Evaluating the roles of social workers and medical staff in patient support activities: A comparative analysis of satisfaction levels

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Abstract This study examined the effectiveness of consulting support activities aimed at addressing social work problems for patients and their relatives at Cu Chi Regional General Hospital. A mixed-methods approach was employed, utilizing surveys administered to 100 participants and data analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Participants provided sociodemographic information and rated their satisfaction levels with social work activities on a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze both demographic data and satisfaction levels. The findings from this study underscore the critical roles that social workers and medical staff play in providing consulting support activities to address social work problems for patients and their relatives. Social workers are predominantly involved in most of these activities, highlighting their integral role in patient care and support within the healthcare system. This distinction is crucial because it emphasizes the specialized training and skills that social workers bring to patient interactions, which are different but complementary to the expertise of medical staff. The findings underscore the critical role of social workers in providing personalized support and advocacy for patients. Recommendations include enhancing communication, resource allocation, and training initiatives to optimize social work services. By addressing these factors, the Cu Chi Regional General Hospital can improve patient satisfaction and promote holistic care. This study contributes to ongoing efforts to enhance social work practices within healthcare settings.

Keywords: social work activities, patient satisfaction, healthcare settings, Cu Chi Regional General Hospital, consulting support activities

1. Introduction

The integration of social work services within healthcare settings is pivotal for addressing the diverse and complex needs of patients and their families. Social workers assume integral roles within interdisciplinary healthcare teams, offering consulting support activities tailored to address the social work challenges patients encounter throughout their healthcare journey (McCoyd et al., 2016; Reeves et al., 2011). Given the multifaceted nature of these challenges, assessing the satisfaction levels associated with social work interventions becomes imperative for optimizing patient care and fostering favorable healthcare outcomes. Social workers function as linchpins within healthcare teams, bridging gaps between medical interventions and the broader social and emotional needs of patients and families (Dobrof et al., 2019; McCoyd et al., 2016). Their expertise in addressing psychosocial factors, navigating community resources, and advocating for patients’ rights contributes significantly to the holistic well-being of individuals receiving healthcare services (McCregor et al., 2018; Stanhope & Strausser, 2017). By providing targeted support that extends beyond medical treatment, social workers play a vital role in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of patient care. The involvement of social workers in healthcare settings extends beyond individual patient interactions to encompass systemic efforts aimed at improving overall healthcare delivery. Through their participation in program development, policy advocacy, and community outreach initiatives, social workers contribute to the creation of more responsive, equitable, and patient-centered healthcare systems (Browne et al., 2017; National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine et al., 2019). As such, understanding the level of satisfaction with social work services provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of these broader efforts and informs strategies for enhancing healthcare delivery at both the individual and systemic levels.

Social workers’ involvement in welcoming, instructing, and providing information about medical examination and treatment services is foundational to the patient experience within healthcare settings. Patients and their families often rely on social workers to navigate the complexities of the healthcare system, ensuring that they receive clear and comprehensive information from the outset of their care journey (Allen, 2014). This initial interaction sets the tone for the patient’s overall experience and satisfaction with the healthcare system. Research by Howe et al. (2019) emphasizes the critical role of social
workers in providing information and support to patients at the beginning of their healthcare journey, highlighting how this interaction influences patients’ perceptions of the quality of care they receive. Similarly, Bleich et al. (2009); Nguyen et al. (2024) underscore the importance of initial interactions with social workers in shaping patients’ overall satisfaction with the healthcare system, noting that clear communication and support at this stage can have lasting effects on patients’ experiences and outcomes throughout their care journey. By establishing trust, rapport, and a sense of partnership from the outset, social workers lay the foundation for positive patient-provider relationships and contribute to improved patient satisfaction and outcomes.

Moreover, social workers play a central role in organizing visits to patients and their families to gather comprehensive information about their health situations and difficult circumstances (Batbaatar et al., 2017). These visits serve as crucial opportunities for social workers to establish meaningful connections with patients and their families, providing insights into their individual needs and challenges. Research by Cooley et al. (2011) highlights the importance of these visits in facilitating personalized care plans that address the unique circumstances of patients. By taking the time to understand patients’ backgrounds, preferences, and social support networks, social workers can tailor their interventions to align with patients’ specific needs and goals (Berkman, 2000). Furthermore, these personalized support plans developed by social workers have far-reaching implications for patient outcomes and well-being. By addressing the underlying social determinants of health, such as housing instability, financial constraints, or lack of social support, social workers can help mitigate barriers to care and promote better health outcomes (Thornton et al., 2016). The individualized nature of these interventions ensures that patients receive holistic support that goes beyond medical treatment alone, addressing the root causes of health disparities and promoting equity in healthcare delivery.

