

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RISK IN SOCIAL WORKERS PRACTICE AND
RISK MANAGEMENT THROUGH WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A PROPOSED
FRAMEWORK**

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Abstract

The key aim of the proposed study is to examine the relationship between risk in social workers practice and risk management through work-life balance. Based on previous study, Existing research includes several studies on risk in social workers practice, risk management and work-life balance in the process. Methodologies of positivism have expressed different types of validity checks, such as construct validity, internal and external validity and statistical conclusion validity. In other words, the evidence presented should be able to be examined, as well as the process used, the research context, and to conclude that the claims made are reasonable. The results show that there is a positive and significant relationship between risk in social workers practice and risk management. Work-life balance mediates the relationship between risk in social workers practice and risk management. The research proposes a will contribute appropriate strategic decision-making for risk in social workers practice on risk management. The outcomes of this research are very fruitful in clarifying our understandings about the impact of risk in social workers practice on risk management. Thus, evaluating the effective strategies followed around the world and how they can be best implemented in the context of UAE.

Keywords: – Risk, social workers practice, work-life balance, risk management, A proposed framework

Introduction

The social work profession was introduced with the assistance of experts from several Arab countries. The functions of the social work department were to undertake supervision of various aspects of school activity and to establish plans and programs to help improve society. This is a critical period in the history of the development of social work in the UAE where the International Association of Schools of Social Work subjected the first professional social work education and training program offered to the rigor of a review process. Currently most social work programs are evaluated against Western social work accreditation frameworks and quality assurance processes. While this practice may be appropriate in certain contexts, in others, such as in the Arab world, a more authentic frame of reference is required. Since the emergence of the profession of the social worker, social workers have put themselves in risky situations in one way or another when they assist their clients. For all social workers around the world, the risk is inherent and they have to manage risk daily (Abisheva & Assylbekova, 2016). Furthermore, the risk in social work is multi-faceted and serious (Whittaker & Taylor, 2017). The career of social work requires professionals to help clients who may be at their worst (Whittaker & Taylor, 2017). For example, a client may have a mental illness, lost their loved ones; have an ongoing drug addiction, currently experiencing trauma, facing violence, poverty, and homelessness during a social worker's visit. All these elements and more can put the social worker in dangerous situations (Abisheva & Assylbekova, 2016; Van Den Berg et al., 2020; Kalantjankos, 2019). Social workers often put themselves in vulnerable positions and harmful situations to help others. The risks and circumstances that enhance such risks depend on the work environment and the specialty of social work. The risks include stress, health, physical endangerment, and the worsening situation of the client (Kalantjankos, 2019).

Social workers abilities and responsibilities are enormous and different organisations are working tirelessly to empower many individuals within the circle of social workers without gender discrimination (Van Den Berg et al., 2020). In cooperation with both public and private organisations, social workers contributions are strongly noticed, because social workers improve environment and human activities with grossly high risks tendencies (Tadam, 2020). Risks involved in the aspects of social workers responsibilities is unquantifiable (Tadam, 2020). Moreover, the concern over work-life balance and risk management is gradually becoming a common talk especially when it comes to social workers. Work-life balance is a state of balance in which the demand of both professional and personal life is equal. Each role has a different set of demands and when such role demands overlap, multiple problems are faced, and it creates a lot of risks. Work-life balance is an additional factor that has been associated with risk management (Van Den Berg et al., 2020). However, although recent studies have shown that work-life balance plays a critical role in predicting risk management (Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2015; Van Den Berg et al., 2020), there has yet to be extensive research conducted on the impact of work-life balance among social work practitioners specifically.

In this research, the work-life balance variable serves as a mediator. Based on its significance in the literature and its ability to predict risk management in the early stage of the quitting process, the researcher in this study has deduced that this variable is a mediator. Researchers have paid a

lot of attention to this factor as one of the extra-role behaviours (e.g., Van Den Berg et al., 2020), and successful firms usually urge workers to strike a balance between work and life (Whittaker & Taylor, 2017). In order for a company to thrive, it needs people who are willing to make contributions outside the scope of their regular work (Tedam, 2020). Moreover, it is essential that organizations understand the significance of work-life balance in reducing risks inside the workplace (Dechen et al., 2020).

