

The Role of Social Workers in Empowering Vulnerable Groups A Field Study in Women and Juvenile Reformatory-Erbil.

Research Project

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Prepared by: Benar Jamil Hassan Nechir Tariq Namiq

Supervised by: Hazha Mohammed Salih

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of social workers in empowering vulnerable groups, specifically women and juveniles, within the Women and Juvenile Reformatory in Erbil, Iraq. Through qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews with 10 social workers, the research explores the challenges faced by these inmates and the strategies employed by social workers to support them. Findings reveal diverse perspectives on cultural influences, the significance of social workers' roles, challenges encountered, and methods of rehabilitation. The study emphasizes the importance of tailored interventions to meet the complex needs of inmates and recommends further research to enhance support systems in correctional facilities.

Acknowledgment

Firstly, we thank God for guiding us through our academic journey and allowing us to successfully complete this research. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to our supervisor, Mrs. Hazha Mohammed Salih, for her support and guidance. We also appreciate the consistent support and direction from our department head, Dr. Hakim. To our friends and loved ones, your encouragement has been invaluable. Finally, we extend our thanks to everyone who has contributed to this project, directly or indirectly

Dedication

We dedicate our research project to our beloved parents, whose enduring love and guidance have shaped our spirits. Our heartfelt dedication extends to our family, relatives, friends, and all who have accompanied us on this journey. Special recognition goes to our supervisor, Mrs. Hazha Mohammed Salih, and all our teachers for their invaluable support and mentorship.

Table of Contents

Abstracti
Acknowledgmentii
Dedicationii
Chapter 1: Introduction
1.1Introduction1
1-2 Research problem
1.3 Research Objectives
1.4 Research question
1.5 The definition of Concepts:
Chapter 2: Literature Review
Chapter 3: Methodology
3.1 Qualitative Research:1
3.2 Semi-structured interviews and Sampling
3.4 Research Ethics
3.5 Data Analysis
Chapter Four : Results, Discussion , conclusion and recommendation
4.1 Results
4.2 Discussion5
4.3 Conclusion6
List of references6
Appendixes8

Chapter 1:

1.1Introduction

In today's world, social workers are recognized for their crucial role in helping vulnerable groups, especially in places like correctional facilities. In Erbil, Iraq, the Women and Juvenile Reformatory is a key institution for supporting inmates. This study looks at the challenges faced by women and young inmates there and explores how social workers help them. By understanding these challenges and the role of social workers, we can see how they empower these vulnerable groups to succeed and reintegrate into society.

1-2 Research problem

The Women and Juvenile Reformatory in Erbil encounters unique challenges in adequately supporting its inmates, especially women and juveniles. Despite efforts made by social workers and other stakeholders, there remains a gap in understanding the specific needs and experiences of these vulnerable groups within the reformatory environment. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the hurdles faced by women and juvenile inmates in the reformatory and investigating how social workers can empower them. By identifying these challenges and recognizing the most effective interventions, this research aims to enhance support systems and tailor interventions to meet the needs of women and juvenile inmates in Erbil's reformatory.

1.3 Research Objectives

- 1. To examine the role of social workers in empowering vulnerable groups, particularly women and juveniles, within the Women and Juvenile Reformatory in Erbil.
- 2. To identify the specific challenges faced by social workers in their efforts to

- empower women and juvenile inmates in the reformatory.
- 3. To explore the strategies and interventions employed by social workers to address the needs and circumstances of women and juvenile inmates in the reformatory.

1.4 Research question

- How do social workers contribute to empowering vulnerable groups, specifically women and juveniles, within the reformatory setting in Erbil?
- What specific challenges do social workers face in their efforts to empower women and juvenile inmates in the reformatory?
- What strategies and interventions do social workers employ to address the unique needs and circumstances of women and juvenile inmates in the reformatory?
- 4 How effective are the empowerment efforts of social workers in facilitating the rehabilitation and successful reintegration of women and juvenile inmates into society?
- What recommendations can be made to enhance the role of social workers in empowering vulnerable groups within the Women and Juvenile Reformatory in Erbil?

