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Exploring the Challenges of Social Welfare Department Officers during Their Services Delivery: A Case Study of Sargodha Region

Abstract

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Keywords: Challenges, Social Welfare Department Officers, Service Delivery, Essential Resources, Beneficiaries

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the issues experienced by Social Welfare Department Officers in the outcome of service delivery in the Sargodha region of Pakistan by qualitative case study method. Informed by in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 officers which are working in 6 different welfare projects, the research involved thematic analysis. The Results relate that poor office facilities, lack of transport and communication facilities, and outmoded methodologies, no doubt, impacted the provision of good service, and that bureaucratic and geographical barriers also restricted access, especially in rural areas. Despite a lack of political interference, subtle political pressures of governance crept in from time to time that influenced the autonomy of the profession. The findings support the significance of certain reforms, such as the role of infrastructure development, the timely availability of funding, the consistent development of the workforce, the simplification of administrative procedures, and the role of governance regimes in making services more efficient and improving the situation of the vulnerable segments of the population.

Keywords: Challenges, Social Welfare Department Officers, Service Delivery, Essential Resources, Beneficiaries

Introduction

Social welfare systems are a fundamental basis in terms of social development, manifested in terms of inequality, vulnerable population, and ensuring social justice. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is

mandated to implement social policies to ensure actual provision of social services, which includes advocacy, direct provision of services, and community-based intervention. The effectiveness of these services is very much linked to the institutional setting and



professional context in which Social Welfare Officers (SWO) are employed (Bland et al., [2021](#); Reamer, [2018](#)). Where organizational capacity is limited, the capacity of welfare officers to represent needs of beneficiaries is seriously impaired.

Globally, the demands of service have been growing for social welfare professionals at the same time as resources are being squeezed, pressures for bureaucratic forms of organization, and ethical responsibilities evolve. Research has consistently exhibited infrastructural inadequacies such as shortage of staff, underfunding, and professional development as ongoing challenges affecting the quality of services and practitioner well-being (Nyashanu et al., [2020](#); Banks et al., [2020](#); Choy-Brown et al., [2020](#)). These challenges are particularly acute in developing countries, in which welfare institutions are in many instances governed under a weak regimes of governance and are often limited by limited fiscal capacity (Wudil et al. [2023](#); Eshiotse et al. [2023](#)).

In South Asia and especially Pakistan, the provision of social welfare is likely to be affected by economic, administrative, and socio-cultural conditions. The empirical researches are abundant on chronic under constitution, delays disbursement of budgets, low access to modern technology, and poor number of trained personnel within public welfare institutions (Shah, [2024](#); Mahmood & Ali, [2021](#); Ahmad & Hassan, [2022](#)). These structural limitations mean that the effect of programs is limited and the magnitude of the sustainability of welfare interventions is diminished.

Despite growing scholarly attention towards social welfare systems in Pakistan, existing research has largely followed policy analysis, quantitative assessment, or program level evaluations in Pakistan. Such approaches provide useful insights at a macro-level but are often not in a position to provide insights about the lived experiences of frontline workers (SWO) who is directly involved in the implementation of the welfare policies (Hussain et al., [2023](#); Alam et al., [2020](#)). Qualitative evidence from similar settings has illustrated the importance of frontline workers' views for understanding of

institutional bottlenecks, administrative inefficiencies, ethical dilemmas, and contextual constraints that account for the way services are provided in practice (Buthelezi, [2019](#); Jalil and Hussain, [2023](#)).

Moreover, the role of governance and political dynamics on the provision of welfare services are not fully addressed by the application of the qualitative inquiry methods. While overt political interference may not always be obvious, the subtle influence of political pressures at the low level may manifest in the professional autonomy, professional morale, and decision-making process between welfare officers (Banks et al., [2020](#); Eshiotse et al., [2023](#)). The lack of substantial qualitative research prevents such forms of policy reform that are contextually grounded and informed by practice.