In UAE also studies on risks faced by social workers indicated that they are vulnerable to traumatic stress and burnout symptoms. A study conducted by Musa (2009) involved 180 social workers working in NGOs, welfare centers, hospitals, and schools, examined the prevalence of burnout and stress and its effect on their job satisfaction. The study found a high prevalence of burnout and stress among social workers and age is negatively related to secondary traumatic stress and burnout and positively related to compassion fatigue. Burnout was found to be related positively to the workplace. The study concluded that social workers working in social welfare centers were exposed to high burnout risk. However, there is very little research or studies done focusing on the risk faced by social workers in the UAE and how to manage them. Therefore, this research tries to fill that gap to explore the risks social workers face in their practice in the context of the UAE.

Social workers have been objected to verbal and physical assaults, and some of them sadly lost their lives performing their job responsibilities (Dechen et al., 2020). As these studies show that, the problem of the risk and challenges that face social workers from the beginning of the profession is related to the nature of their job duties. These studies and events demonstrate how social workers doing their jobs in unsafe and stressful environments may cause them to lose their lives or negatively affect their personal life or their feelings toward their careers that may lead them to quit the job. Therefore, the researcher decided to implement the current study to investigate the risks that social workers face while performing their job duties in the UAE. The research studies the relationship between risk in social workers practice and risk management through work-life balance, a very recent topic where only few researches were conducted earlier.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social work is a demanding and impactful profession that involves working with individuals, families, and communities to address various social and psychological challenges. While the primary focus is on providing support and assistance, social workers do encounter various risks in their practice. These risks can have emotional, professional, and personal implications. Effective risk management, including maintaining a healthy work-life balance, is crucial for maintaining the well-being of social workers and ensuring the quality of their services. Risk work theory influences social work because social work is in the business of risk work. Social work constantly involves social workers making decisions about risky situations and events. Social workers working in statutory social work must practice a range of risks associated with work. Social workers are often getting involved in anticipatory risk work or find themselves working in a pre-crime space. It is their everyday practice issue (Stanley, 2018).

Risk in social worker practice

Social workers assist individuals in overcoming personal obstacles, ranging from homelessness and poverty to domestic violence and behavioral issues in children. Social workers may face physical and emotional violence, threats, and verbal abuse in the course of their work, despite the rewarding nature of the profession (Pentaraki, 2018). Understanding the potential dangers associated with the profession is essential. Understanding the laws and regulations designed to protect social workers is also crucial. Every day, social workers are required to make difficult decisions, such as denying a client financial benefits. This can result in clients retaliating with physical or verbal violence (Lever Taylor et al., 2019). An organization that makes personal safety training a central component of social work training can aid social workers in preventing and resolving these and similar issues.

Since social workers are in a vulnerable position, their risk of injury is significantly increased. The nature of these hazards, as well as the circumstances that encourage them, varies based on the social worker's area of expertise and work environment (Watts & Hodgson, 2019). In the majority of social work situations, however, the dangers include physical peril, stress-related maladies, and the possibility of aggravating a client's situation.

Since the inception of the social work profession, social workers have in some manner placed themselves in harm's way to aid their customers. As members of the assisting profession, social workers typically deal with clients when they are at their worst. At the time of social worker intervention, clients may be afflicted with mental illness, have endured trauma, be afflicted with destitution, and/or be destitute (Cocker & Allain, 2019). All of these factors, along with many others, can place the well-being of social workers at risk in multiple situations. The practice of social work is significantly influenced by the person-in-environment perspective, which means that seeing clients in their homes can be crucial to their treatment (Pascoe et al., 2022). Going to a client's home exposes social workers to a whole new set of dangers: being targeted for representing a specific agency, driving an agency vehicle, entering potentially dangerous neighborhoods, unexpected interactions with clients that may turn violent, and exposure to health hazards in the home itself are all safety concerns social workers face in this field. Recently, many in the social work profession have become concerned about the safety of social workers; there is cause for concern.

