
UNIT 5 RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITMENT AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Contents

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss various types of responsibilities in social work;
- Explain various levels and circles of commitment in social work;
- Define responsibility and commitment as core value of social work;
- Explain the importance of responsibility and commitment in social work practice;
- Describe the principles of values of responsibility and commitment and
- Discuss ways of expression of value of responsibility and commitment.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Professional social work requires core values for effective practice at various levels ranging from individuals, groups, families and communities. The core value of responsibility and commitment play a pivotal role in fulfilling the objectives of social work profession. 'Responsibility' and 'Commitment' are interlinked. If one wants to practice the value of responsibility, he/she should have commitment to the profession, its mission and vision. The value of responsibility and commitment make social workers to be responsible for their action and committed to the profession. Practising the amalgamation of responsibility, commitment and professional loyalty would bring good results to social work interventions. The value of responsibility and commitment brings veracity to the different role of social workers such as educating, training, research, learning, practising, etc.

Since, social work profession is involved in enabling the clients to find solutions to the problems and caters to various categories of people in society including marginalized, underprivileged, weaker sections, stigmatized population, neglected victims, etc., value of responsibility and commitment are very important and has to be made evident with dedication.

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5.2 CONCEPT AND NATURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility

The word “responsibility” means “ability to respond.” Responsibility means taking ownership of one’s own thoughts, feelings and actions and refraining from blame or judgment on self or others. Responsibility can be defined as the ‘state or fact of being accountable or to blame for something’ (Hans Lenk, 2006). One has to be accountable for his/her duties whether they are personal or professional. Responsibility refers to the human conduct and the consequences thereof that trigger such responses (Peter, 2002).

To be responsible, or to take responsibility for something (or someone), means that somebody is obliged to (against) an addressee for actions, results of actions, tasks and states of affairs, and that he or she has to justify these actions and results before (or in the face of) a judgement, according to standards, criteria, or norms (Hans Lenk, 2006).

Types of Responsibilities

Responsibility can be described as the ‘state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone’. There are many different types of responsibilities expected from a professional social worker.

Responsibility for actions and their results

Taking responsibility for one’s deeds is essential for effective social work practice. Nobody can be perfect at all times, and in every dealings. In fact, everyone commits mistakes. When one accepts responsibility, he/she is accepting the blame/praise for one’s actions and also accepting the responsibility for making improvements in one’s life. Accepting responsibility is a measure of one’s self-worth and the true sign of strength and courage.

Task and role responsibility

People from various walks of life play different roles and perform different tasks in the society. One has to be responsible for the entrusted tasks and the roles. For example, if a social worker is given charge of an upcoming seminar in the school or an agency, she/he has to take the responsibility and perform the task in the best manner possible.

Universal moral responsibility

Sometimes we feel responsible for people or things because we believe it is the right thing to do. We feel that we are morally responsible because to ignore it would be wrong. All are expected to perform certain actions in certain situations, being a member of the society and guided by some moral values; to be morally responsible for something, say an action for having performed it. For example, one who encounters a car accident may be regarded as worthy of praise for having saved a child from inside a burning car.

Legal responsibility

Some responsibilities are upheld by law. It is against the law not to take responsibility in some cases. There are different types of legal responsibilities. Some laws may only apply in a country and others are international. Legal responsibility is very essential for effective social work practice. Social workers have to perform various roles such as educators, managers, evaluators, negotiators, facilitators, advocates, health workers, etc. All these roles must abide by legal responsibilities concerning clients’ personal information, treatment and behavioural issues. Social workers have the legal responsibility

to protect every client, whether children or adults. At the same time, the social work interventions provided to the clients should be in accordance with the law of the land. For example, although the thought of reporting child abuse can become an ethical issue, social workers have a legal responsibility to report abuse and neglect to the concerned authority so that children are not victimized.

Religious responsibility

Social workers have to respect the religious rights of others. There is a religious responsibility that urges every believer to treat others well, as well as care for orphans, widows and the poor. Accommodating religious beliefs at work is protection against direct and indirect discrimination of the marginalized and weaker sections of the society on the grounds of religion or belief.