In the Sargodha region of Punjab in Pakistan, there is a relevant empirical setting in which these issues may be studied. The region hosts several government-run and affiliated social welfare projects, such as MSSU, UCD, Dar-ul-Aman, Sanat-Zaar, Kashana, and Modern Children Homes, based on various beneficiary groups. However, empirical documentation of the institutional and professional challenges that SWOs face in working within these social welfare projects is still scarce. Given the socio-economic diversity of the region and the administrative structures, there is a need for an in-depth exploration in the form of a qualitative approach, which will help to understand the manifestation of systemic constraints at the level of service delivery.

In view of the identified empirical and methodological gaps, an attempt is made in the present study to overcome the challenges faced by (SWD) Officers during service delivery in the Sargodha region with the help of a qualitative case study approach. Guided by in-depth interviews and a rigorous process of thematic analyses (open, axial, selective coding), the research aims to capture the experiences of officers with respect to institutional resources, accessibility, budget concerns, professional training, and political influences.

By foregrounding the voices of (SWO), this research contributes to the small amount of qualitative literature on social welfare service delivery in Pakistan, and offers context-specific inputs to policy makers, administrators, and practitioners striving to strengthen institutions of welfare and improve service delivery at the frontlines.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the institutional and administrative challenges faced by (SWD) Officers while delivering services.
2. To investigate the professional and resource-related constraints that affect the effectiveness of social welfare services from the perspectives of frontline welfare officers.
3. To understand the role of governance and contextual factors, including administrative control and political influence in the service delivery practices of social welfare.

Research Questions

1. What are the problems faced by the (SWD) Officers in the course of rendering social welfare services in the Sargodha region, in terms of institutional and administrative issues?
2. How do the service delivery experiences of (SWD) Officers compare to professional capacity, resources, and infrastructural conditions?

Literature Review

Social welfare service delivery has become widely recognized as a complex productive process that is shaped by institutional frameworks, ethical frameworks, and contextual constraints. (SWO) work at the intersection of policy implementation and community engagement, and thus require a combination of professional skills and organizational support (Bland et al., 2021). "Not only is the capacity of individuals important to effective service delivery, but also the availability of resources and support infrastructure, and coherent administrative systems are important to effective service delivery," Reamer

(2018) said. However, international evidence shows that practitioners working in the welfare sector often work in conditions of structural insufficiency, and that this compromises service effectiveness and professional autonomy (Buthelezi, 2019).

Ethical responsibility and value-based practice remain at the heart of social work, particularly as practitioners are bound by systems. Ethical dilemmas of unfairness, access, accountability are amplified when resources are low, or systems within organizations are inefficient (Banks et al., 2020; O'Donoghue and O'Donoghue, 2019). These challenges are explicitly manifest in the institutions of public sector welfare system in which managerial bureaucracy and the welfare system governance have a permanent limitation of timely service delivery (Brown et al., 2019).

Institutional and Resource Related Challenges of Social Welfare Services

The weight of literature focusses on infrastructural deficiencies, staffing shortage and lack of financial resources as the important stumbling block in efficient provision of social welfare services. Studies have been conducted in the different developing environments, which have often reported on poor office facilities, transport, outdated technology, and poor communication systems as limitations that keep cropping up (Eshiotse et al., 2023; Ijon et al., 2023). Many of these difficulties are then reinforced through budgetary restrictions in which the continuity and stability of programs, outreach activities, and professional development opportunities are curtailed (Wudil et al., 2023). Delayed allocation of funds and insufficient operational budgets as key barriers in the provision of welfare services, especially in low and middle-income countries has been noted (Mahmood and Ali, 2021). These financial constraints do not only impact the performance of the organizations, but they also contribute to the frustration of practitioners and further reduce the quality of services offered (Al Ameer et al., 2024). Empirical evidence from Pakistan notes similarly minor challenges of limited funding, poor administrative coordination and inconsistency of policies in service delivery being impediments to

offering effective services (Shah, [2024](#); Hussain et al., [2023](#)).

While the welfare offices may be accessible physically, more often than not, there are complicated bureaucratic process and lengthy administrative processes leading to indirect barriers for beneficiaries (Eshiotse et al., [2023](#)). Rural populations are especially disadvantaged by distance, transportation cost, and poor awareness of available services (Alam et al., [2020](#)). Such barriers in the provision of structures create inequalities in the use of the services, which can also serve as reinforcement of inequalities in access to welfare (Abel, [2016](#)).