Social worker risk in the field has been studied for some time, and it is now becoming the focus of training for some organizations to assure their employees' safety (Reininger et al., 2021). There are numerous dangers to a social worker's safety when visiting a client's residence, and being cognizant of them is the first step in developing safety policies for social workers. A social worker's gender or dearth of experience may place them at greater risk than other social workers in the field. Implementing safety training as early as the Bachelor of Social Work level could reduce the risk faced by field employees because they would be better prepared (Samuel, 2022). Because of systems theory and its emphasis on the individual in his or her environment, household visits are a significant part of the profession. Typically, the assessment must include a visit to the client's environment.

Various kinds of hazards that social workers may encounter have been identified through research. These risks include physical harm, such as assault or injury from working in high-risk environments, as well as emotional and psychological risks resulting from their work with vulnerable populations (Kagan & Itzick, 2020). Ethical risks may arise when navigating complex ethical dilemmas or working with conflicting interests, whereas organizational risks may involve job stress, exhaustion, or a lack of resources. By recognizing and addressing these various categories of hazards, social workers can better secure themselves and ensure their client's safety and well-being (Berszán, 2020).

Psychological risks

Psychological risk is the possibility for psychological injury to occur when exposed to a hazard. Hazards from a psychological perspective are situations or factors that could increase the likelihood of employees experiencing a stress response - essentially a physical, mental or emotional reaction. The social work profession, which aims to improve the well-being of individuals and communities, frequently exposes practitioners to several obstacles and dangers. While much of the existing literature emphasizes the emotional and psychological effects of the job, the physical hazards social workers confront have received less attention.

Psychological risks involve the trauma social workers go through when handling clients that experience trauma through spill over effect (Cunningham, 2004). Bride (2007) also stated that social workers constantly work among clients surviving domestic violence, childhood abuse, disasters, violent crime, war, and terrorism. These traumatic events not only affect adversely the clients but also the people dealing with them. Social workers are affected by psychological risks in terms of grief and sadness emanating from empathy on the condition of the client; heightened emotions ranging from anxiety and fear, and guilt and shame causing them possible psychological imbalance (Ahmed, 2021; Banks et al., 2020).

Health risks

A health risk is the chance or likelihood that something will harm or otherwise affect your health. Social workers are exposed to health risks in the course of discharging their responsibility (Leung, 2019). Social workers have direct contact with their clients. This poses risk of exposure to diseases and infections especially in the case of communicable diseases. During Covid-19 pandemic, social workers were exposed to the deadly virus which pose risk to their health (Banks et al., 2020; Ferguson, Kelly, & Pink, 2020).

Physical risks

These are the risks of physical violence which may cause harm to the social workers when performing their responsibility. They include the intimidation, violence and threats faced by social workers in their operations (BASW Northern Ireland, 2018). The physical assault which social workers been subjected to were being pulled to the floor, kicked in the head, being pinched in the face, being grabbed by the throat, and choked, being bitten, having bones broken, and being pushed around and manhandled, experience of being attacked with knives or improvised weapons such as chaise, fire extinguishers, hot liquids, numerous incidents of being spat. There are also reported cases of murders against social workers (Sancken, 2015).

Ethical risks

The concept of « Ethical Risk » refers to unexpected negative consequences of unethical actions. A proper training about ethical risks allows the identification, mitigation and transformation of ethical risks, improving organizational efficiency and developing organizational identity. These are risk encountered by social workers involving the ethics of the profession. Ethical risks of social workers include the challenges of maintaining privacy, trust, service autonomy in remote relationships, and dignity; striking a balance between rights and needs of the different parties; allocating limited resources; handling emotions and ensuring care of self and colleagues; and making decision to compromise policies in the interest of service users (Banks et al., 2020). Several studies have highlighted the challenges and complexities of the ethical hazards social workers confront. As practitioners entrusted with assisting vulnerable populations, social workers must navigate a variety of ethical considerations daily.

Dual relationships have been investigated exhaustively as a potential ethical risk (Reamer, 2021). Dual relationships exist when a social worker has multiple relationships with a client, such as being their therapist and acquaintance. These relationships can erode the professional boundaries required for effective social work practice and lead to conflicts of interest. According to research, maintaining distinct and appropriate boundaries is crucial for preventing ethical violations and safeguarding consumers (Abisheva & Assylbekova, 2016).

