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MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PERCEPTION IN ACCESS TO DOCUMENTATION TRAINING IN SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

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by

Saige Lenee Downs

June 2017

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the Master of Social Work (MSW) student perception of access to documentation training in their program. When a student graduates with an MSW degree, there is an expected level of competency in regards to documentation when entering the field. Currently, there is literature available about the risk of poor documentation and the need for additional documentation training in the field of social work but the literature focusing on the perceptions of the student is very limited. The study contributed to the academic literature on social work documentation by providing awareness of the student perception of where they received documentation training in their graduate program. The research design for this study is qualitative and exploratory due to insignificant literature available. A survey with four open-ended questions was administered to graduating MSW students through a California State University School of Social Work. Upon the completion of data collection, transcripts were compiled to identify themes and entered into a thematic software for theme organization with addition to frequency of themes. The findings suggested that MSW students would benefit from additional clinical documentation training from their MSW program since the student perceptions are there is limited access to training within the program.

There are numerous of implications to the field of social work in regards to the lack of documentation training in MSW programs. The absence of training from students may include not having a full understanding of risk management

that corresponds with documentation and will have to assume to be ethically responsible for when the student graduates from their program. This can be detrimental to the student's professional development and can overall create a decrease in the quality of graduating MSW students.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Traditionally, there are expectations of Masters in Social Work (MSW) student graduates from accredited Schools of Social Work such as students being competent in documentation. The documentation experience is acquired from students participating field placement, or internships, in a social work program. During an MSW program, there are requirements for graduate students to complete 900 hours and 400 hours for undergraduates in field placement as an intern (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). While participating in field placement, students have the opportunity to develop skills on how to diagnose, assess, plan, implement interventions with clients and document these instances. The context of documenting a specific event is also important due to students understanding the significance of providing an abundance of information where it can be detrimental to a client or insufficient so it seems that inadequate services were provided. Documentation is not only beneficial for record keeping, but for risk management purposes such as defense against ethics complaints, professional negligence and ensuring quality of services (Reamer, 2015). Documentation is a skill that all MSW students would benefit from completing their graduate program, but do not always receive the proper training for it in their field placements.

Accreditation for Schools of Social Work programs must be approved by Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and in regards to field education, “the program provides a rationale for its formal curriculum design demonstrating how it is used to develop a coherent and integrated curriculum for both classroom and field” (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). The CSWE does not enforce social work programs to require documentation training, but rather allows programs to design their own curriculum. This is partially due to the difficulty of teaching documentation methods in the classroom since there methods that vary from social work agencies (Leon & Pepe, 2013).

As previously mentioned, documentation is crucial for risk management and not just for clinical relevance. The relevance clinical documentation relevance includes diagnosing, assessment, planning and intervention instruments. If a student is not properly trained in documentation, there are risk management implications at the micro and macro level. From the micro aspect, a student and field supervisor are directly responsible for ensuring documentation for the agency follows the National Association of Social Worker’s (NASW) Code of Ethics along with the agency’s guidelines. It is crucial that students are aware of the risk-management for case management and documentation, including the content of documentation, language and terminology, credibility, and access to records and documents (Reamer, 2005). Unfortunately, not all students are guaranteed that their field supervisors in their field placement will provide the guidance for proper documentation training. Therefore, the students can be at

risk for poor documentation in their professional social work career which only becomes evident when hired at a social work agency (Leon & Pepe, 2013).

Due to the schools of social work designing their own curriculum for field education, this creates a gap in scholarly research of how students learn documentation in the field. Currently, there is more academic research about how field instructors observe the type of abilities and behaviors that are displayed in an agency but still very little information about training in documentation in field education (Bogo et. al, 2006). This is due to accredited social work programs requiring program systems of evaluation and measurable learning objectives that measure the knowledge and ethics rather than skills that are expected to know for graduation (Vinton & Wilke, 2011).

The macro implications of social work are the lack of documentation training in MSW programs includes agencies providing documentation workshops for employees such as in hospital settings where documentation is of importance due to many service departments requiring documentation in a fast-paced environment. The workshops are implemented to address the gap in skills since supervisors not always have the time to train their employees which can be detrimental to the agency as a whole (Leon & Pepe, 2013).