Studies from South Asia and Southeast Asia point out that due to a lack of understanding about welfare procedures among the beneficiaries, the services are often underutilized despite their availability (Ijon et al., [2023](#); Jalil & Hussain, [2023](#)). Such challenges impose further strain on the front-line officers, who struggle to balance various administrative requirements and the needs of the community.

Professional Capacity, Training, and Workforce Challenges

Professional training and ongoing capacity building are key to excelling in repertoire services to the poor in social welfare institutions. However, there is evidence that the opportunities for training welfare officers are often limited, irregular, and out-of-date (Bogo et al., [2022](#)). In many public-sector scenarios, training is limited to initial orientation, with scarce chances to build formally onto professional development that can be related to new social concerns and changes in technology (Saleh & Adhani, [2022](#)). The out datedness of training fuels the reliance on traditional modes of action, making the ability of innovation and adaptability in service delivery less efficient (Choy-Brown et al., [2020](#)). Research in Pakistan and Bangladesh raise concern to incurring shortages of professional development, which undermines the skills of officers responding effectively to complex social problems, especially to vulnerable people (Ahmad & Hassan, [2022](#); Jalil & Hussain, [2023](#)). In addition, issues such as staff shortages and

the pressure of workloads in the workforce are detrimental to job satisfaction and the effectiveness of services (Andrade et al., [2022](#)).

Governance structures and political dynamics is one of the major factor in social welfare service delivery. While in some cases there might be little key political interference there are instances which point to nuanced attempts to put pressure on the process, especially around the time of elections and possibly around key cases (Shah [2024](#)). Political influence may impair professional judgment and lower morale, as well as challenge the ethical criteria in welfare practice (Reamer, [2018](#)).

In times of crisis, such as the case of the pandemic of a novel coronavirus in 2020, governance and ethical issues became much more prominent, making systemic weaknesses in welfare systems the world over (Nyashanu et al., [2020](#); Cui & Querubin, [2025](#)). These findings highlight the importance of exploring the dynamics among governance and institutional constraints in galvanizing experiences in frontline service delivery.

Research Gap and Rationale of the Study

Although there is a vast amount of existing literature on structural, financial, and professional difficulties in the delivery of social welfare services, there are a number of gaps in the literature. First, much of the empirical work is based on quantitative or mixed methods approaches and does not offer much depth into the lived experiences of frontline welfare officers. Second, qualitative research for region-specific studies that pay attention to (SWD) in the public sector (especially at the district policy level) is still scarce in research studies for Pakistan (Hussain et al., [2023](#); Shah, [2024](#)). Third, few efforts have been made to understand the nexus between institutional constraints, professional capacity, and governance mechanisms in the process of service delivery practice.

To fill these gaps, the present qualitative case study is an attempt to examine the issues faced by (SWD) Officers in the Sargodha region. By using in-depth thematic analysis based on lived experience from officers, this study adds to the growing body of social

welfare research contextually rich information that is a direct response to calls for localized and practice-informed qualitative information.

Methodology

This research work adopts a constructivist paradigm of qualitative research, which, of course, assumes that social reality is co-constructed through the interactions and contextually located undertakings (Bland et al., 2021; Reamer, 2018). Guided by this paradigm, a case study approach was adopted to understand the problems of (SWD) Officers resident in the region of Sargodha in order to understand the complex phenomena inside their real-life context (Yin, 2018). Data was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews with 10 officers involved in 6 different welfare projects, in order to ensure that a diversity of people, in terms of gender, age, educational background, as well as affiliation to the different projects, was reached. Thematic analysis was carried out after open coding, axial coding, and selective coding in order to systematically determine patterns, categories and general themes (Cui &

Querubin, 2025). To protect these ethics, the research sought to get informed consent from all study subjects, the inclusion of confidentiality in the form of anonymized data, and the respect of people's right to withdraw from the study at any time during the research process. The research was also conducted by principles of beneficence and non-maleficence (whereby the engagement of individuals in the research did not lead to any harm but the participation resulted in an addition of significance to the understanding of the challenges in welfare service delivery (Reamer, 2018; Banks et al., 2020).