In addition to providing direct support to patients, social workers also offer urgent support for patients who are victims of violence, domestic violence, accidents, and disasters (White-Williams et al., 2020). Their expertise in crisis intervention and trauma-informed care enables them to respond effectively to urgent situations, ensuring patient safety and addressing immediate social work needs. This critical role underscores the importance of having skilled social workers who can provide immediate support and advocacy in times of crisis (Cox et al., 2015). Furthermore, the provision of urgent support by social workers extends beyond addressing immediate safety concerns to encompass holistic care and support for individuals experiencing trauma and crisis. Social workers employ a range of therapeutic techniques and interventions to help patients cope with the emotional, psychological, and practical challenges associated with traumatic events (O’Hare, 2020). Their trauma-informed approach emphasizes safety, empowerment, and collaboration, recognizing the complex interplay of factors that contribute to individuals’ experiences of trauma and crisis. Moreover, social workers’ involvement in crisis intervention extends beyond the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event to encompass ongoing support and advocacy for patients as they navigate the aftermath of trauma (Roysircar et al., 2013). Social workers help individuals access resources, services, and support networks that can facilitate their recovery and resilience in the face of adversity (Ungar, 2011). This continuum of care ensures that patients receive the support they need at every stage of their healing journey, promoting long-term recovery and well-being.

Furthermore, social workers advise patients on their rights, legal interests, and obligations in medical examination and treatment (Galowitz, 1998). Patients benefit from the legal and rights-based guidance provided by social workers, empowering them to navigate the complexities of the healthcare system and advocate for their rights. By ensuring that patients understand and can assert their rights within the medical context, social workers promote patient autonomy and dignity. Moreover, the legal and rights-based guidance offered by social workers serves as a crucial resource for vulnerable people who may face discrimination, exploitation, or violations of their rights within healthcare settings (Ife et al., 2022). Social workers advocate for the rights of marginalized and underserved individuals, ensuring that they receive equitable access to healthcare services and fair treatment under the law (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). This advocacy work aligns with social work’s commitment to social justice and human rights, challenging systemic injustices and promoting equity within healthcare systems. Additionally, social workers collaborate with patients to develop strategies for resolving legal and ethical dilemmas that may arise during the course of medical treatment (Reamer, 2018). They provide information, support, and referrals to legal resources and advocacy organizations, empowering patients to assert their rights and address grievances effectively. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of partnership and trust between patients and social workers, enhancing the quality of patient-provider relationships and promoting positive healthcare experiences.

Finally, social workers are instrumental in coordinating and guiding organizations and volunteers who support the hospital’s social work (Kitchen & Brook, 2005). Their coordination efforts ensure that external resources and volunteer efforts are effectively utilized to benefit patients, aligning with their needs and the hospital’s goals. By leveraging community partnerships and volunteer support, social workers enhance the capacity of healthcare organizations to meet the diverse needs of patients and promote holistic care (Onyekere et al., 2016). Furthermore, social workers play a pivotal role in facilitating communication and collaboration between healthcare organizations and community-based agencies, fostering a seamless continuum of care for patients (National Academies of Sciences & Medicine, 2019). They serve as liaisons between different service providers, ensuring that patients receive coordinated support and referrals to external resources as needed. This collaborative approach to care enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare delivery, maximizing the impact
of available resources and improving patient outcomes. Moreover, social workers engage in capacity-building efforts aimed at strengthening the skills and competencies of volunteers and community organizations involved in supporting hospital social work initiatives (Tan & Yuen, 2013). They provide training, supervision, and ongoing support to volunteers, ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively meet the needs of patients and uphold professional standards of practice. By investing in the development of community partnerships and volunteer networks, social workers contribute to building a more resilient, responsive, and inclusive healthcare system (Chen et al., 2013).