With issues that arise from lack of document training for MSW students, there are implications that directly impact the field of social work. According to the *NASW Standards for Social Work Case Management*, there are standards that work cohesively with NASW's Code of Ethics. One of the standards

discusses the importance of documentation in case management and how documentation can be for program evaluation as well (National Association of Social Workers, 2013). If an MSW student does not have formal training in documentation and becomes employed at a social services agency post-graduation, the social worker is ethically responsible for their competency in their documentation skills according to the NASW's Code of Ethics Standard of Continuing Professional Education (National Association of Social Workers, 2013).

Social work education is also impacted by documentation training due to having required courses or workshops to assist in documentation skill development. This will require social work educators educate themselves about various types of forms and methodologies of documentation which would benefit the student's education. If there is a significant change in Schools of Social Work for documentation training, it can lead to policy change in accreditation standards with the CSWE as well. More importantly, the quality of MSW students who graduate will increase as well and providing quality services in various social service agencies.

There is limited research available about student perceptions of their own training when student view field instruction as the most important aspect of their education (Sherer & Peleg-Oren, 2005). The overall implication which can be detrimental to the field of social work is the compromised quality of graduating MSW students. The lack of quality can greatly affect micro and macro settings as

previously mention which can lead to the violation of NASW's Code of Ethics to provide competent services to all populations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the MSW student perception of access to documentation training during their MSW program. There is an abundance of available research about the importance of documentation in the social work field, perceptions from field supervisors and competence levels post-graduation. Specifically, this study focuses on the opinion of MSW students and their documentation experiences in the social work program. This study focuses on the student's perception of exposure of documentation trainings from field placement, classes from the social work program, additional workshops and their interest in a social work program requiring a documentation course. The study is qualitative in nature and is meant to prompt discussion about social work student's education in field placement, access to documentation opportunities and preparedness after completion of the social work program. This study aims to develop the discussion of interventions for students to receive additional opportunities.

The research method for this study was exploratory and takes a qualitative approach to data. The study provided a self-administered questionnaire with short written responses. The research design was selected due to focusing on collecting data from a large group of people from a California State University School of Social Work. Additionally, this type of research design is ideal due to

the study's restricted time frame. The participants that were included in this research study are social work graduate students in their final year of their social work program. This study also hopes to provide insight on student access to documentation training within their graduate program.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

The need to conduct this study arose from the researcher's interest in providing awareness about MSW student opinion about documentation training in their MSW program. An additional need for this study is that it is not a guarantee that social work students obtain adequate training in documentation from their field placement in their social work programs. This study contributes to social work research by adding a study of the student perspective since the current research available is limited. By adding more content to the area of social work documentation in research, this study brings awareness to social work educators and promote discussion about documentation opportunities in social work practice and policy change.

This study is favorable to the beginning and assessment stages of the Social Work Generalist Model due to the exploratory nature of the study. Current research about social work documentation discusses the importance of documentation and this study will explore the student's perceptions in their access to documentation in their social work program in the beginning stage. The assessment stage of this study will be reviewing the collected data and identifying themes in terms of student accessibility to documentation

opportunities. Since this study is exploratory, no further stages for the generalist model such as planning, implementation, evaluation, termination or follow-up will be pursued. The overall significance of this study was to promote discussion of additional training in social work programs to provide all students equal opportunities in their education. The research question for this study, do MSW students perceive clinical social work documentation training during their social work program as beneficial?

Summary

This study explored social work student's perceptions of access to documentation training throughout their social work program. The need for awareness of student access to documentation is crucial. While there have been changes in accreditation standards for Schools of Social Work in regards to documentation, students having equal access to documentation training in the social work program is not certain. There are many identifiable problems which arise from poor documentation which has been identified from the literature. This study seeks to add student perspective to the literature and to prompt discussion to improve access to documentation trainings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter consists of an examination of the research relevant to the topic of student documentation. Due to the limited research that is currently available, the subsections will include competency and preparedness, ethics and risk management, and documentation training in social work programs. The final subsection will examine competency based education as the conceptual framework for the approach of this study.

Documentation in the Field of Social Work for Students

There is a limited amount of research information regarding MSW student documentation training in the field or the classroom. The current literature heavily focuses on documentation training for social workers in managed care agencies and the need for additional documentation training. Additionally, research also provides the perspective of field instructors, field liaisons and deans of Schools of Social Work rather than the student's experience. Studies involving documentation training using social work students as subjects are a small percentage of literature.