Results

This section presents the findings of the study on the basis of the qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews of (SWD) Officers working in different welfare projects in the Sargodha region. The findings are presented using (I) a demographic profile of respondents and (II) systemic thematic analysis with an explicit coding framework (open, axial, and selective coding). Verbatim quotes are used to bring credibility and verifiability.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Project Affiliation	MSSU Projects	4	40
	UCD Projects	2	20
	Dar-ul-Aman Project	1	10
	Sanat-Zaar Project	1	10
	Kashana Project	1	10
	Modern Children's Home	1	10
Gender	Male	3	30
	Female	7	70
Age (Years)	30–39	5	50
	40–49	3	30
	50–59	2	20
Education	M.A. Sociology	4	40
	M.A. Social Work	1	10
	M.Phil. Sociology	3	30
	M.Phil. Social Work	2	20
Marital Status	Married	7	70
	Unmarried	3	30

Variable	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Family Type	Joint Family	6	60
	Nuclear Family	4	40

The spread of respondents in terms of affiliation of the project shows a broad spectrum of institutional representation from which officers were sampled in MSSU, UCD, Dar-ul-Aman, Sanat-Zaar, Kashana, and Modern Children Home projects. The highest proportion of respondents from MSSU projects (40%) implies a greater operational presence of this project in the region, while the inclusion of smaller units of the work guarantees diversity in organizational experiences. Gender distribution shows the predominance of the female respondents (70%), and the role of women is significant in the provision of social welfare services. A look at the age distribution indicates that most of the responses (50%) fall in the age group of 30-39 years, followed by 40-49 years (30%) and 50-59 years (20%). Educational qualifications of the respondents are of the solid

academic background in social sciences. A considerable number have postgraduate qualifications in Sociology and Social Work, including M.Phil. qualifications (50%) cumulatively. Regarding the marital status of the studied characteristics, most of them are married of 70%, and 30% marital status are in unmarried status.

All in all, the socio-demographic characteristics show that the respondents belong to the academic qualifications and professional experiences with the institutional diversification. This profile reinforces legitimacy of the qualitative findings in the sense that views captured are based on the practical experience and understanding of the context of social welfare service delivery in the Sargodha region.

Table 2

Open, Axial, and Selective Coding Framework

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
Poor office buildings Lack of furniture & sanitation Shortage of staff	Inadequate infrastructure	Lack of amenities and requirements
No departmental vehicles Field visit difficulties	Insufficient transport & communication	
Internet connectivity issues Outdated computers	Lack of essential resources	Accessibility problems faced by beneficiaries
Beneficiaries reach offices easily	No major accessibility barriers	
Lengthy procedures Staff shortage affects service	Bureaucratic hurdles	
Rural distance Transport cost issues	Geographical barriers	
Lack of public awareness	Information dissemination gaps	Challenges of budget constraints
Low allocated budget Delayed fund release	Low operational budgets	
Program suspension	Inadequate program funding	

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
No external financial support	Difficulty securing funds	
One-time training	Insufficient continuous education	Impact of professional training on services
Outdated methods	Lack of updated practices	
Rare training sessions	Scarcity of training programs	
No political interference	Minimal political pressure	Problems of political pressure
Election-time influence	Low-level political pressure	
Pressure affects morale	Impact on decision-making	

Theme 1: Lack of Amenities & Requirements

The most dominant theme that emerges from the data is the one relating to the absence of basic amenities and operational requirements that tend to compromise the effective service delivery to a major extent. Respondents in many cases raised the issue of poor infrastructure, including a lack of office space, poor building conditions and staffing shortages. One respondent noted:

“Our social welfare officers do not have basic amenities like proper office space, furniture and proper sanitation.” (R-1)

To these difficulties, transportation and communication difficulties added:

“Officers had transport problems to visit field work.” (R-2)