Social workers' role in coordinating and guiding organizations and volunteers who support hospital social work is essential for enhancing patient care, promoting community engagement, and building a more inclusive healthcare system. Their coordination efforts facilitate collaboration between healthcare organizations and community partners, maximizing the impact of available resources and improving patient outcomes. By leveraging community partnerships and volunteer support, social workers contribute to creating a more responsive, resilient, and patient-centered healthcare system for all individuals and communities.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The study included a total of 100 participants, representing a diverse range of demographic characteristics. In terms of gender distribution, 43% of the participants identified as male, while 57% identified as female, reflecting a relatively balanced gender composition within the sample. Regarding the socioeconomic background of the participants, the study included individuals from various family conditions. Among the participants, 8% hailed from poor households, 9% from near-poor households, 68% from average households, and 15% from well-off households, providing a nuanced understanding of how individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds perceive consulting support activities in healthcare settings. Educational attainment varied among the participants; 15% had completed primary education, 19% had completed secondary education, 39% had completed high school, and 27% had attained a university or college degree. This diverse educational background ensures a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences regarding consulting support activities, contributing to the richness of the study’s findings. The comprehensive representation of participants across gender, family condition, and academic level enables a thorough exploration of the factors influencing satisfaction with consulting support activities in addressing social work problems for patients and their relatives within healthcare contexts. By incorporating diverse perspectives, the study aims to provide insights that are applicable and relevant to a wide range of individuals receiving healthcare services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Overview of participants.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Family condition</td>
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<td>Poor households</td>
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<td>Near-poor households</td>
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<td>Average household</td>
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<td>Well-off households</td>
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<td>Academic level</td>
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<td>Primary</td>
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<td>Secondary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>University/College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2. Measurements

The measurement instrument utilized in this study serves the primary objective of assessing the current status of social work activities at the Cu Chi Regional General Hospital. To achieve this goal, the author will administer a survey to 100 patients and patient relatives, targeting their satisfaction levels with consulting support activities aimed at addressing social work problems within the hospital setting. Participants will be asked to rate their satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied." This quantitative approach enables the systematic evaluation of satisfaction levels, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of social work activities at the hospital. The survey instrument is designed to identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of social work activities at the Cu Chi Regional General Hospital. By collecting data on participants' satisfaction levels and perceptions, the study aims to pinpoint areas of strengths and weaknesses within the existing social work framework. Additionally, the survey will include sections for participants to propose suggestions and solutions for the development and enhancement of social work activities at the hospital. This qualitative component allows participants to provide valuable feedback and recommendations based on their experiences, contributing to the formulation of targeted interventions and improvement strategies.
2.3. Procedures

This study will be conducted in a systematic manner to assess the current status of social work activities at the Cu Chi Regional General Hospital and propose potential solutions for improvement. Initially, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed to gauge participants’ satisfaction with consulting support activities aimed at addressing social work problems. This questionnaire includes both closed-ended questions and a 5-point Likert scale.

A sample of 100 participants, comprising patients and patient relatives, will be recruited from Cu Chi Regional General Hospital. Participants will be chosen based on their willingness to participate and their direct experience with social work activities within the hospital setting. The survey will be administered either in person or electronically, depending on participants’ preferences and accessibility. They will be informed about the study’s purpose and provided with instructions for completing the questionnaire.

Quantitative data obtained from the Likert scale responses will be analyzed using statistical methods to calculate mean scores and assess satisfaction levels. Through this analysis, factors influencing the effectiveness of social work activities at the Cu Chi Regional General Hospital were identified. These factors may include communication barriers, resource constraints, or gaps in service delivery.

Based on the identified factors, proposals and solutions for the development and enhancement of social work activities will be formulated. These proposals may involve changes to existing practices, resource allocation strategies, or training initiatives for staff members. The proposals will then be validated through consultation with key stakeholders, including hospital administrators, social workers, and patient representatives.

Once validated, the proposed solutions will be implemented in collaboration with relevant departments and stakeholders. The effectiveness of the proposed solutions will be monitored and evaluated over time to assess their impact on patient satisfaction and the overall quality of social work activities at the Cu Chi Regional General Hospital. Through this process, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the current state of social work activities at hospitals and propose evidence-based solutions for improvement.

2.4. Data Analysis

This study used SPSS version 25.0 for data analysis, focusing on sociodemographic data and participants’ satisfaction with consulting support activities. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic distribution and satisfaction levels. The study ensured accuracy, efficiency, and reliability in processing and interpreting the data. Descriptive statistics provided valuable insights into participants’ sociodemographic profile and perceptions of social work activities at Cu Chi Regional General Hospital. This rigorous analytical approach led to key findings and evidence-based recommendations for improving social work services.