Preparedness and Competency

Documentation and forms of record keeping can be a low priority over other work duties in social work due to resentment, difficulty explaining

interventions and writing clear objectives. For individuals who resent documentation, the ending results for documentation is poorly written records and the records not being up to date (Sayava, 2010). A 2010 study focused on one Bachelor's Social Work (BSW) program when students were provided 190 client files which were intentionally unclear and unorganized. The students were to then write reflections based on the information that was reviewed. The files included client characteristics, client problems, interventions and outcomes but not all files contained all information in the categories. After the students reviewed the incomplete files, their reflections mentioned the importance of how documentation, clarity and organization heavily impact their roles as interns in their agencies (Sayava, 2010).

In social work agencies, such as managed care service, documentation is a crucial skill which requires competency. Social workers in managed care are expected to be well-informed in medical treatment modalities and program management skills to be successful in working with a multidisciplinary team (Kane et al., 2002). There is agreement of expectations for social work students to display competency in the field (Vinton & Wilke, 2011) and the competency includes correct documentation. Due to manage care social agencies experiencing budget cuts for various reasons, supervisors may experience difficulty in creating time for social work students or new employees for supervision or trainings due to maximizing their caseload or having additional job titles (Kane et al., 2002; Leon & Pepe, 2013). With supervisors having limited

time to effectively train interns and employees, it becomes problematic when there is new methodology and knowledge available for documentation. The limited time supervisors are able to provide does not allow for social work students to have access to training to become competent in documentation. Managed care social services agencies are fast pace environments and to address the lack of training, documentation training workshops may become available so workers can develop and maintain the skills to be effective in the workplace to prove competency skills (Leon & Pepe, 2010; Leon & Pepe, 2013).

Risk Management and Ethics

According to the NASW Code of Ethics, documentation must be accurately recorded not only ensuring clients receive quality services, but for defense against ethical and professional negligence complaints (Reamer, 2005). There are important factors for documentation for social workers are to avoid issues of risk management and have ethical practices such as content of the documents, language and terminology, credibility, and access to records (Reamer, 2005). On average, MSW programs spend 72 hours on legal issues in the classroom but many students have difficulty identifying legal restrictions and mandates for their agency's county or state which is an issue for risk management (Gelman et al., 1996; Reamer, 2005). A 2012 study surveyed 73 school social workers about their record keeping duties. The study revealed that many of the school social workers were not aware of local mandates or simplified case notes. The survey also conveyed that 20% of the school social workers

violated the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) by releasing disclosed information to guardians or parents of the children without qualifications. However, 25% of those who participated chose not to answer the questions about disclosing client information to unqualified individuals which can lead to indication of not being certain to what client information is allowed to be disclosed (Garrett, 2012).

Documentation and legal education in social work programs need to become more prominent in classroom settings in order to develop ethical social workers in the future. If the issue is not addressed, ethical complaints can be filed against the social worker. The most common types of ethical complaints are client rights, confidentiality and privacy, informed consent, service delivery, boundaries and conflicts of interest, documentation, defamation of character, client records, supervision, staff development and training, consultation, client referral, fraud termination of services, practitioner impairment, evaluation and research, and ethical decision making (Cumming et al., 2007).

Documentation Training in Social Work Programs

In the late 1990's, there was not any research on documentation recording in social work programs and this is still an issue that occurs today (Ames, 1999; Leon & Pepe, 2010). Social work is a profession where one individual can work in many aspects in the field of social work but there are issues with student interns learning documentation in field placement only. Students can be familiarized with a style of recording that is first introduced to them and have

difficulty changing that style; this is not sufficient for the career of social work since documentation requirements are rapidly changing (Ames, 1999). When documentation is taught in the classroom, basic skills are taught such as writing, information gathering techniques, understand the importance of documentation, familiarization of various forms, applying record skills and understand summary recording (Ames, 1999; Reamer, 2005).