The lack of needed technological resources, such as computers and reliable internet access were constant reiterations:

“There is considerable lapse in the availability of vehicles and modern communication tools such as computers, laptops and internet facilities which is a hindrance to coordination.” (R-7)

Theme 2: Issues of accessibility encountered by beneficiaries

Findings indicated mixed views about accessibility. Several respondents noted that beneficiaries generally have no problem accessing services:

“No problems in offering our services to the people of beneficiaries.” (R-6)

However, further indirect accessibility challenges arose as indirect barriers to accessibility in the form of administrative complexity and geographical barriers:

“The process is long and difficult, even if the beneficiaries come to our office.” (R-7)

Respondents working with rural populations cited limitations of distance and transportation:

“Long distances and issues with transport affect beneficiaries from rural areas.” (R-3)

Theme 3: Challenges of Budget Constraints

Budgetary constraint was identified as a cross-cutting issue of both infrastructure, staffing and training issues, and outreach activities.

“Budget is the main problem in service delivery.” (R-2)

Delayed disbursement of fund was a further factor contributing to operational inefficiency:

The problem “is not only budget but timing availability of budget.” (R-1)

Respondents noted that the programs cannot be sustained due to low funding:

“Most welfare programs suffer due to lack of adequate funding.” (R-5)

Theme 4: Effects of Professional Training on Service

Although initial training was recognized, there were reports of under-provided continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities expedited by the respondents.

“To train is generic and not up-to-date depending on the current needs.” (R-2)

Outmoded methodologies and infrequent training sessions restricted officer capacity to take up best practices:

“A lot of times officers work with ways that are outdated because they don't get updated training.” (R-1)

Theme 5: Issues of the Pressure politics

Most respondents claimed to have very little political interference in routine operations:

“No political pressure is encountered in our department.” (R-9)

Nevertheless, some recognized some low-level political influence on occasion, especially during election periods:

“Sometimes we face low-level political pressure which affects decision-making.” (R-1)

Such pressures were seen to have a negative impact on morale and professional autonomy.

Discussion

The results of this research show us a detailed insight of the challenges experienced by the (SWD) Officers in the Sargodha region while serving their people. The dominant theme of inadequate infrastructure and insufficient essential resources follows existing international evidence to suggest that insufficient office facilities, unsupported staffing and outdated technology significantly impedes the delivery of welfare services (Eshiotse et al., 2023; Ijon et al., 2023; Buthelezi, 2019). Respondents' descriptions of poor office buildings, the inadequacy of furniture, lack of sanitation facilities, and vehicles are characteristics of the effects of infrastructural defects, which persistently threaten the poor officers from the execution of timely and efficient services. These findings support other research showing the importance of operational resources in nursing professional practice and in maintaining quality of service (Bland et al., 2021; Reamer, 2018).

Accessibility challenges - although it was reported that the accessibility to beneficiaries was less severe in urban areas, they also found systemic barriers, especially in rural areas. Long distances and high transportation costs, as well as complicated bureaucratic procedures, indirectly put a brake on the

use of services, in accordance with previous research highlighting the role of administrative and geographic factors in shaping the provision of services (Alam et al., 2020; Abel, 2016; Eshiotse et al., 2023). These results point to the significance of considering the structural as well as the procedural determinants of access, which fosters the idea that simply providing access to services is not enough, and may become redundant if institutional barriers and resource constraints remain (Ijon et al., 2023; Jalil & Hussain, 2023).

Budgetary concerns became a cross-cutting problem that was a constraint for the infrastructure, staffing, training, and program continuity. Officers' accounts of delayed access to funds, low operational budgets, and dependence on ad hoc funding are consistent with previous information from developing nations, where financial constraints are a challenge for ensuring long-term sustainability and effectiveness for social welfare programs (Wudil et al., 2023; Mahmood and Ali, 2021; Al Ameer et al., 2024). These constraints not only decrease organizational capacity but are known to contribute to staff frustration and a challenge in adopting innovative methods of service, which treat the critical relationship between fiscal stability and professional efficacy (Shah, 2024; Hussain et al., 2023).