1.5 The definition of Concepts:

Social Worker

According to IFSW, social work is "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people" IFSW & IASSW. (2014).

Social workers are a diverse group of professionals who share a commitment to helping enhance the well-being of people, communities, and society. They have a rich history of striving for social, economic, and environmental justice, advocating for human rights, competently providing services for clients at every stage of life, and engaging in lifelong learning. (Council on Social Work Education, 2023).

In this research, we refer to a qualified social worker specializing in aiding women and children within the correctional facility in Erbil, offering psychological and social support as required.

Empowerment

Empowerment of individuals refers to a participatory process of becoming stronger and more confident enabling them to have more control over their lives An empowered individual may display characteristics of increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, responsibility and self-determination (Herbert et al., 2009;pp.107–32).

The empowerment of vulnerable women and children at the Erbil reformatory center entails providing them with the resources, support, and opportunities necessary to enhance their autonomy, self-esteem, and control over their lives.

Reformatory

Reformatory, correctional institution for the treatment, training, and social rehabilitation of young offenders (Jensen, 2007).

The Erbil Reformatory Center for Women and Juveniles is a correctional facility located in Erbil, Iraq, specifically designed to house and rehabilitate female and juvenile offenders. It serves as a place where women and young individuals who have committed crimes are detained and provided with various programs and services aimed at their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The center likely offers educational opportunities, vocational training, counseling, and other supportive interventions tailored to the specific needs of women and juvenile inmates. Additionally, it may focus on addressing underlying issues such as trauma, substance abuse, and mental health concerns to facilitate positive behavior change and reduce recidivism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the context of women and juvenile reformatory settings, the role of social workers in empowering vulnerable groups has garnered significant attention in academic literature. Several studies underscore the crucial role that social workers play in supporting and advocating for the needs of vulnerable populations within such institutions.

Throughout the 20th century, forensic social workers have been essential in the criminal justice system, providing services like counseling, therapy, and advocacy. This article traces their role from the founding of the first juvenile court in 1899 in Cook County, Illinois, to modern times. It discusses federal funding initiatives benefiting various groups and highlights how forensic social workers are increasingly involved in probation departments, law enforcement, correctional facilities, and support programs for addiction and domestic violence (Robert, 2002,p1).

According to study about Gender Injustice: System-Level Juvenile Justice Reforms for Girls that despite years of attention, the number of girls in the juvenile justice system continues to rise, facing consistent challenges that stem from systemic gender injustice. Girls experience abuse, violence, and adversity in various aspects of their lives, yet reforms in juvenile justice systems often overlook their specific needs and fail to collect data on their experiences. As a result, girls are left out of reform discussions, hindering their ability to benefit from systemic changes. This report aims to address this gap by mapping girls' pathways into the juvenile justice system, identifying the social factors influencing their behavior, and proposing alternative, developmental approaches to system redesign. By

focusing on girls' needs and experiences, policymakers can ensure that reforms effectively address gender disparities and promote equitable outcomes in the juvenile justice system (Sherman and Black, 2015).

Social work's limited involvement in corrections is notable, considering that individuals in the criminal and juvenile justice systems are often part of the vulnerable populations traditionally served by the profession. While the roots of juvenile probation intersect with social work, the connection has weakened over time. While it's commonly believed that social workers are hesitant to work in coercive environments, a closer look at history suggests that this explanation is incomplete. Gender stereotypes and theoretical shortcomings also contribute to social workers' reduced presence in juvenile probation. However, shifts in attitudes toward gender and working with coerced clients, along with evidence of effective interventions, indicate a potential for social workers to reengage in corrections work. This article proposes steps in professional education and workforce development to facilitate the reintegration of social work into the corrections field (Clark, 2011.p1).