The current and limited literature also emphasized documentation skills are classroom instructor's and field supervisor's responsibility since documentation can be difficult to incorporate in the single setting of classroom or field placement (Leon & Pepe, 2010). Leon and Pepe's study consisted of a single 15-week course for 101 BSW students that was a requirement to participate in the specific social work program for the semester (2010). The study suggested the course cannot be done properly without interviewing and assessing clients. The use of role plays, role actors, videotaped client scenarios, treatment team exercises and macro documentation exercises were conducted as part of the course. The methodology for the study was a pretest post-test with the average mean of 78.32 for 97 students and the average mean increased 21.52 for the post-test scores. Due to the significant change in scores, the study of teaching documentation in a classroom setting has practical significance with significant student feedback. The student feedback includes understanding the relationship between training and having confidence; understanding what to include in case notes and on the job training; and increase of confidence in

preparedness from taking the required course (Leon & Pepe, 2010). While this study was conducted with BSW students, it lends support to the possibility of implementing the application of similar courses not only to all BSW social work programs, but MSW programs as well (Leon & Pepe, 2010); yet, there is no implementation of formal training in social work programs.

Limitations in Literature

As previously mentioned, there is limited information of social work student documentation in current literature which primarily focuses on social workers who have obtained their degree to work in the field. In the late 1980's and 1990's, documentation was brought to the attention in the field of social work in regards to ethics and risk management being incorporated into recording keeping (Gelman et al., 1996). By the mid 2000's, there was recognition by the scholarly community that documentation is an important skill to the field of social work and how it should be incorporated into the field. Yet, there is hardly any literature in regards to the student perspective of needing documentation training in their social work program.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

In past research, the conceptual framework for the basis of social work student documentation training research has been the generalist model as a result of bringing various elements of the importance of documentation which influences students completing social work education programs. This also allows for researchers to apply other conceptual frameworks under the generalist model

such as systems theory or ecological theory. An additional conceptual framework that is found in literature is using competency-based education (CBE) or also known as the competency-based model. This model extends the focus of education and evaluation to include performance in academic courses and field placement. In a 2006 study, the competency based model was used to identify relevant educational outcomes, define outcomes in specific behavioral terms, describe indicators of increasing levels of performance and create evaluation methods (Bogo et al., 2006).

The conceptual framework is used to conceptualize the study for competency-based education model due to this researcher's interest to understand the MSW student perceptions of documentation training access in their field education and social work program. The model emphasizes on performance in academics and field education which is the intention of collecting information from MSW students.

Summary

This study explores social work student's perceptions of access to documentation training throughout their social work program from the MSW student standpoint. The need for awareness of student to access for documentation is crucial. While there have been changes in accreditation standards for Schools of Social Work in regards to documentation, students having equal access to documentation training in the social work program is not

certain. There are many identifiable problems which arise from poor documentation which has been identified from the literature. This study seeks to add student perception to the literature and to prompt discussion to improve access to documentation trainings.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This study explores MSW student perceived access to documentation training in their graduate program. This chapter contains the details of the study design and the limitations of the study. Additionally, this chapter will also discuss sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protections of human subjects and data analysis.

Study Design

The objective of this study is to explore social work student perceptions of access to documentation training in their social work program. This is an exploratory research project due to the limited amount of literature that is available on documentation training from the student perspective. Since the perceptions of the social work students that may reveal aspects of documentation access is not described in existing literature this is a qualitative study which will utilize the distribution of short answer response surveys with open-ended questions as the tool through which to collect data from subjects.

The purpose of using an exploratory, qualitative approach using a self-administered electronic short written response survey is that participants are allowed to add their own personal experience to their answers, rather than being restricted to a limited range of answers. The self-administered electronic survey

questionnaire is appropriate for this study to allow students to complete the questions at a time that is convenient for the student. A limitation using the survey is participant completion of the survey. Participants may feel reluctant to complete the survey when there is a requirement to type in a response due to taking more time to complete the survey. An additional limitation is upon completion of the short-written responses from participants, there is a possibility of obtaining data that lacks the in-depth information which one may collect when conducting an one-on-one interview or a focus group.

The study seeks to explore the perceptions of MSW student access to documentation training in their graduate program by revealing what opportunities are available to the students. The study asks would MSW student's perceptions benefit from clinical social work documentation training during their social work program?