Work-life balance

Work-life balance is about adjusting working patterns, so people are able to achieve a fulfilled life inside and outside paid employment (Duan et al., 2023). There is no universally correct amount of work-life balance. Attaining the „right“ balance is a personal decision that varies for different people at various stages of their life span (Adah et al., 2023). For some, the main issue may revolve around too much work, while others may desire additional work.

Risk management

Risk management refers to processes devised by organizations to minimize negative outcomes which can arise in the delivery of welfare services (Abisheva & Assylbekova, 2016). In social work, the risks for which social care agencies and individual professionals can be held accountable will relate to their statutory duties.

Gap of research

Lyter and Abbott (2007) also stated that a review of the literature reflects minimal research addressing the topic of dangers in the field and efforts to enhance social worker safety. There is no national-level, central database that consistently and comprehensively records data about injuries to social workers. Social workers have to make home visits because of their commitment to reach the community; however, the violent society poses real risks of harm to the social worker. Lyter and Abbot (2007) stressed that surprisingly there is a lack of information on how to conduct safe home visits. Social workers often deny the risks they must face and behave recklessly and incautiously which further enhances the risks they face, furthermore newcomers are often ridiculed by their colleagues or superiors if they express fears about home visits. Barry (2007) also stated that in social work literature views of risk are mostly absent whereas social workers daily engage

actively with risk. Whittaker and Taylor (2018) also stated that though there are some studies on risk in social work, and risk management however risk in social work requires more research and development. Professional approach to social risk is only emerging slowly and the challenge is to integrate different ideas from other fields such as law, healthcare, communication, military studies, organizational behaviour, sociology, and psychology to identifying risks and management and develop own conceptualization of risks in social work profession (Whittaker & Taylor, 2018).

Hypothesis development

Based on the reviewed literatures and the theories, it is evident that social workers contend with various risks which affect their personal and professional lives. (Alghizzawi, Habes, and Salloum 2019; Alghizzawi, Salloum, and Habes 2018; Habes et al. 2018) These risks are psychological risks, health risks, physical risks and ethical risks,. These risks are considered as the independent's variables of the research with the social workers lives as the dependent variables. The relationships between the duos are explored in the following subsections.

The relationship between social work risks and work-life balance

In response to growing health and productivity problems resulting from employees' lack of work-life balance, many organizations are taking serious steps to reduce conflict in their employees' work and family roles (Ahmed, 2021). This has led to increasing researchers' and managers' interest in this area of research. Organizations not permitting work-life flexibility tend to negatively impact their employees' job performance, whereas enhancing work-life balance may benefit both employees and organizations (Fenton and Kelly, 2018). A recently published report in Forbes (an American business magazine) suggests that work-life balance matters much for higher creativity, productivity, and performance (Neumann et al., 2018). When employees work long hours on a frequent basis and fail to establish boundaries between their work and home life, they end up suffering from physical and psychological exhaustion. As a result, their ability to think clearly and their eye-hand coordination suffer. As claimed by Fenton and Kelly (2018) that social workers' exposures to psychological risks manifest in post-traumatic stress disorder which should be managed properly. The same impact is also expressed by Choi (2011) who further elaborates on the need for balancing work and life.

Social workers are exposed to health risks that affect their lives adversely. Lynch (2017) opined that health risk is among the risks that affect the lives of social workers. He revealed that among the health risk affecting the lives of social workers are pest infections, exposure to Ammonia from urine, exposure to parasites and communicable diseases, and drug paraphernalia. EPSU (2021) stated that social workers face a high risk of suffering from work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). This risk if not prevented leads to social workers not being able to carry out their job and having to stop working in the sector altogether. These health-related risk increase burnout and turnover intention of social workers.

A survey in Northern Ireland by BASW Northern Ireland, (2018) found that 86% of social workers experience intimidation, 75% received threats and 50% were subjected to physical violence in the

course of their social work practice. The research found that these risks have a mental, physical, and emotional impact on the well-being, work performance, and family lives of social workers. Moreover, many firms are making substantial efforts to eliminate friction between their workers' work and family responsibilities in response to the rising health and productivity issues caused by employees' lack of work-life balance (Fenton and Kelly, 2018). This has increased interest in this field of research among scholars and management. The performance of employees at companies that don't allow for work-life flexibility typically suffers but improving work-life balance may be advantageous to both people and companies (Fenton and Kelly, 2018).