This study Prison Social Work describes the role of social workers in prisons and the various tasks they handle, such as screening, assessment, crisis intervention, treatment, case management, and planning for parole and release. The authors discuss the legal framework for providing social work services in prisons and focus on three specific groups: women inmates, inmate parents, and those with mental illness, who are of increasing concern to corrections officials and social workers. The article explores the challenges of balancing social work goals with those of corrections and identifies opportunities for social workers

to uphold their professional values while working in prisons (Matejkowski, Johnson, and Severson, 2014).

In a 2015 study on Zimbabwe's juvenile justice system, it was noted that children in conflict with the law often face stigma and rejection from society due to being seen as a threat. Historically, Zimbabwe's approach to juvenile justice has been punitive, focusing on punishment rather than rehabilitation, leading to criticism regarding the protection of children's rights. The study aimed to explore recent reforms in the juvenile justice system and the role of social work in these reforms. Based on a review of existing literature, the findings indicate a shift towards a more reformative and rehabilitative system, marked by new laws and policies safeguarding children's rights, such as access to legal representation and the abolition of the death penalty for child offenders. Social work practice plays a crucial role in preventing reoffending and providing support services. Despite these reforms, challenges persist, such as children spending excessive time in adult prisons due to resource limitations. Recommendations include expanding programs like the Pre-trial and Diversion Programme all provinces introducing across alternatives institutionalization (Ruparanganda, 2016, p7).

In a 2015 study titled "Social Work Advocacy: Professional Self-Interest and Social Justice," the researchers analyzed advocacy-related resources available on the websites of the 50 NASW state chapters. The findings showed that a significant portion of state chapters (42%) lacked information about advocacy on their websites. Only about one-third of the mission statements mentioned advocacy, while a similar percentage did not include any content related to advocacy or social justice on their homepages. Additionally, nearly

two-thirds of the websites did not offer any resources, tools, or links related to advocacy practice, promotion, or education. Thirteen advocacy themes emerged from the analysis, with Professional Self-Interest being the most frequent issue (17%) across state advocacy agendas in 2010. However, when considering all social justice issues combined, they dominated the legislative agendas (83%). Professional self-interest issues were prevalent across state agendas, appearing on 86% of the chapters' agendas analyzed (Brown, . Livermore, and Ball ,2015.,p42).

Summary:

The literature review provides insights into the role of social workers in various aspects of the criminal justice system, particularly focusing on women and juvenile reformatory settings, forensic social work, juvenile justice reforms, prison social work, and social work advocacy. It highlights the importance of social workers in empowering vulnerable populations, addressing systemic gender injustice in the juvenile justice system, advocating for reformative approaches, and upholding professional values in challenging environments. However, it also identifies gaps in the literature, including limited involvement of social workers in corrections, overlooked needs of girls in juvenile justice reforms, challenges in balancing social work goals with corrections objectives, and deficiencies in social work advocacy efforts.

Gap in Literature Review:

Despite the comprehensive coverage of various topics related to social work in the criminal justice system, there is a notable gap in addressing the intersectionality of identities and

experiences among individuals involved in these systems. Specifically, there is a lack of exploration into how race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and other intersecting factors impact the experiences of vulnerable populations and the effectiveness of social work interventions. Understanding these intersecting dynamics is crucial for developing inclusive and culturally competent approaches to addressing the needs of marginalized groups within the criminal justice system. Additionally, there is limited discussion on the impact of globalization, technology, and emerging trends on social work practice in criminal justice settings, highlighting the need for further research in these areas to inform evidence-based interventions and policy development.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research:

Qualitative methods are research techniques that focus on understanding phenomena through non-numerical data such as observations, interviews, and textual analysis. These methods aim to explore and interpret social phenomena in their natural settings, often emphasizing depth and context rather than statistical generalizability. Examples include ethnography, case studies, and thematic analysis (Gerring, 2017, p17).

Qualitative data are data collected using qualitative research methodology and techniques across the range of social science disciplines. Qualitative research often encompasses a diversity of methods and tools rather than a single one, and the types of data collected depend on the aim of the study, the nature of the sample, and the discipline.

The current research utilizes qualitative methods because they are better suited for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by social workers and their strategies for empowering vulnerable women and children in reform centers in Erbil city.