Sampling

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge of MSW student perceptions of access to documentation training in their graduate programs from a California State University School of Social Work. Therefore, this study utilizes a non-random purposive sample of social work students in master's programs. More specifically, these students are in their final year of their MSW full-time, part-time or online program and will be asked to participate in this study due to their student standing of near completion of the program. Participants will have the ability to develop a perception about the access to documentation to their

specific program due to the length of the attendance of the program where as a student in the primary years do not. There will be approximately 15 subjects who will participate in this study with a possibility of being subjected to more or less participants.

Data Collection and Instruments

Qualitative data was collected using a self-administered electronic survey with written responses in January 2017 using Survey Monkey. Demographic information was collected prior to the student's responses such as age, ethnicity, gender and program enrollment status. Open-ended questions that focused on exploring the type of opportunities are available for documentation training in field placement and in their graduate program other than social work courses. Other questions ask to describe how documentation training is taught in the classroom and how they would benefit a documentation course became available during their program.

Procedures

The survey was developed online using Survey Monkey. The link to the survey was provided to students via email through the School of Social Work in January 2017. Prior to the subjects participating in the survey, a consent form was provided in the first step of the survey. Next, a disqualifying question asking participants if they are in their final year of their MSW program was asked in an attempt to eliminate participants who do not meet the qualifications for

participation. Data collection was completed in March 2017. The researcher was the only individual to have access to the data which is password protected. The data collected from Survey Monkey was transferred to a qualitative software program, Atlas.ti for data analysis. The analysis results will be kept in a password encrypted flash drive.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher ensured that each participant receives the information on informed consent by including it in the survey. There were no anticipated risks at this time for participation in this study. Participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. All participants of this study will remain anonymous and any identifying information will remain in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home office. The results of the survey and any identifying information will be destroyed upon completion of this study at the end of the Spring 2017 quarter.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted using a qualitative analysis technique. Conventional content analysis was used for the purpose of describing a phenomenon due to the research literature being limited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The link for the survey from Survey Monkey was emailed to social work students and require short-written responses for four questions. After completion

of collection, the researcher compiled transcripts and reviewed the transcripts to identify any themes and subthemes. The themes were categorized by the access to documentation training from the social work program, field placement and courses. An additional theme was the student interest of a documentation course if it was available to them. After the identification of the themes, the data was entered into Atlas.ti where the data will be coded using the established themes and subthemes. Frequencies were conducted all of the student statements relating to access to documentation training from the social work program, field placement, courses and interest in a documentation course. In addition to gathering information from the short-written responses, the researcher compiled nominal descriptive statistics on the participant's age, gender, ethnicity and program enrollment status from Survey Monkey.

Summary

This chapter has addressed the research methods that will be used in conducting the study of student perception of documentation training during their graduate program from various aspects. The design of the study, sampling methods, data instrument, data collection, data analysis, procedures and the protection of human subjects were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, the data gathered from the survey will be presented. First, demographic characteristics of the participants will be discussed along with the identification of key themes and subthemes. These include participant's perception on access to documentation training in the classroom, field placement, the MSW program and the need for training in the classroom. Finally, the themes and subthemes will be summarized.

Presentation and Findings

Demographic Characteristics

The current study consisted of 14 participants that completed the survey (see Table 1). There were 12 females (85.71%) and 2 males (14.29%). The participant's age range include 4 participants in the 18-24 age group (28.57%), 9 participants in the 25-34 age group (64.29%) and 1 participant in the 35-44 age group (7.14%). Nine participants identified as Hispanic or Latino (64.29%), 6 as White (42.86%), 1 as Black (7.14%) and 1 as American Indian (7.14%). Participants were allowed to select multiple ethnicities if they identified with more than one. The majority of the participants were in the full-time program with a total of 13 full-time students (92.86%) and 1 part-time student (7.14%).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

	N (%)	M	SD
Age		27.79	24.79
18-24	4 (28.57%)		
25-34	9 (64.29%)		
35-44	1 (7.14%)		
Gender		1	1.41
Female	12 (85.71%)		
Male	2 (14.29%)		
Ethnicity		3.2	4.07
American Indian	1 (7.14%)		
Black	1 (7.14%)		
Hispanic or Latino	9 (64.29%		
White	6 (42.86%)		
Student Status		7	8.49
Part-time Program	1 (7.14%)		
Full-time Program	13 (92.86%)		

Note: Students were able to select more than one ethnicity if they desired.