A research implies that leaders and managers who create trust-based relationships, respect work-life balance, and treat their employees as unique individuals are perceived as more ethical than those who do not (Neumann et al., 2018). Additionally, when individuals who do not possess appropriate management skills are placed in leadership/managerial positions, they are perceived as unethical (Cannizzo et al., 2019). Therefore, positive constructs managers can use to enhance their ethical behavior. Moreover, social workers are more interested in issues such as work-life balance and being treated uniquely. Creating programs that support work-life balance will validate the unique individual needs of employees. On the basis of the earlier discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Social work risks have a significant relationship with work-life balance in the UAE.

The relationship between social work risks and risk management

Social workers deal with clients who are mostly affected by traumatic experiences such as those that experience childhood abuse, violent crimes, terrorism, domestic violence, and disasters (Thomas, 2013). Such traumatic experiences are mostly not limited to the client but also spread to the social workers attending to them leading to Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) leading to the need for diagnostic criteria for PTSD for the social workers (Ferguson et al., 2020). This is also supported by Fenton and Kelly (2018) who pointed that the social workers exposures to psychological risks manifest into the post-traumatic stress disorder. The spiral effect of clients' traumatic experience to social workers is reported by Choi (2011). He found that social workers experience secondary traumatic stress that is spilled over from their clients. However, social workers who got support from their supervisors, work teams, and co-workers experience lower stress levels.

The psychological risk can also lead to increased burn out by social workers. This was revealed by Padyab, Richtel, Nygren and Ghazinour (2013) who studied burnout among social workers in Iran. They conducted a national research involving 390 social workers and found that 10.9% of social workers experienced burnout while 17.4% were at the risk of developing burnout. Taylor and Whittaker (2018) also stated that social workers are involved in high-profile decision-making with regard to mental health patients and child protection which can result in generating anxiety for both managers and social work practitioners. Similarly, social workers also experienced stress in their practice (Bloomberg, Kallio, Kroll and Saarinen, 2014). Social workers are also affected by personal distress. Psychological risks associated with social work contributes significantly to social workers' personal distress and social problems (Thomas, 2013).

Social workers exposed to health risks that affect their lives adversely, hence risk management is compulsory for the personal wellbeing of the social workers. Lynch (2017) opined that health risk is among the risks that affect the lives of social workers which consequently demotivates them and social worker quit the job. Management of risk related to health of social worker is mandatory and a strong relationship exists between health risk of social worker and risk management. This risk if not managed leads to social workers inability to carry out social work. These health-related risk increase burnout and turnover intention of the social workers hence necessary to manage.

Social workers in the course of their duty face threats, intimidation and violence, which if left unattended will lead to burnout or departure of the social worker from the social work. Without managing the risk of social worker, the impact of physical harm may lead to loss of life of the social workers (Fenton & Kelly, 2017). Hostile relationships are sometimes prevalent between social workers and clients leading to hate, conflict and anxiety for social workers in their long-term work (Ferguson et al., 2020), and management of the same is mandatory. Additionally, threats and verbal aggression are commonplace in such cases which have a detrimental work-life balance if not managed properly.

Similarly, the media and the politicians also vilify social workers in the guise of ethical considerations leading to a lack of confidence, anxiety, and doubt in their decision-making ability, and failure to follow correct procedure consequently it is further making them vulnerable to any litigation (Littlechild, 2008). The negative coverage of social workers in a sensationalist manner results in creating distrust against the social workers which affects their image in society (Seden, 2016). These lead the social workers to ethical stress working against their values causing them moral injury (Fenton & Kelly, 2017). It is therefore hypothesised that:

H2: Social work risks have a significant relationship with risk management in UAE.