3.2 Semi-structured interviews and Sampling

The semi-structured interview is an exploratory interview used most often in the social sciences for qualitative research purposes or to gather clinical data. While it generally follows a guide or protocol that is devised prior to the interview and is focused on a core topic to provide a general structure, the semi-structured interview also allows for discovery, with space to follow topical trajectories as the conversation unfolds (Magaldi, and Berler, 2020).

In our recent study, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 social workers working at the reform center in Erbil, which caters to women and children.

3.4 Research Ethics

Before starting, we got permission from our social work department and supervisor. Then, we received formal approval from Salahaddin University, College of Arts. We also got approval from the General Director of the Reformatory Directorate and the Women and Children Correctional Directorate in Erbil. After that, we asked the social workers for their consent before interviewing them. During the interviews, we asked questions related to our research.

To maintain anonymity in the 10 interviews, we implemented a coding system where female social workers were represented by the label "A" and male social workers were denoted by "B" in our research.

3.5 Data Analysis

In current research, content analysis were followed to analyze the data gathered from the semistructured interviews.

Chapter Four : Results, Discussion , conclusion and recommendation 4.1 Results

The current research provided a detailed analysis of 10 semi-structured interviews conducted with social workers from women's and juvenile correctional facilities. Each participant was anonymized and identified by a code, with (A) denoting men and (B) denoting women. These interviews, consisting of nine questions, sought to explore the perspectives of these 10 experts in women's and adolescent care based on their professional experiences.

Q1: To what extent culture has influenced your role as a social worker in a rehabilitation center?

One respondent (A1) stated that culture has no impact, while others (A2, A3) acknowledged its significance. Another participant (A4) noted a partial effect. Among female participants, all (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5) highlighted the importance of cultural factors, whereas one (B6) mentioned occasional relevance.

Q2: What is the significance of the social worker's role in rehabilitation?

Respondents (A1, A2, A3, A4) emphasized the crucial importance of social workers in the rehabilitation process within correctional facilities. Participants (B4, B5) stated that social workers contribute significantly to reform efforts, while one participant (B6) stressed that rehabilitation lacks significance without the involvement of social workers.

Q3: What kind of services should social workers offer?

One participant (A1) sees social workers as addressing societal issues. Participants (A2, A3, A4) advocate for a range of psychological, social, and health services. Participants (B1, B2) emphasize external services, while others (B3, B4) highlight the importance of listening to cases and providing humanitarian aid without bias. Lastly, participants (B5, B6) stress the significance of personal interaction and humanitarian support.

Q4: What are the primary challenges and difficulties you encounter?

Participant (A1) identifies various issues, such as interference with social workers' tasks and hindrances to the reform process. Participant (A2) perceives a lack of recognition for the social worker's role. Participant (A3) highlights challenges related to the high caseload and inadequate

facilities for case management. Participant (A4) points out the lack of social work expertise among therapists. On the other hand, participants (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5) cite challenges include ng insufficient space, inadequate research personnel, and limited oversight. Participant (B6) attributes problems to the involvement of adolescents' families and relatives.

Q5: Does prison overcrowding affect the process of investigating and handling cases?

Participants (A1, A2) suggest that prison overcrowding does have some influence on cases. Participants (A3, A4) express concerns that an excessive number of cases can impede effective follow-up.

In contrast, participants (B1, B2, B3, B4) strongly assert that overcrowding significantly impacts their workflow, advocating for fewer cases to ensure better service provision. Participants (B5, B6) affirm that indeed, overcrowding does affect cases.

Q6: How many prisoners does each social worker handle, and does this impact the quality and quantity of services delivered?

Participants (A1, A2, A3, A4) are assigned between three to five cases. They believe that having fewer cases allows for better attention and duration per case. Similarly, participants (B1, B2, B3) also manage three to five cases, asserting that a smaller caseload ensures better service provision. In contrast, participants (B4, B5, B6) handle a larger workload, approximately fifty cases each.

Q7: How would you characterize your service delivery experience in the previous month?