Social Responsibility

These are responsibilities that society has towards everyone. They are not the responsibilities of individuals but ones we share as a society. Social responsibility is an ethical framework that suggests that an entity, be it an organization or individual, has an obligation to act to benefit society at large. Social responsibility is a duty every individual has to perform. This responsibility can be passive, by avoiding to engage in socially harmful acts, or active, by performing activities that directly advance social goals.

Personal Responsibility

We often believe that we are personally responsible for things, not because it is the law but because it is very personal to us or our friends and family.

Check your Progress I

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) Describe the term responsibility.

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- 2) List out various types of responsibilities.

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Commitment

Commitment means to be focused and determined to follow through with purposes, goals and objectives. Commitment to a cause or way of life may mean spending long hours and hard work, but it will be a work that you love, not an obligation. Commitment is the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc. One should work for accomplishing a cause or an activity in which one should dedicate oneself faithfully. According to Hall et al (1970) “The process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated or congruent” is commitment. According to Salancik (1977), commitment is “a state of being in which an individual becomes bound by his action and through these actions to beliefs that sustain the activities of his own involvement”.

Jaros (1993) speaks of three levels of commitments, namely, affective, continuance and moral commitment.

Affective commitment

Affective commitment is the degree to which an individual is psychologically attached to an employing organization through feeling such as loyalty, affection, worth, belongingness, pleasure and so on. People with affective commitment are always happy to work for the development and prosperity of the organization or institution. He/she express a sense of belonging to the cause/organization they work with. An example for affective commitment is of a social work practitioner who is actively engaged in the protection of rights of street children and dedicate his/her time for the cause or to the particular organization which is working for the rights of street children.

Continuance Commitment

Continuance is the degree to which an individual experiences a sense of being locked in place because of the high cost of leaving the particular place. People with continuance commitments count on the benefits of associating with their current institution and employment.

Moral Commitment

Moral commitment is the degree to which an individual is psychologically attached to an employing organization through internalization of its goals, values and mission. People with moral commitment stay with their organization because of their imbibed moral values and assimilation of the mission and vision of the organization. The values which were internalized through education, family status, environments, culture and the commitment to organization’s goals motivate some people to stay in their current employment for a longer period of time.

Three Circles of Commitment

Kevin (2014) states that ‘commitment is critically important to team successes’. Of course, there are other factors for success (like relationships, clear goals and more), but commitment is one that is often overlooked. More specifically, teams need three forms of commitment to be most successful:

1. Commitment to each Other

It is the commitment to each other and each others’ success. Teams that are comprised of individuals that actively support and believe in and care about the success of each other will be more successful. This type of commitment promotes the comfortable shifting

of duties and responsibilities among team members as necessary and allows teams to have less stress and higher productivity. Social work academics helping each other towards their academic excellence through prompt feedback, adequate support and proper direction, is an example of commitment to each other.

2. Commitment to the Team

It is the commitment to one's team and the team's success. Team pride and commitment is important to ultimate success. The commitment that arises from a team that understands their role and relishes achieving it is hard to be undervalued. Teams with this type of commitment will overcome long odds due to their strength and unity and willingness to band together to get through a tough situation. Social work department is one of the best examples for commitment to the team. Usually in social work department, every faculty member contributes towards the smooth running and work towards the excellence of the department by undertaking various responsibilities entrusted upon them. If a seminar is being organized by the department, each faculty takes their respective role and contributes and coordinates towards perfection. This quality of team work is called the commitment to the team.

3. Commitment to the organization/Profession

When teams see their work, as supporting valuable and important organizational pursuits, such type of commitment is strengthened. This can't be built without a clear understanding of an organization's direction and goals, but with those in place this commitment can grow. Like the internal team commitment, this manifests in organizational pride and a clear sense of obligation to the greater good. Commitment to organization and profession is an essential quality for social workers. Loyalty to the profession is a core value of social work profession. Value of commitment urges social workers to inculcate profession's values, principles, mission and vision and make the same evident in their practice and life.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) Explain the term commitment.

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- 2) Write your understanding about three circles of commitment.