The relationship between work-life balance and risk management

Risk management is said to be achieved when the impact of risks on the lives of social workers are reduced (Fenton & Kelly, 2017). Risk management has been previously discussed in this research. It involves measures taken to protect the social workers and their clients from risk or where the risk is inevitable to minimise its impact on them (Abisheva & Assylbekova, 2016). Thus, it involves risk identification, assessment, mitigation, and monitoring. These measures of risk management systems and audits have increased the formalisation of the social work practice by minimising the impact of associated risks on social workers (Abisheva & Assylbekova, 2016). Fenton & Kelly (2017) also emphasized the importance of integrating risk management concepts in social works as it impact the lives of social workers positively. This implies that the severity or otherwise of the impact of social work associated risks on the lives of the social works are linked with risk management. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed;

H3: Work-life balance has a significant relationship with risk management in UAE.

The mediation role of work-life balance

Mediating variable is the one that influence the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. However, the concept of work-life balance focuses on minimizing the tensions between work and other parts of one's life (Hayman, 2005). Only a small number of studies have looked at the role of work-life balance as a mediator, for instance, in the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction (Fenton & Kelly, 2017) or between work outcomes like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and career accomplishment (Stanley, 2018). To the best of our knowledge, however, the role of work-life balance as a mediator in the particular relationship between risk in social workers' practice and risk management has not been investigated. As a result, closing the gap in the literature as suggested by the researchers in the literature will need to include work-life balance as a mediator variable in the model of this research. On this point, the current research contends that when social workers' practices (psychological risks, health risks, physical risks, and ethical risks) are taken into account, work-life balance has a theoretical mediating influence in predicting and boosting risk management. As a result, it was suggested that the following hypothesis be investigated:

H4: Work-life balance mediates the relationship between risk in social workers' practice and Risk Management in UAE.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework was built and following dependent variables and independent variables were identified. Independent variables are those variables that are assumed to have a direct effect on the dependent variable (Allen, 2017). The independent variables include the risks faced by social workers, they include psychological risks, health risks, physical risks, and ethical risks. Dependent variables are the variables that are measured in the research and are dependent on other variables (Alnaser et al. 2020; D. N. Tahat, Tahat, and Habes 2020; K. M. Tahat, Habes, and Tahat 2020) The dependent variable includes the risk management. Work-life balance serves as the mediator on the relationship between risks in social work practice (psychological risks, health risks, physical risks, and ethical risks) and risk management. The framework explains clearly how the postulated hypotheses relate to each other and provides the key input of this research. Based on the discussion above, a research framework has been developed as shown in Figure 1.