Participant (A1) did not provide a response. Participant (A2) noted engagements with youths facing challenging social circumstances. Participant (A3) described organizing psychological and social guidance sessions, along with screenings of relevant films and question-and-answer sessions regarding inmates' rights and responsibilities.

Participants (B1, B2, B3, B4) shared experiences of conducting social research, making phone calls to victims' relatives, and daily case follow-ups. They also mentioned resolving multiple prisoners' issues.

Participant (B6) mentioned coordinating private meetings, along with offering psychological and physical support to individual cases.

Q8: What methods do you implement during prisoners' rehabilitation?

Participant (A1) did not provide a response. Participants (A2, A3, A4) listed techniques including self-introduction, maintaining confidentiality, conducting case meetings, and utilizing cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).

Participants (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5) mentioned referring prisoners to Correctional Health Centers. Participant (B6) highlighted conducting psychological sessions.

Q9: Is the correctional environment suitable for juvenile residents?

Participant (A1) feels the rehabilitation environment is somewhat appropriate. Participants (A2, A3) expressed concerns about building inadequacies. Participant (A4) believes it's passable.

Among female participants, (B1, B2, B3) described it as somewhat appropriate but not perfect, while (B4, B5) deemed it generally suitable. Participant (B6) disagreed, stating that the correctional environment isn't suitable for juveniles.

4.2 Discussion

The research findings from the 10 semi-structured interviews with social workers in women's and juvenile correctional facilities reveal several key insights.

Firstly, there's a divergence in perspectives regarding the influence of culture on the role of social workers in rehabilitation. While some participants downplay its significance, others emphasize its importance, particularly female participants who unanimously stress its relevance. Secondly, the significance of social workers' roles in rehabilitation is unanimously recognized across all participants, with emphasis placed on their crucial contribution to the reform process. Regarding the services provided by social workers, there's a range of perspectives, with some focusing on societal issues, while others advocate for psychological, social, and health services. However, there's a consensus on the importance of personal interaction and humanitarian support.

Challenges faced by social workers include interference with tasks, lack of recognition, high caseloads, and inadequate facilities, as well as issues like insufficient space and limited oversight.

The impact of prison overcrowding on case handling varies, with some acknowledging its influence, while others strongly assert its significant impact on workflow and service provision. The caseload per social worker also varies, with smaller caseloads generally believed to allow for better service provision.

Participants' recent service delivery experiences vary, with engagements ranging from conducting social research to providing psychological support and resolving prisoners' issues.

Methods employed during prisoners' rehabilitation include self-introduction, maintaining confidentiality, case meetings, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and referral to Correctional Health Centers.

Finally, opinions on the suitability of the correctional environment for juvenile residents differ, with some expressing concerns about building inadequacies and others deeming it generally suitable or inappropriate.

Overall, these findings highlight the diverse perspectives and experiences of social workers in women's and juvenile correctional facilities, underscoring the complex challenges and crucial roles they face in rehabilitation efforts.

Chapter 5:

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings from the 10 semi-structured interviews with social workers in women's and juvenile correctional facilities offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of their roles and the challenges they encounter. The study sheds light on various aspects, including the influence of culture on their work, the significance of their roles in rehabilitation, the services they provide, challenges faced, the impact of prison overcrowding, caseload management, methods employed during rehabilitation, and the suitability of the correctional environment for juvenile residents.

Overall, the findings underscore the complexity of social work in correctional facilities and the need for tailored approaches to address the diverse needs of inmates. The study highlights the importance of continued research and support for social workers to enhance their effectiveness in facilitating rehabilitation and promoting positive outcomes for incarcerated individuals.

