social worker existed in the schools. Most participants believed that school social workers have the ability to do the best change, not just for the students but also for the schools which will reflect whole the community positively. One teacher pointed that the school social worker is valuable and important.

The social worker in the development countries work based on the students' file which has all the data about this student. Social worker need to be exist and has own office to prepare for those files and make case studies and interventions depend on each situation. Social worker is valuable in school if he/she hired in the right place.

Overall findings from the three groups indicated that school social workers have multiple roles, including intervention and integrating students with their classmates in the school, especially those who come from different groups like refugees. Also, their roles based on the participants' perspective involve linking the school with the resources in the community. Moreover, the role involves cooperation with all members in the school to solve students' problems and improve their academic achievement.

Also, participants indicated that there could be differences between the school social workers and counselors based on their roles since the social worker role is deeper and more comprehensive for the students' issues than the counselor. Some indicated there is no difference between the two roles while some did not recognize that a member in the school was called the school social worker.

In summary, the problems that require a school social worker are many but the same in most schools. The basic problems are dropouts, drug use and smoking, low academic achievement, and behavioral and emotional problems. Most participants agreed that our culture has been changed and developed, and that parents nowadays are more aware of their children's school problems and they need someone professional to help deal with these problems.

In addition, both teachers and parents reported common problems they face with their children and students. Parents and teachers focused on low academic achievement for a huge number of students, especially males. They mentioned that there are many reasons for low academic achievement, such as labor work for males, early marriage for females, poverty, family violence, dropouts from school, bad friendships, and sometimes teachers not satisfied about their salary which makes them hate teaching. Moreover, both teachers and parents reported that those social, behavioral, and emotional problems which need to be addressed. They claimed that issues require a social worker who has knowledge and experience to deal with these sensitive student issues. The reason for a school social worker is that teachers are not specialized and they do not have enough time to work on students' problems. Also, parents feel that a social worker could be closer to their children on some issues because students feel too scared or embarrassed to discuss these issues with their parents. Gadour (2006) and Khoury-Kassabri (2012) confirmed this theme by suggesting that teachers are not well prepared to deal with behavioral issues; further they also mentioned that some teachers use physical and verbal punishment which makes the situation worse.

### **The Differences between School Social Workers and School Counselors**

The findings revealed the differences between school social workers and school counselors. Participants in this study indicated that there are some similarities and differences between school counselors and the school social worker. Stone-Johnson (2015) confirmed this finding by indicating that counselors perceived teachers' as lacking knowledge about the role of counselors.

Social worker participants reported that there is no difference between the school counselors and the school social worker in their roles. Since both of them are members in the school and work with all members to serve the students, participants with this opinion believe that schools need both social worker and counselor; they both complete each other. On the other hand, some social workers who participated in this study claimed that the school social worker was much more important than the counselor because they played real roles in the schools, from the start of the intervention in addition to contacting the outside environment of the school. Slaten and Baskin (2014) confirmed this theme and stated that school counselors need to have the ability to develop and maintain supportive relationships with students/clients.

Whitley (2010) compared both social work and counselling. The social work profession in the United States was initiated by volunteers in charity organization societies who gained expertise in working with poor urban immigrant populations, while the counseling profession has both self-help and professional origins.

Moreover, the three groups who participated in this study agreed that the school social workers are more comprehensive and work a wider scope than counselors. The reason for this opinion is that social workers study each issue more deeply. Also social workers have the eligibility to contact the organizations outside the schools and refer cases, which is not allowed for the counselor. Currie, Kuzmina, and Nadyuk (2012) confirmed this theme in their study by noting that in Russia counseling officially emerged as a social work branch called social psychological help in 2011.

### Recommendation

Social workers need to gather more information related to the importance of school social workers. This work needs to be collaborative between the pioneers of social workers and show the results to the public and policymakers. This allows stakeholders to see change on several levels, including individual change within clients (students) and the larger system changes that are necessary to support these individual client interventions.

(2) Teachers should be educated so they understand school social work roles and how students' life environment affects their academic performance. Teachers should understand the positive influence school social workers can have on students' emotional and social health and therefore how academic achievement can improve.

School social workers have to place more consideration on both the Bachelor and Master levels. Social worker students need to practice more in the schools and working with students. They need to have more training. Because of what appears to be a lack of knowledge base among school social workers about solution-focused brief therapy, individual social workers may want to learn more about the modality for use in their practice (Jean, 2003).

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