

**King Saud University**  
**Deanship of Graduate Studies**  
**College of Arts**  
**Department of Social Studies**



## **Study summary**

### **The Role of Continuing Education in Improving the Social Worker's Professionalism in female residential shelters, in Riyadh: a Field Study**

This study is presented as a completion of the requirements for obtaining the master degree in Social Work

**Student: Bduor Bint Hassan Al-Amri**

**Dr. Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Dakhil**

**1437 – 2015**

Master Thesis was discussed and licensed on 20/3/1437 AH corresponding to 31/12/2015 AD.

#### **Key words:**

Continuing education – Continuous professional development – Social worker – Professionalism.

The social practitioners in the developed countries in the social work field reached advanced levels of professional practice. Furthermore, technology also brought new challenges in the practice of the social work, such as maintaining confidentiality and privacy, evidence-based practice; in addition, there are new other fields have been emerged such as the Solution-based Practice, Narrative Family Therapy and Cognitive Behavior Therapy. All these modern and new fields in the social work could be unknown to the Social Practitioners who graduated from the Bachelor and Master programs twenty, thirty or ten years ago and they were not enrolled at all in continuing education (Congress, 2012: 398).

In addition to life changes and rapid evolution which took place in the societies where social work profession practiced in, social work in Arab World in its current content still suffers from noticeable defect in its education and practice. Therefore, that led to a gap between the profession and the practice reality, which made the social worker critically confronts with problems related to life changes without any effective professional experience or knowledge-based reference that may suits the requirements of solving problems in a way that helps and satisfies the client. This guides the Social Worker to two options; either to work on engaging all what he sees suitable to solve the problem based on the right and wrong method- and due to the sensitivity of some intervention situations that may not respond to the used method, this may lead in the end to an ineffective professional practice- or to stand down, and in both cases that will affect negatively the social work profession. This is considered a violation of the Code of Ethics, which should be endured by the professional practitioner; practice in modern fields or using modern therapeutic technologies should be avoided till having the necessary study and training under the supervision of qualified people.

Accordingly, an urgent need for education and training has been emerged in order to enable the Social Work to practice his profession efficiently in accordance with its developments, the human life change and with what the Profession Code of Ethics states. This study looks into the role of the continuing education in improving the level of the professionalism of the social worker. It also aims to recognize the availability of the continuing education activities and

programs for the social worker, identifying the extent of the social worker's tendency to obtain continuing education activities and programs, recognizing the extent of the social worker beneficiary of the continuing education activities and programs in order to improve his/her knowledge, skills and achievement of the professional roles. Moreover, it aims to recognize if these programs and activities cover the shortage in the basic social work education programs.

This is a descriptive study that has adopted the comprehensive survey method for the male and female social workers in the female shelter institutions, centers in Riyadh, which is under the Ministry of the Social Affairs in Saudi Arabia. There were (10) shelters have been surveyed using questionnaires, which consisted of (96) items. The male shelters were excluded because of the late acceptance of applying the questionnaire procedures.

The study concluded that there is deficiency in providing the most important sources of the continuing education for the social worker; (62.5%) of the respondents agreed on the existence of professional supervision, (55.2%) were under professional supervision from a specialist in the social welfare field, (27.1%) indicated that regular meetings were held to discuss the professional performance for them, (3.1%) indicated that their meetings are held on a daily basis, and (3.1%) stated that their meetings are held weekly. Accordingly, we can say that the professional supervision is unavailable – as stated in the Code of Ethics for the social work profession – for the social worker who works for the shelter institutions except for only (6.2%) of the study group.

The study found out that there is a very huge deficiency related to the professional training, there was about (62.5%) who didn't receive any training from the institution before starting the work in the shelter institutions. It was found that (40.6%) of the study group had an evaluation for their professional performance to determine their training needs. Furthermore, (39.6%) of the study group agreed that the institution encourages them to get some training chances and (39.6%) stated that the institution announces for a training chances for the social worker. The results showed that (83.3%) of the respondents have received training courses after work, (44.7%) received (2-6) training courses, (17.7%)

received (7-11) courses, and (11.5%) received one training course. Most of those training sessions were short courses ranging from (2-5) days, and (60.0%) of the study group, who received training courses, have agreed on the high benefit they had, while (32.5%) of the participants indicated that the benefit was average.

The study concluded that most of the activities and educational programs that provided modern and effective information to the social worker in the professional field include: seeking the assistance of experts in the field (76.0%), training during work (66.7%), professional meetings (62.5%), the professional consulting of the colleagues (61.5%), workshops (59.4%), postgraduate studies (52.1%), conferences, scientific seminars and long-term training courses (3 months and more) obtained less than half of the study group. They agreed with equal percentages on the importance of reading and browsing specialized websites in the social work field as it reached (40.7%), but the rest of the activities and scientific programs reached low percentages, for instance, scientific lectures, Learning Packages and Distance Learning.

The study discovered that the most influential obstacles that prevent social worker of getting any benefit from the training courses are: announcement of the training courses (46.9%), the extent of organization's cooperation to join training courses (45.8%), the researcher sees that these obstacles directly related to the shelter institutions where the social worker works. Then, obstacles related to the limited numbers of the trainees followed with a percentage of (38.5%), obstacles related to the theoretical and practical content of the training courses (37.5%), then the obstacles related to the time of courses held (34.4%). Mostly, these obstacles are related to the training providers because they are who determine the number of the trainees according to its regulations and potentials, the content and the time of courses.

The study found that the most influential obstacles related to the specialized library and the theoretical knowledge are represented in the lack of the specialized library in the workplace (62.5%), no time to make library visit outside the workplace (53.1%), no time to visit the library inside the workplace (43.8%). The researcher sees that the last percentage doesn't compile with those

who responded that there are libraries inside the workplace, as only (11.5%) of the study group responded that there is a library inside the workplace. So, it is logical that the lack of time to visit libraries is limited to only (11) participants, but the rest of the study group have no libraries in the workplace, so the time won't form an obstacle. The internet-related obstacles is that there is no internet access inside the workplace (65.6%), insufficient time to browse internet (42.7%), and the technical obstacles (38.5%).

In relation to how the male and female social workers look forward obtaining continuing education activities and programs, there is awareness among the study group of the professional development importance. Most of them desire to obtain continuing education activities and programs, but the level of their practice differs and tends to be weak when it comes to reading and searching, and this an expected result according to the obstacles related to libraries and theoretical knowledge.

Regarding the benefit of the continuing education activities and programs in improving the professional knowledge, skills and roles, most the study group agreed on their benefit. By comparing the rates of benefit between the professional knowledge and skills and professional roles, it has been shown that the knowledge represents less in the benefit rates, and that may be a result of the professional knowledge relation to the theoretical content which is still suffering a great weakness, while the skills and roles could be acquired by emulation the colleagues, specialists, consultants, and the experts in the work field. This result is consistent with what was found in the current study which states the weakness of the continuing education activities and programs related to the professional knowledge; for example, the availability of updated libraries in the workplace in addition to the obstacles related to the libraries and theoretical knowledge.

The study found out that the continuing education activities and programs have the ability to cover the deficiency of the basic education of the social work profession where (57.3%) of the study group agreed on that, while (12.5%) responded with neutral answers, and (3.1%) responded negatively.