3. Results

The evaluation of patients’ satisfaction with consulting support activities to solve social work problems and their relatives reveals several insights. The analysis included eight different aspects of social work support within a medical context, each assessed for mean satisfaction (M) and standard deviation (SD).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mean (M)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Welcoming, instructing, providing information, and introducing medical examination and treatment services</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Organizing visits to patients and their families to obtain information about the patient’s health situation and difficult circumstances, determine the level and have a plan for psychological and social support.</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Urgent support for social work activities for patients who are victims of violence, domestic violence, gender-based violence, accidents, and disasters to ensure patient safety</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supporting and advise patients on their rights, legal interests and obligations in medical examination and treatment</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support and advise patients on social programs and policies on health insurance and social benefits in medical examination and treatment</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Providing information and advice to patients who are scheduled to be transferred to medical examination and treatment facilities or discharged from the hospital.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Supporting discharge procedures and referring patients to community support locations.</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coordinating and guiding organizations and volunteers who need to implement and support the hospital’s social work</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.79</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.777</strong></td>
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</table>
The highest level of satisfaction was noted in the "Welcoming, instructing, providing information, and introducing medical examination and treatment services" category, with a mean score of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.745. This suggests that the initial interactions and the provision of essential information to patients and their relatives are highly valued. Similarly, the aspect of "supporting discharge procedures and referring patients to community support locations" also had relatively high scores, with a mean of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.77. This indicates a positive reception of the assistance provided during the discharge process and subsequent referral to community resources. In terms of providing information and advice, both the categories of "providing information and advice to patients who are scheduled to be transferred to medical examination and treatment facilities or discharged from the hospital" and "support and advise patients on social programs and policies on health insurance and social benefits in medical examination and treatment" had mean scores of 3.83 and 3.81, respectively, showing consistent satisfaction in these areas with standard deviations of 0.766 and 0.8, respectively. The support for legal and rights-related advice, covered under "Supporting and advising patients on their rights, legal interests, and obligations in medical examination and treatment," had a mean score of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 0.791. This reflects a strong appreciation for guidance in navigating legalities and patient rights. Conversely, the aspect with the lowest satisfaction is "Urgent support for social work activities for patients who are victims of violence, domestic violence, gender-based violence, accidents, and disasters to ensure patient safety," which has a mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.757. This lower score suggests that there may be challenges or areas for improvement in providing urgent social work support in crisis situations.

The overall mean satisfaction across all aspects is 3.79, with a standard deviation of 0.777, indicating a generally positive but varied perception of the support activities. The relatively consistent standard deviation values of approximately 0.7-0.8 suggest that while the satisfaction levels are fairly uniform, there are nuances in different areas that could benefit from targeted improvements to enhance the overall patient and relative experience in social work support.

The comparison of satisfaction levels in consulting support activities to solve social work problems for patients and their relatives between social workers and medical staff highlights the differing roles and contributions of these two groups. The data include eight categories of social work support, with each category showing the percentage of activities implemented by social workers and medical staff.