Access to Training in the Classroom

The theme of access to training in the classroom was a common theme to emerge among the responses from the participants. Participants were asked to describe how documentation was taught in the classroom and two additional subthemes were developed from the responses. The first underlying subtheme is students perceive they do not have access to documentation training in the classroom. Twelve participants expressed there is currently no access to documentation training in the classroom. This theme explored the student perception of access to documentation training in the classroom is nonexistent which was found in a response, “Documentation is not taught at all. It is just

stressed that it is important in the social work field," (Participant 8, personal communication, February 2017).

The second subtheme that emerged from this question was the student perception of what documentation is in the classroom setting. All of the participants varied in their narratives such as when should documentation occur, consequences when one fails to document and the variation of documentation throughout social services agencies. A respondent expressed:

> Topics such as signing informed consent and signing disclosure consents are discussed but we are told every agency has different forms. [The] same is true about assessments conducted on clients; it is based on the particular agency (Participant 16, personal communication, February 2017).

Additionally, there was a consensus among the participant narratives that the classroom discussion of documentation stresses on the importance of documenting but the act of documentation has not been taught as respondent shared, "We only talk about the importance of documentation and doing notes" (Participant 17, personal communication, February 2017).

Access to Training in Field Placement

An additional theme that was also common was that students do have access to documentation training in their field placement. Twelve participants responded to the question what opportunities were available for documentation training in the current and past field placements. Participants were able to

describe when they received training on documentation and how documentation training is continued through supervision. Ten participants provided neutral responses for access in documentation training in their field placements while the remaining participants mentioned there are limitations to training in their field placements.

A subtheme that emerged from four participants was a limitation of access to documentation training in current or previous field placements. Some respondents described they did not receive adequate training from their current or previous field placement so there was a reliance on previous training for their current documentation. The other limitations included having group supervision and time documentation for review is not allocated adequately. The participants expressed field supervisors provided limited feedback

> In my previous field placement within an elementary school district, there was no formal documentation training provided. I also received limited feedback from my field instructor regarding my documentation. This highlights that professors and the MSW program should not expect that MSW students will be taught social work documentation in field work (Participant 30, personal communication, February 2017).

Perception to Access of Training in the Master of Social Work Program

The participants were asked what type of opportunities were available in the MSW program? Five participant's responses stated there were no opportunities for documentation training to their *current knowledge* in the MSW

program. There were no suggestions or responses by any participants that indicated their knowledge of possible opportunities in the future. Nine participants responded there were no opportunities available for documentation training in their program when the data was collected such as a respondent expressed:

> There are currently no opportunities available for social work documentation training in the MSW program. Social work documentation is something that is not addressed in social work courses (Participant 30, personal communication, February 2017).

Need of Additional Training in the Master of Social Work Program

All of the participants were asked if a hypothetical documentation course were to become available in the MSW program, would they benefit from the course and why would they benefit from it? A theme that arose from the responses was the *need* of additional documentation training in the MSW program. Twelve participants agreed that a class that focuses on documentation would be beneficial while two participants were unsure how the class would be beneficial due to documentation varying from different social service agencies. Those respondents who would benefit from a documentation class described a class would be able to provide insight on the type of language to use in documentation, eliminate irrelevant information from notes, how to document a client crisis and building student confidence in their documentation skills. One respondent described how there are universal aspects to documentation and what should be taught in the classroom:

> …there are aspects of social work documentation that are universal and expected to be covered across all organizations. For example, clear and concise documentation, documenting that you assessed for SI/HI [suicidal ideation/homicidal ideation], AH/VH [auditory hallucinations/visual hallucinations], risk, mental status, and so on. Due to this, I feel certain aspects of social work documentation can be taught in the classroom, but are currently not being taught. MSW students can largely benefit from social work documentation being taught in the classroom (Participant 30, personal communication, February 2017).

An additional subtheme which arose from this was the student understanding of the importance of documentation. All 14 participants described how important social work documentation is in the field such as being a crucial, vital and necessary tool in their professional development as social workers. There was also an understanding for documentation varying at different agencies so there are various protocols. A single participant described how a documentation course would be beneficial for legal aspects if they needed to provide documentation in the courts:

> ...I think it would benefit me to ensure that I make sure all legal and/or relevant information is provided in my documents in case I ever had to go to court (Participant 32, personal communication, February 2017).