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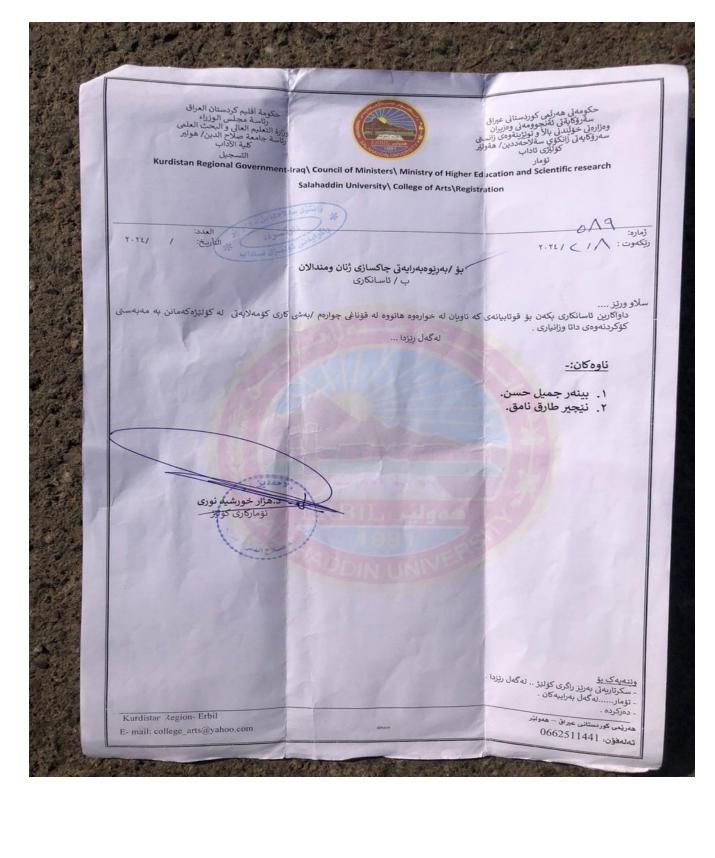
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Appendixes





رۆلى تويژەرانى كۆمەلايەتى لەبەھىزكردنى گروپە لاوازەكان. تويژينەو ھەكى مەيدانيە لە چاكسازى ئافرەتان و مندالان-ھەولىر

تنِينى :

- 1- ناوى تونير در يان فهرمابنه ناتوسرنت لهناو تونير ينهوه بهلكو كود بهكار دهنينرنيت.
- 2- له همر پرسیار نك تننگه شتینی ده تو انی پرسیار بكه ی بؤ نهوه ی بؤت روون بكه ینه و .
- 3- هعر پرسیاریک حمزت نمکرد و هلام بدمیتموه نموانو ناز ادی نموه الام نعدانموهی بان پاشمکشی
 کر دن نه و هلام دانموه ی پرمیار مکان.
 - 4- جەخت دەكەينەوە ئەو وەلاماتە تەھا بەمەبەستى توپژينەوە بەكاردە ھۆنرنىت.

ئاق
تىمەن
ر ،گەز

 ١٠ بهراى تق هۆكاره كولتوورىيەكان رۆڵ دەگنىرن له پراكتىز مكردنى سۆشىيال وۆركەر لـه چاكساژىدا؟

٢ .تا چەند رۆلى سۆشىيال وۆركەر لە چاكسازىدا گرئگە؟

٣ سۆشيال وۆركەر دەبى چى خزمەتگوزارىيەك پېشكەش بكەن؟

٤ .گرنگترین نهو بهربهست و کیششه چین که دینه بهردستان؟

 قار دبالْخی ناو چاکسازی کاریگاری هاپووه لاسسار میکائیزمی بهدواداچوون و کارکردئی کهیسهکان ؟

 ٨. هـ سوشياڵ ويركهريك چاند زيندانى بهردهكهويت نهمه كاريگهرى ههيه لهمهر چونايهتى و چهندايهتى پيشكهش كردنى خزمهت گوز اريبهكان؟

٧ چۆن باسى نەزموونى پۆشكەشكردنى خزمەت گوزارىيەكىقى خۆتم بۆ دەكەيت لە مائگى
 رابردوو ؟

۸.نهو تهکنیکشه چین که نهنجامی داددی له کاتی پر قسهی چاکبوونه و دی دقی تهندروستی زیندانیان ؟

٩. ژينگهي چاکسازي گونجاوه بو نهوهي نهوجهوانان تيدا بژين؟