Table 3 Comparing the level of satisfaction in consulting support activities to solve social work problems for patients and patients’ relatives between social workers and medical staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Implementer</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Welcoming, instructing, providing information, and introducing medical examination and treatment services</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Organizing visits to patients and their families to obtain information about the patient’s health situation and difficult circumstances, determine the level and have a plan for psychological and social support.</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Urgent support for social work activities for patients who are victims of violence, domestic violence, gender-based violence, accidents, and disasters to ensure patient safety.</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supporting and advising patients on their rights, legal interests and obligations in medical examination and treatment</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support and advise patients on social programs and policies on health insurance and social benefits in medical examination and treatment</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Providing information and advice to patients who are scheduled to be transferred to medical examination and treatment facilities or discharged from the hospital.</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Supporting discharge procedures and referring patients to community support locations.</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coordinating and guiding organizations and volunteers who need to implement and support the hospital’s social work</td>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical staff</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In welcoming, instructing, providing information, and introducing medical examination and treatment services, social workers are primarily responsible for handling 65.6% of these activities. This indicates their crucial role in initial patient engagement and information provision, with medical staff contributing 34.4%. In regard to organizing visits to patients and their families to gather information about the patient’s health situation and difficult circumstances, social workers again take the lead, accounting for 67.9% of these activities. This substantial involvement highlights their significant role in conducting home visits and gathering essential information to create personalized support plans compared to the 32.1% handled by medical staff. In providing urgent support for patients who are victims of violence, domestic violence, gender-based violence, accidents, and disasters, social workers are involved in 64.6% of cases. This demonstrates their critical role in ensuring patient safety during emergencies, while medical staff are involved in 35.4% of these urgent support activities. This area requires immediate attention and specialized support, where social workers’ expertise is essential. Supporting and advising patients on their rights, legal interests, and obligations in medical examination and treatment is another area where social workers play a significant role, contributing to 64.0% of the activities. This reflects their substantial involvement in guiding
patients through legal matters and ensuring that they understand their rights and obligations, with medical staff accounting for 36.0%. Social workers are also primarily responsible for advising patients on social programs and policies related to health insurance and social benefits, handling 65.0% of these activities. This highlights their role in ensuring patients access to necessary resources and benefits, while medical staff manage 35.0% of this support. In managing patient transitions and discharge planning, social workers provide 64.6% of the information and advice to patients scheduled to be transferred to other medical facilities or discharged from the hospital. This underscores their importance in facilitating smooth transitions and ensuring postdischarge support, with medical staff accounting for 35.4%. Supporting discharge procedures and referring patients to community support locations is another area where social workers lead, accounting for 64.6% of these activities. This role is vital in ensuring continuity of care through community support systems, with medical staff contributing 35.4%. Finally, in coordinating and guiding organizations and volunteers who support the hospital's social work, social workers are responsible for 65.3% of these activities. This highlights their crucial role in managing external support and integrating additional resources within the hospital, while medical staff handle 34.7%.

Overall, social workers are the primary implementers in most social work support activities, with their involvement consistently higher than that of medical staff across all categories. Their participation ranged from 64% to 67.9%, demonstrating their vital role in providing comprehensive support to patients and their families. Medical staff, while supportive, are more involved in areas requiring medical expertise, ensuring that patients receive both the social and medical support necessary for their well-being.

4. Discussion

The findings from this study underscore the critical roles that social workers and medical staff play in providing consulting support activities to address social work problems for patients and their relatives. Social workers are predominantly involved in most of these activities, highlighting their integral role in patient care and support within the healthcare system. This distinction is crucial because it emphasizes the specialized training and skills that social workers bring to patient interactions, which are different but complementary to the expertise of medical staff.

In the areas of welcoming, instructing, providing information, and introducing medical examination and treatment services, social workers take the lead. This significant involvement suggests that social workers are essential in ensuring that patients and their families receive clear and comprehensive information immediately from the beginning of their healthcare experience. This initial interaction is crucial because it sets the tone for patients’ overall experience and satisfaction with the healthcare system. Effective communication during these initial stages can significantly reduce patient anxiety and confusion, leading to a more positive healthcare experience. According to a study by Thompson and McCabe (2012), patients who receive thorough and empathetic communication from healthcare providers report higher levels of satisfaction and are more likely to adhere to treatment plans. With their specialized training in communication and patient advocacy, social workers are uniquely positioned to fulfill this role. Moreover, the welcoming and instructing phase often involves explaining complex medical information in an accessible manner. Social workers excel in translating medical jargon into understandable language, which empowers patients to make informed decisions about their care. This empowerment is vital for patient autonomy and engagement, as patients who understand their treatment options and the healthcare process are more likely to participate actively in their care. Research by Adams (2010) emphasizes the link between patient understanding and engagement, noting that clear communication from healthcare providers is associated with better health outcomes and greater patient satisfaction. By addressing these social determinants of health early on, social workers help to create a more supportive and accessible healthcare environment. This proactive approach is supported by the findings of Colizzi et al. (2020), who highlight that early intervention by social workers can lead to improved patient outcomes and reduced healthcare costs by preventing crises and promoting preventive care. The initial engagement facilitated by social workers also helps to build trust between the patient and the healthcare team. Trust is a fundamental component of the patient−provider relationship and is crucial for effective care delivery. When patients trust their healthcare providers, they are more likely to disclose important health information, follow medical advice, and engage in recommended treatments. A study by Birkhäuser et al. (2017) found that trust in healthcare providers is significantly associated with higher levels of patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment plans.