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5.3 RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITMENT IN SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Commitment and responsibility go together as core values of professional social work. Commitment brings about happiness to both the client and the worker. Commitment, concern and responsibility can be observed among individuals, groups and communities during difficult times such as natural and manmade calamities. Some of the appropriate examples are the rebuilding of Germany after the Second World War; the whole hearted support given by scores of people in Japan in 2011 when it was hit by massive earthquake and tsunami; and the spontaneous relief work extended to Jammu and Kashmir flood victims in 2014.

Commitment has been defined in dictionaries as: a pledge to do; the state of being emotionally or intellectually bound to a cause or a person. A professional social worker is expected to go beyond routine tasks related to one's employment and work hard with discipline and commitment. Jim Collins says "The kind of commitment I find among the best performers across virtually every field is a single-minded passion for what they do, an unwavering desire for excellence in the way they think and the way they work. Genuine confidence is what launches you out of bed in the morning and through your day with a spring in your step."

There is a famous story of a nurse and her elderly client in his 80s. This gentleman came to the nurse at around eight in the morning to get his wound redressed. He requested the nurse to get the work done as early as possible as he had an appointment at nine. The nurse enquired from him whether he had the appointment with any doctor. The old man said that he had to be with his wife for breakfast in a home for the aged and that she was a victim of Alzheimer disease. During their conversation, while re-dressing his wound, the nurse enquired further from the old man whether his wife would recognize him because of her illness, to which he said: My wife no longer recognizes me since last five years. Although she does not know me, I still know who she is. The nurse was amazed at the response of the elderly man. She understood that true love was neither physical nor romantic. It is a choice, a commitment and a responsibility.

In professional social work, responsibility and commitment are core values which would direct professionals in several contexts. For instance, while working with people of various categories including people infected with HIV and leprosy, commercial sex workers, street children, child labourer, homeless, victims of natural calamities, etc., the professional should have the values of responsibility and commitment to help the needy.

The prime responsibility of the social work fraternity is to enhance the visibility and recognition of the profession. For this, apart from other assignments, one has to work hard, do service activities, work for national cause, respond to the emergency situations, etc., for attaining and performing commendable tasks. The teaching community, practitioners' fraternity and student world should take these challenging responsibilities with commitment. Social work profession is rendering its services for the betterment of the people in society. There are various types of societal problems faced by different categories of people in the society. At the same time, there are plenty of resources, expertise, facilities and remedial measures available towards ameliorating those problems. For working towards society's betterment, the social work fraternity and particularly the educators have to apply the process of social work intervention that is study, diagnosis and treatment by identifying needs and mapping resources. For doing all these, one should demonstrate the value of responsibility and commitment towards society so that the goals and objectives formulated for the society's betterment can be easily achieved.

At every stage of social work intervention, responsibility and commitment from the professional is required. According to Chrissy Scivicque (2008), “Professional values are the principles that guide your decisions and actions in your career.” Value of responsibility and commitment is very important for the effective practice of social work. There is a close relationship between the popular values of social work and the values of responsibility and commitment.

Responsibility and commitment has a role in motivating all the responsible persons to work towards attaining the tasks. Social work profession has various stakeholders in its profession who include educators, practitioners, students, clients, agencies, institutions, etc. Each one of them needs to shoulder the responsibilities according to their limit. Students have to deliver their responsibilities with commitment; educators have a vital role to fulfil the aspirations of the students and clients; practitioners have to be responsible and committed to the clients, and agencies of social work also have to exhibit the value of responsibility and commitment in their functioning. All of them have to have devotion, loyalty, dedication, accountability and commitment to deliver their roles.

5.4 RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITMENT AS VALUES OF SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

The term social workers broadly cover three categories namely, social work educators, social work practitioners and social work trainees. Social work profession aims at and work for social justice and welfare of the society at large through various methods of the profession guided by certain ethical principles and core values. For this reason, everyone involved in this profession should demonstrate responsibility and commitment as one of the significant core values.