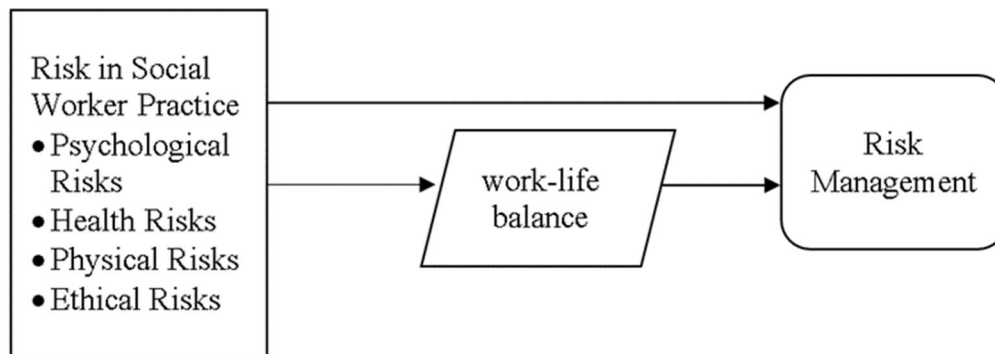


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

RESULT OF THE STUDY

Based on the literature review analysis and theories, the conceptual framework was developed for this research. The risk work theory indicated that risk is inherent to social work practice, and social workers face different types of risks in their daily work life (Whittaker & Taylor, 2018; NASW, 2020; Ahmed, 2021). The types of risks they face while working with their clients such as psychological risks (Cunningham, 2004; Fenton & Kelly, 2018), health risks (Lynch, 2017; EPSU, 2021), physical harm risks (BASW Northern Ireland, 2018), and ethical risks (Abisheva & Assylbekova, 2016). These risks hurt the profession as well as social workers personally. They experience burnout, stress, and personal distress, hostility from clients, which increases suicidal tendencies, injury, and death. The risk management theory suggests that using risk management framework, risks can be mitigated and reduced in social work without impacting work productivity or social work practice (Fenton & Kelly; 2017). All the three theories underlying the research are used to develop the conceptual framework. The both risk work and systems theory explains the risks faced by social workers in their practice (Stanley, 2018), the risk management theory helps in suggesting how risks can be mitigated or reduced by adopting the risk management framework to highlight the impact of risk over the life of social workers (Fenton & Kelly, 2017; Ahmed, 2021). The conceptual framework will not only help in identifying the risks faced by social workers and its impact on their professional and personal life but also the best coping strategies and stress management strategies social workers can adopt to manage the risk they face.

Banks et al. (2020) stated that considering the increasing risk to social workers, it is recommended that better working conditions be created for social workers to keep them safe from risks to enable them to continue delivering quality service to their clients. Social workers need to rethink how they apply professional values, standards, policies, and procedures, and risk management frameworks appropriate to the risks they face, understand the full ethical implications of situations, and show respect to their clients. They have to raise awareness with associations, employers, and policymakers about any serious harm they are facing as well as inequities, the difficulties they face in delivering social services to vulnerable groups, and also present proposals for improvements.

Social work employers need to ensure that all safety procedures and protocols are observed. They also have to ensure that all social workers are supported through proper and regular supervision and guide them on how to perform their job ethically and safely by putting in place risk management strategies. The governments can help through policymaking or legislation as well as ensuring and providing protective and hygienic resources for social workers. The national and international associations of social workers can help by highlighting the risky factors, supporting social workers through guidelines. The conceptual framework of the research highlighted the dependent, independent and moderating variables including the relationship that exists among them.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The literature review has shown that the prevalence of risk is high in social work and social workers face risk daily. The risks are multifaceted and arise from different factors such as the risky society, globalization, clients, their family or friends, context, and environment. The risks they face are health risks, physical violence risks, ethical and psychological risks. It is impacting them physically, socially, economically, and psychologically. However, literature review also found that not much research is done on the risks faced by social workers per se, most of the research is focused on how social workers need to assess and manage risks for their clients. The research also probed on the risk management strategies adopted and implemented by social work agencies, government, and organizations to protect clients and social workers. It was found that risk assessment and risk management framework is adopted, safety training programs are implemented to provide safety training to social workers, and insurance programs can be provided as well as placing code of standards for social workers to adhere to, to minimize risk. However, the literature review also revealed that not many agencies or organizations have adopted risk assessment and risk management framework, do not provide enough safety training to employees during education or in practice and researchers and practitioners called for more research and recommended adoption of professional and appropriate risk management framework to prevent and reduce risk at social work practice.

This research has provided a thorough review of the relationship between risk in social workers practice and risk management through work-life balance, highlighting the intricate interplay between cultural values, social norms, and legal constraints. Through the analysis of the literature review, this research has provided valuable insights into the coping strategies and support systems utilized by social workers in the UAE to effectively manage their work.

The application of Social Exchange Theory has furthered our comprehension of the decision-making processes of social workers in the United Arab Emirates by illuminating how they balance the perceived benefits and costs of their interventions in this context. This theoretical perspective has allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the coping strategies and supports systems used by social workers, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of their field experiences.

The findings of this research contribute to the extant corpus of knowledge on social work practice in the United Arab Emirates and provide a foundation for future research. The practical insights and real-world examples from the experiences of social workers can inform the development of targeted interventions, training programs, and organizational policies to better support social workers in the region. By recognizing the unique cultural, social, and legal contexts of the UAE, social work agencies can improve their ability to provide culturally competent services and ensure the well-being of both their clients and practitioners.

In a nutshell, this research highlights the significance of adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and robust support systems for enabling social workers to navigate the unique challenges they face in the United Arab Emirates. As the United Arab Emirates (UAE) continues to evolve and change, social work practice must adapt and grows alongside it, ensuring that social work professionals are equipped to advocate for their clients and promote social justice in this dynamic environment.

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