Social workers also play a primary role in organizing visits to patients and their families to gather information about their health situations and difficult circumstances. This involvement is vital for developing tailored support plans that address the unique needs of each patient. The positive reception of these efforts indicates that patients value the thorough assessments and personalized care plans that social workers provide (Miller et al., 2010). These visits serve as an opportunity for social workers to establish deeper connections with patients and their families in more familiar environments. Furthermore, organizing home visits allows social workers to engage in a collaborative assessment process with patients and their families (Couturier et al., 2023). Instead of simply gathering information, social workers involve patients in the assessment process, encouraging them to share their perspectives, concerns, and goals. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of empowerment and partnership between social workers and patients, which is essential for promoting patient autonomy and self-efficacy. According to a study by Malhotra et al. (2022), patient involvement in care planning is associated
with increased adherence to treatment plans and improved health outcomes. Thorough assessments conducted during home visits enable social workers to identify not only the patient's medical needs but also their psychosocial and environmental challenges (Pilotto et al., 2017). This holistic assessment is essential for developing comprehensive support plans that address all aspects of patients' well-being. In response, they can work with the patient to develop strategies to increase social connections and support networks, such as connecting them with community groups or arranging for regular check-ins with friends or family members.

In providing urgent support for patients who are victims of violence, domestic violence, gender-based violence, accidents, and disasters, social workers are more actively involved than medical staff. This critical role underscores the importance of having skilled social workers who can provide immediate and effective interventions in crisis situations. The involvement of social workers in these urgent cases highlights their expertise in ensuring patient safety and addressing immediate social work needs (Dziegielewski & Holliman, 2019). Social workers are trained to assess and respond to complex social and psychological issues, making them well equipped to handle crisis situations with sensitivity and expertise (Islam, 2024). Their training includes trauma-informed care, crisis intervention techniques, and knowledge of community resources, all of which are essential for providing effective support to patients in urgent situations. Moreover, social workers' involvement in urgent cases extends beyond immediate crisis intervention to include long-term support and advocacy for patients (Cox et al., 2015). After ensuring patient safety and addressing their immediate needs, social workers work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals to develop comprehensive support plans that address the underlying causes of the crisis. This holistic approach is essential for promoting long-term recovery and preventing future crises. According to a study by Deshields et al. (2021), social work interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of crises are associated with improved patient outcomes and reduced recurrence of crises. In addition to providing direct support to patients, social workers also play a crucial role in coordinating multidisciplinary responses to urgent cases. They collaborate with medical staff, law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to crisis management. This collaboration is essential for maximizing resources, preventing duplication of efforts, and addressing the diverse needs of patients. Research by Fung et al. (2015) highlights the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in crisis response, noting that effective coordination between different service providers leads to better outcomes for patients.

The support and advice provided by social workers regarding patients' rights, legal interests, and obligations in medical examination and treatment are also highly valued. Patients benefit from the legal and rights-based guidance offered by social workers, which helps them navigate the complexities of the healthcare system (Berthold, 2014). This assistance is crucial in empowering patients and ensuring that they understand and can advocate for their rights within the medical context. By providing clear and accessible information about patients' legal rights and responsibilities, social workers empower patients to make informed decisions about their care and treatment options. Furthermore, social workers play a crucial role in ensuring that patients' voices are heard and respected within the healthcare system (Salumi et al., 2023). They advocate for patients' rights to autonomy, dignity, and self-determination, helping to ensure that patients are active participants in their own care. Research by McMillan et al. (2013) emphasizes the importance of patient-centered care in healthcare delivery, noting that when patients feel empowered and respected, they are more likely to engage in their care and experience better outcomes. In addition to advocating for individual patients, social workers also work to address systemic barriers and injustices within the healthcare system (Brown et al., 2022). They identify policies and practices that may disproportionately impact vulnerable populations and work toward systemic changes that promote equity and social justice. Research by Ife et al. (2022) highlights the role of social workers as advocates for social change, noting that they play a vital role in challenging oppressive systems and promoting human rights.

Social workers are primarily responsible for advising patients on social programs, health insurance, and social benefits (National Academies of Sciences & Medicine, 2019). This role is essential for helping patients access the necessary resources and support they need for their healthcare. The guidance provided by social workers in this area can significantly impact patients' overall health outcomes by ensuring that they receive the benefits and support available to them (Reinhard et al., 2008). Navigating the complexities of social programs, health insurance policies, and social benefits can be daunting for many patients, especially those facing health challenges or socioeconomic barriers. Social workers serve as advocates and educators, helping patients understand their eligibility for various programs and benefits and assisting them in navigating the application process (Berg-Weger, 2019). This guidance is particularly crucial for vulnerable populations, such as low-income individuals, seniors, and individuals with disabilities, who may rely heavily on these programs for essential healthcare services and support. By ensuring that patients have access to comprehensive health insurance coverage, social workers help mitigate financial barriers to care and ensure that patients can access the medical services and treatments they need to maintain their health and well-being (Bhatt & Bathija, 2018). In addition to providing guidance on social programs and health insurance, social workers also connect patients with community resources and support services that can address their broader social and economic needs. This holistic approach to care recognizes the interconnectedness of social determinants of health and acknowledges that access to healthcare is just one aspect of overall well-being. Social workers' expertise in identifying and