Social work academician/educator

An educator in social work profession has significant extent of responsibilities. A social work faculty is educating scores of learners in social work who will be working for the welfare of the society. Therefore, one should deliver one’s responsibility in a way that is widely recognized and encouraged. A teacher has to educate, train, counsel, mould and shape the students of social work. The major responsibility and commitment of the teaching community in the social work profession is to provide high quality education, upholding in consonance with the changing society. Students are to be equipped with adequate knowledge, needful skills and enough capabilities to deal with the various issues and concerns which demands social work intervention along with change in one’s attitudes. Apart from shaping the student community, they have other responsibilities and commitments like, working for the professional advancement, contribution towards research, practice and development of literature, continuing education, etc. Hence, the teaching community should demonstrate the value of responsibility and commitment to a great extent in their lives and work.

Social Work Practitioner

Practitioners in social work have certain responsibilities and commitment towards people who are service seekers. Practitioners are the back bone of the profession. Besides the practice roles, they are responsible for providing quality field work training to the social work trainees during their practicum. Several of the practitioners are supervisors during the practicum of social work students. Building capacity of the students is one of the core objectives of social work training and practicum is the soul of social work education.

Therefore, demonstrating responsibility and commitment, and nurturing responsibility and commitment among the social work trainees, are essential and crucial part in social work.

Practitioners' active participation and commitment are highly needed in several terms including working for advancement of the profession and devoting time for the betterment of the people. Apart from these, practitioners have the role in contributing to the development of literature and increase knowledge base for the profession. Maintaining high standards in research is the foundation for developing indigenous literature in social work. In this context, active contribution of practitioners in developing indigenous literature is highly required. Unless they are responsible with commitment, it would not be possible for them to be loyal to the profession.

Social Work Trainees

Since the profession is committed to provide efficient and productive work force in the field of social work, the students are to be equipped with adequate knowledge and skills. Students are expected to be punctual, ready to learn, practice values of social work and find out opportunities for enhancing their knowledge and skills. Above all, they should bear witness to the core values of service, dignity and worth of the person, cultural sensitivity, patriotism, hard work, responsibility and commitment throughout their training period.

Students are responsible for utilizing the opportunities and facilities at the time of their training and learn as much as possible from the teachers and supervisors. As already stated earlier, practicum is soul of social work profession and therefore all the students of social work are expected to dedicate their prescribed time solely for practicum. During the practicum, the value of responsibility and commitment plays a significant role to direct and guide the learners.

5.5 PRINCIPLES OF VALUE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITMENT

The ethical principles of responsibility and commitment highlighted in code of ethics for social workers (Thomas, 2015) are:

- 1. Need for social workers to exhibit professional responsibility and commitment towards social work practice.**

Social workers are expected to have a higher degree of responsibility and commitment towards social work interventions and practice. Social workers are responsible and committed to promote social justice and bring about changes in social system and structures that are barriers to preserving equality, human rights and natural environment.

- 2. Need to provide services in the context of professional relationship.**

It is the value of responsibility and commitment of the worker that motivates him/her to provide services in the context of professional relationship, keeping in view the experiences, principles and values of the social work profession. Responsibility and commitment expects the social worker to refrain from engaging in any form of sexual activities with the clients, colleagues and students such as sexual advances, seeking sexual favours, and physical and verbal conduct of sexual nature.

3. Need to maintain confidentiality.

Responsibility and commitment urges the social worker to respect the client's right to privacy and protect the confidentiality of all information shared by the client during the helping process.

4. Need to be responsible and committed to professional enhancement.

Social workers should have responsibility and commitment towards enhancing professional knowledge and skills, professional self and evidence based practice.

5. Need to exercise responsibility and commitment to the profession while selecting agencies for field placements.

It is the responsibility and commitment of the professional to arrange field placement including block placement and internship in agencies that exercise fair personnel practices such as integrity and promoting procedures and policies that uphold dignity and worth of clients (Thomas, 2015).

Check your Progress III

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) Describe responsibility and commitment as core value of social work.

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- 2) List out the principles of responsibility and commitment.

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5.6 EXPRESSION OF VALUE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITMENT

Social worker's commitment and responsibility are expressed in three ways namely, commitment and responsibility to the clients, commitment and responsibility towards colleagues and practice settings, and commitment and responsibility towards the profession.