Summary

This chapter provided the data that was collected from the surveys. The demographic characteristics of the participates were provided in addition to the themes of access to social work documentation. These include participant's perception on access to documentation training in the classroom, field placement, the MSW program and the need for training in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the micro and macro social work implications given this study's findings. In addition, the limitations of this study are addressed. Lastly, recommendations for social work practice, policy and research in regards to documentation training will be discussed.

Discussion

The data collected provided insight into the student perception of access to documentation training within the MSW program using qualitative data. Four central themes that emerged from this study are access to training in the classroom, access to training in field placement, perception to access of training in the MSW program and the need of additional training in the MSW program. Based on the short-answer responses that were collected from the participants of the study, it is concluded that MSW students would find clinical social work documentation training in their MSW programs beneficial.

The most apparent theme that emerged from the study was the need of additional training MSW program. As previous mentioned, 12 participants agreed that a hypothetical documentation course would be beneficial for them and a subtheme emerged of students understand the importance of learning documentation being so crucial in their education. The participants were able to

provide an array of answers such as documentation being a crucial component of the MSW program and correlates with the second common theme of not having access to documentation training in the social work courses due to the material not being taught in the classroom.

The majority of responses from the participants described the access of documentation training in the classroom as nonexistent while a minority were able to describe how documentation is presented in the classroom. It was also important to consider the definition of “access to documentation training” differed from the students as seen in their responses. Such descriptions included development of skills on how to diagnose, assess, plan, implement interventions documenting in a relatively short time period. Since the majority of the students had the perception of having no access to documentation training in the classroom, it is unclear if they have proper training from their field placement such as information gathering techniques, familiarization of various forms, apply record skills and understanding summary recordings (Amers, 1999; Reamer, 2005).

The next common theme was access to training in the social work program where there was a general consensus the students did not have access to documentation training. The three themes the need for documentation training in the program, the lack of access to documentation training in the classroom and in the program, have negative implications in the field of macro social work such as accreditation and quality of graduating MSW students. As previously

mentioned, accredited social work programs provide a rationale for the curriculum for the classroom and field (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Documentation training is not required for accreditation but if students do not have access to documentation training in their program, the quality of graduating MSW students would be detrimental to the field of social work. The results of the implications can be found in final theme of access to documentation training in field placement. A small portion of the responses from the participants expressed there was not adequate training to documentation in their foundation or advanced year field placement. Documentation skills are more likely to develop during field placement rather than a classroom (Reamer, 2005) and if students do not have access to quality training, the poor documentation skills will be apparent when the students are in the field as professionals. This is also seen in social work agencies when the agencies provide workshops for their staff to address the inadequacy of documentation skills (Leon & Pepe, 2013).

The micro implications of the lack of access to documentation training is ethical responsibility from students and field supervisors to ensure documentation recordings hold up to the NASW standards. If documentation is not upheld to the ethical standards of the NASW, students are at but at risk for malpractice and lawsuits in their professional career due to not being responsible for their competent in social work practice as well (National Association of Social Work, 2013).

Limitations

In this study, there were a number of limitation that arose in the data collection process. The first limitation of was the method of collecting data. Traditionally, qualitative data is collected through individual interviews or in focus groups rather than providing short-answer responses through an electronic survey. While this methodology provided convenience to the participants and this researcher, there was no access to the participants for further clarification of the participant's responses. The original purpose of this methodology was to obtain data from multiple Schools of Social Work in the Southern California region to have a comparative analysis of access to documentation training from various schools. Since this researcher was not able to obtain permissions from various schools, personal interviews would have been more beneficial for this study.

An additional limitation for this study was the data collection sample. As previously mentioned for the demographic characteristics in Chapter 4, the majority of the sample consists of full-time students and a single participant in the part-time program. There were no participants from the online MSW program and with a single participant from the part-time program, this study was not representative of students from the various types of programs but rather provided responses from the full-time program.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

A recommendation for social work practice is to develop additional research for student's perceptions documentation training during their social work

programs. The current research that is available is extremely limited and focuses on the importance of documentation rather the observing the student perception of documentation training. If there is more research available, there is a possibility for policy change for the Council on Social Work Education in regards to documentation training in the classroom to provide additional training to those students who do not have quality documentation training in field placements.