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addressing these factors positions them as key contributors to efforts to promote health equity and reduce health disparities (Baciu et al., 2017).

In managing patient transitions and discharge planning, social workers again play a key role. Their involvement in providing information and advice for patients scheduled to be transferred or discharged is critical for ensuring continuity of care. Patients appreciate support during these transitions, which can be a vulnerable time for them (King et al., 2019). The smooth transition facilitated by social workers helps reduce anxiety and ensures that patients receive continuous care postdischarge. Transitioning between healthcare settings, such as moving from a hospital to a rehabilitation facility or from an inpatient unit to home care, can be a complex and overwhelming process for patients and their families. Social workers serve as guides and advocates during these transitions, helping patients understand their options, navigate logistical challenges, and access the support services they need to facilitate a smooth transition (Shanske et al., 2012). Research by Scott (2010) emphasizes the importance of effective discharge planning in ensuring patient safety and continuity of care, noting that coordinated discharge processes are associated with reduced rates of hospital readmission and improved patient outcomes. Moreover, social workers play a vital role in addressing the psychosocial and emotional needs of patients during transitions and discharge planning (Barber et al., 2015). They provide emotional support, counseling, and practical assistance to help patients and their families cope with the challenges of transitioning from one care setting to another. Research by Lobchuk et al. (2021) highlights the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in discharge planning, noting that effective teamwork is associated with improved patient outcomes and reduced healthcare utilization. Furthermore, social workers advocate for patients’ rights and preferences during the discharge planning process, ensuring that their voices are heard and respected (Zimmerman & Dabelko, 2007). They facilitate communication between patients, families, and healthcare providers, helping to address any concerns or conflicts that may arise during the transition process. The involvement of social workers in discharge planning not only benefits individual patients but also contributes to more efficient and effective healthcare delivery.

Supporting discharge procedures and referring patients to community support locations is another area where social workers’ contributions are crucial. The role of social workers in this process ensures that patients are not left without support once they leave the hospital (Lloyd et al., 2002). Discharge from the hospital can be a daunting prospect for many patients, especially those who require ongoing care or support services in the community. Social workers play a pivotal role in facilitating this transition by connecting patients with community resources and support programs that can help meet their needs after discharge (Kulurski et al., 2017). Social workers, whether they are arranging for home health services, coordinating with rehabilitation facilities, or providing information about support groups and community organizations, ensure that patients have access to the resources they need to continue their recovery outside of the hospital setting. Research by Hoyer et al. (2018) emphasizes the importance of postdischarge support in reducing hospital readmissions and improving patient outcomes, noting that coordinated care transitions are associated with better patient experiences and reduced healthcare costs. Moreover, social workers play a vital role in addressing the social determinants of health that may impact patients’ ability to recover and thrive in the community (National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine et al., 2016). They assess patients’ social and environmental circumstances, such as housing stability, access to transportation, and social support networks, and work to address any barriers or challenges that may impede their recovery.

Finally, social workers are central to coordinating and guiding organizations and volunteers who support the hospital’s social work (Whittaker & Garbarino, 1983). This coordination is vital for integrating additional resources and ensuring that volunteer efforts are effectively utilized to benefit patients. The involvement of social workers in managing these external supports ensures that they are aligned with the patients’ needs and the hospital’s goals (National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine et al., 2019). Social workers serve as liaisons between these external entities and the hospital, facilitating communication, collaboration, and mutual understanding (Reeves et al., 2011; Weinstein et al., 2003). By understanding the specific needs and challenges faced by patients and the goals of the hospital’s social work department, social workers can effectively coordinate the efforts of organizations and volunteers to ensure that they are targeted and responsive to patient needs. Furthermore, social workers provide guidance and oversight to volunteers, ensuring that they are adequately trained, supported, and equipped to fulfill their roles effectively (Healy & Lonne, 2010). They offer supervision, mentorship, and ongoing support to volunteers, helping to maximize their impact and ensuring that they adhere to professional standards and ethical guidelines. The involvement of social workers in coordinating and guiding organizations and volunteers who support the hospital’s social work reflects their commitment to advocating for patients’ needs, promoting collaboration and partnership, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in healthcare delivery.