Responsibility and commitment to clients

Social workers' primary responsibility and commitment is to promote the well-being of clients. Social workers respect and promote the right of client's to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. They treat each client

as a unique person with specific qualities and identity. Social workers provide services to clients in the context of a professional relationship based on valid and informed consent. The services provided by the social workers are guided by the values and ethics of the profession. Social workers respect clients' rights to privacy. Social workers provide help as per the guiding principles of the profession and respect the diversity and cultural differences. Social workers take reasonable steps to ensure that the documentation of the work done, which reflect the services provided, is accurate and timely.

Responsibility and commitment towards the social work trainees

Social workers have the function as educators or field instructors and support the growth of students in fair and respectful manner. Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students shall take reasonable steps to ensure that students are moulded in accordance with the mission, vision & values of social work profession. They will support the students to actualise their potentialities in appropriate ways and help them to explore opportunities. They will not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with students in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the students.

Responsibility and commitment towards colleagues and practice settings

Social workers treat colleagues and other professionals in the team with respect and value their qualifications, views and obligations. Social workers have to respect confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and transactions. They must respect the institutional policies and management functions of the agencies within which services are being performed. Social workers make the maximum use of the multidisciplinary approach to provide the best possible service to the clients. Social workers will consider and seek the advice and opinions of the agency and colleagues while providing intervention to the various population. Besides this, social workers have to refer clients to other professionals when the other professionals' specialized knowledge or expertise is needed to serve the clients or when social workers believe that they are not effective or cannot make satisfactory intervention in the helping process.

Responsibilities and commitment to the social work profession

Every social worker is expected to have a great extent of commitment and responsibility to the social work profession. Social workers have to abide by the values and ethics of the profession. They have to promote research, seminars and workshops to enhance the knowledge level of the profession. Social workers have to educate themselves, their students and their colleagues about responsible research practices. Social workers who provide effective supervision to the co-workers and support supervisees are helping the enhancement of professional practices.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

Social work profession is often a challenging one, helping people with difficulty to find solutions to the problems based on the worker's experiences and the value of responsibility and commitment. Values guide the professionals in the practice of profession and achieving the mission and vision of the profession. Value of responsibility and

commitment of professionals make it clear that social work is a divine profession and social workers have to feel that the “calling” to the profession is unique. Value of responsibility and commitment will ensure that the interventions initiated by social workers are in the best interest of the clients. It will also serve the purpose of enhancing the professional development of the workers and that of the profession.

In the present unit, we have discussed the concept and nature of responsibility and commitment. We have further discussed about commitment and three circles of commitment. Responsibility and commitment as core value of social work was also highlighted in the unit. Various principles of value of responsibility and commitment and the roles of social workers as educators, practitioners and trainees have been explained in detail.

5.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

- 1) The word “responsibility” means “ability to respond.” Responsibility means taking ownership of one’s thoughts, feelings and actions and refraining from blame or judgment on self or others.

- 2) Various types of responsibilities are;
- Responsibility for actions and their results.
 - Task and role responsibility.
 - Universal moral responsibility.
 - Legal responsibility.
 - Religious responsibility.
 - Social responsibility.
 - Personal responsibility.

Check your progress II

- 1) • Commitment means to be focused and determined to follow through with purposes, goals, objectives. Commitment to a cause or way of life mean spending long hours and hard work, but it will be a work that you love, not an obligation.
- Commitment to each other- Individuals should be supportive towards each other and should believe and care for each other.
 - Commitment to team- Team commitment is important for the success. Team should be aware of their roles and work towards achieving it.
 - Commitment to organization/profession- Individuals and teams should be committed towards their profession and organizational direction and its goals.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Social work profession aims at and works for social justice and welfare of society at large through various methods of profession guided by certain ethical principles and core values. For this reason, everyone involved in this profession should demonstrate responsibility and commitment as one of the significant values.
- 2) Principles of responsibility and commitment:
- Need for social workers to exhibit professional responsibility and commitment towards social work practice.
 - Need to provide services in the context of professional relationship.
 - Need to maintain confidentiality.
 - Need to be responsible and committed to professional enhancement.
 - Need to exercise responsibility and commitment to the profession while selecting agencies for filed placement.