Conclusion

This study explored the student perceptions of access to documentation training in the MSW program and if the students perceive clinical documentation training beneficial. The findings of this study supported the hypothesis by the students expressing the need and importance of additional documentation training in the MSW program. The implications for the lack of access to training can be detrimental to the field of social work such quality of graduating MSW students, students being at risk for lawsuits for poor documentation in the court systems. When more literature becomes available on the effects of lack of access to documentation training, it is then social work policy can be changed.

APPENDIX A

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENT DOCUMETATION SURVEY

Welcome to the MSW Student Documentation Survey.

Thank you for participating. Please read the informed consent and select "yes" in Question #1 to participate in the survey.

INFORMED CONSENT
The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine MSW student perception of access of documentation training in graduate programs. The study is being conducted by Saige Downs, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Erica Lizano, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The student has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this student is to examine the student perception of access of documentation training in their graduate program.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked a few questions on the current access of documentation training in the classroom, field placement, the graduate program and demographic questions.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: It will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey.

RISK: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Lizano at (909) 537-5584.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2017.

* 1. This is to certify that I am 18 years or older and I read the informed consent.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 2. Are you in your final year of your MSW program?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

3. What is your age?

- ◯ 18 to 24
- ◯ 25 to 34
- ◯ 35 to 44
- ◯ 45 to 54
- ◯ 55 to 64
- ◯ 65 to 74
- ◯ 75 or older

4. What is your gender?

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male

5. What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ White / Caucasian
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

6. What is your student status?

- ◯ Online program
- ◯ Part-time program
- ◯ Full-time program

* 7. Briefly describe how social work documentation is taught in the classroom.

* 8. What opportunities are available for documentation training in your field placement (current and previous)?

* 9. What opportunities are available for social work documentation training in the MSW program other than social work courses?

* 10. Hypothetically, if a documentation course became available in the MSW program, do you think you would benefit from it? Explain why or why not.

Developed by Saige Lenee Downs

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

California State University, San Bernardino
Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee
APPROVED 1/17/2017 VOID AFTER 1/16/2018
IRB# SW1729 CHAIR

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine MSW student perception of access of documentation training in graduate programs. The study is being conducted by Saige Downs, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Erica Lizano, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The student has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this student is to examine the student perception of access of documentation training in their graduate program.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked a few questions on the current access of documentation training in the classroom, field placement, the graduate program and demographic questions.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: It will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey.

RISK: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Lizano at (909) 537-5584.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2017.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

_____ _____

Place an X mark here Date

909.537.5501
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University • Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles
Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

APPENDIX C

E-MAIL RECRUITMENT FLYER

MESSAGE FORWARDED ON BEHALF OF SAIGE DOWNS.
PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS TO SAIGE DOWNS at 004208463@coyote.csusb.edu
REGARDING THIS RESEARCH PROJECT.

Greetings fellow Social Work Students,

My name is Saige Lenee Downs and I am seeking your participation in my research study. I am conducting a research project on MSW student access to documentation training in the graduate program. The purpose of this study is to gain the student perception of access to documentation training in their graduate program. The survey for this study should take 10-15 minutes and you may withdraw at any time. The survey is voluntary and completely anonymous.

There are limitations for those who wish to participate in this study. The participant must be in their advanced year of the MSW program. Students who are in the foundation year in the MSW program or the BSW program are not recommended to participate in this study.

If you would like to participate in the study, please click in the link below.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=peVaDIsZdH8phc_2Fkl7u7Ntt3u83tg3R9poDtHhJ_2FdJIhjwQL_2FvMarFjHoRKL3HR6

Thank you for your participation,
Saige Lenee Downs

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s) Saige Downs

Proposal Title MSW Student Access To Documentation Training In Graduate Programs

SW1729

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

Proposal is:

__✓__ approved

_____ to be resubmitted with revisions listed below

_____ to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

_____ faculty signature missing

_____ missing informed consent _____ debriefing statement

_____ revisions needed in informed consent _____ debriefing

_____ data collection instruments missing

_____ agency approval letter missing

_____ CITI missing

_____ revisions in design needed (specified below)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ 1/17/2017

Committee Chair Signature Date

Distribution: White-Coordinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student

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