The findings of this study have several implications for healthcare practice and policy. First, the prominent role of social workers in various aspects of consulting support activities underscores the importance of integrating social work services into healthcare settings. Healthcare institutions should prioritize the recruitment and retention of skilled social workers who can provide comprehensive support to patients and their families, addressing not only medical needs but also psychosocial and environmental factors that impact health and well-being. Second, the disparity in satisfaction levels between social workers and medical staff highlights the need for interprofessional collaboration and communication within...
healthcare teams. Enhancing collaboration between social workers and medical staff can lead to more coordinated and patient-centered care delivery, improving patient outcomes and experiences. Healthcare organizations should invest in training programs and initiatives that promote teamwork, mutual respect, and shared decision-making among healthcare professionals. Third, the high satisfaction levels reported by patients receiving support from social workers emphasize the value of patient-centered care and the importance of addressing patients' holistic needs. Healthcare providers should adopt a patient-centered approach that prioritizes the preferences, values, and goals of individual patients, ensuring that care plans are tailored to meet their unique needs and circumstances. This approach can lead to improved patient satisfaction, adherence to treatment plans, and health outcomes. Furthermore, the involvement of social workers in addressing social determinants of health highlights the potential for healthcare systems to address upstream factors that influence health and well-being. Healthcare organizations should collaborate with community partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive strategies for addressing social determinants of health, such as poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity. By addressing these factors, healthcare systems can promote health equity and reduce disparities in health outcomes. Finally, the role of social workers in coordinating external resources and volunteer efforts underscores the importance of community engagement and partnership in healthcare delivery. Healthcare organizations should actively engage with community organizations, nonprofit agencies, and volunteers to leverage additional resources and support patients. By fostering collaboration and partnership with external stakeholders, healthcare systems can expand their capacity to meet the diverse needs of patients and promote a more integrated and inclusive approach to healthcare delivery.

Although the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the level of satisfaction with the consulting support activities provided by social workers and medical staff, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study's reliance on self-reported measures for assessing satisfaction may introduce response bias. Participants may provide socially desirable responses or overstate their level of satisfaction, leading to inflated satisfaction ratings. Future research could complement self-report measures with objective indicators of satisfaction or include qualitative methods to gain a more nuanced understanding of patients' and staff members' experiences. Second, the study's sample size and composition may limit the generalizability of the findings. The study included a specific population of patients and staff members from a particular healthcare setting, which may not be representative of broader populations or settings. Future research could include larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings across different healthcare contexts and populations. Third, the study focused primarily on satisfaction with consulting support activities provided by social workers and medical staff, without examining other factors that may influence satisfaction, such as patient demographics, clinical characteristics, or organizational factors. Future research could explore the influence of these factors on satisfaction levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of satisfaction in healthcare settings. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. Although the study identified associations between social workers' involvement and satisfaction levels, it cannot determine whether social workers' involvement directly influenced satisfaction or whether other factors contributed to the observed relationships. Longitudinal or experimental designs could help clarify the causal relationships between social work involvement and satisfaction in healthcare settings. Finally, the study did not assess the quality or effectiveness of consulting support activities provided by social workers and medical staff. While satisfaction is an important indicator of patient and staff experiences, it may not necessarily reflect the quality or impact of the services provided. Future research could incorporate measures of service quality, effectiveness, and outcomes to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of consulting support activities in healthcare settings.

5. Final considerations

This study highlights the significant role of social workers in providing consulting support activities to address social work problems for patients and their relatives within healthcare settings. The findings underscore the importance of integrating social work services into healthcare delivery to meet the diverse needs of patients and promote holistic care. While social workers are predominantly involved in these activities, collaboration with medical staff is essential for optimizing patient care and satisfaction. The study's findings emphasize the importance of interprofessional collaboration, patient-centered care, and addressing social determinants of health in healthcare practice. Moving forward, healthcare organizations should prioritize the recruitment, training, and support of social workers to enhance patient outcomes and experiences. By recognizing and valuing the contributions of social workers, healthcare systems can promote equity, dignity, and well-being for all individuals and communities.

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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