The theme on lack of adequate professional training highlights the gap that exists and continues to exist regarding continuous capacity building for (SWO). Our concerns about inadequate clinical expertise are shared by current problems in social work in the public sector more broadly, given that workforce processes often lack ongoing professional development and rely on over exemplified methods (Bogo et al., 2022; Saleh & Adhani, 2022; Choy-Brown et al., 2020). This limitation weakens the ability of officers to respond effectively to social issues that arise and more aptly to a rapidly emerging social issue, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, where adaptive skills and alternative knowledge are needed to provide ethical and effective services (Nyashanu et al., 2020; Cui & Querubin, 2025).

Political pressures were said to be small in normal operations, but they admitted occasional low-level influence during the elections at times, and God forbid to them affect morale and decisions. This finding is consistent with previous literature focused on the fact that even subtle political dynamics may undermine professional autonomy and ethical standards, especially in bureaucratic welfare institutions (Banks et al., 2020; Eshiotse et al., 2023; Reamer, 2018). The interaction between the governance and institutional constraints to how these concepts affect those working at the front line creates a complex socio-political environment in which SWOs go about their work, underlining the importance of protective policies and institutional safeguards in maintaining ethical practice and professional integrity.

Collectively, these findings paint service delivery challenges in Sargodha as multi-dimensional distinct and situated infrastructural inefficiencies, lack of resources, procedures, human resource, low professional development and governance contextual press. The work builds on the existing studies in that it gives a qualitative frontline level operator which brings out the lived experiences of the police officers and exposes the reality of the operations that are hidden in the shadow of quantitative or policy based understanding (Hussain et al., 2023; Shah, 2024; Alam et al., 2020). This evidence reinforces the need of the implementation of holistic and contextual-specific procedures to improve the institutional capacity for social welfare (targeted resource allocation, capacity building, and simplification of processes, and governance frameworks to support).

Overall, the discussion highlights that to improve the service delivery of social welfare services there is a need to address the systemic barriers and at the same time empower the frontline officers through appropriate infrastructure, professional development, and institutional support. These findings have some reflections in context-specific global and regional evidence and contribute to the context-based policy recommendations about the improvement of welfare services' effectiveness in Pakistan and developing

countries (Bland et al., 2021; Ahmad & Hassan, 2022; Wudil et al., 2023).

Conclusion

This study was conducted to know the challenges of (SWD) Officers while carrying out their services in the Sargodha region for gaining an in-depth qualitative understanding of frontline experiences. The findings showed 5 key themes: lack of amenities and understanding resources needed, beneficiary access difficulties, budgetary difficulties, training professionalism and political pressures role. Collectively, these themes underscore the realization that service delivery is affected by a complex interplay of infrastructural, administrative, financial, professional and governance-related factors.

The research reveals the welfare officers are working under constricted working conditions which has hindered them from providing services on a timely basis and in an effective way. Inadequate infrastructural conditions and absence of operational budgets and professional development also influences the quality of the service offered, but also the morale and professional autonomy of the staff. While there was little political interference on the whole, there are cases of low-level pressure for the protective structures of guardians to conserve the freshness of ethical action and integrity of decision-making when it occurred from time to time.

By foregrounding the lived experiences of (SWO), this study brings some 'contextual richness' to the very limited body of qualitative literature on social welfare (PK) within the public sector. The findings underscore the need to enhance service delivery of welfare through a multi-faceted approach by: investing in adequate infrastructure, ensuring timely and sufficient amount of funding, enhancing workforce capacity through providing for continuous professional development, eliminating administrative processes, and presence of conducive governance frameworks.

Ultimately, this study draws out the fact that the success of social welfare services is determined substantively less by the form of policy adopted and more by the conditions under which front line officers

operate. Policymakers, administrators, and practitioners can use these insights to implement specific reforms in order to make their operations more effective, empower staff, and scale access and quality of services for vulnerable populations in Sargodha and other similar areas.

Implications

The results of this research have important implications for policymakers and social welfare administrators or practitioners in Sri Lanka and other places and times, such as Pakistan. First, the infrastructural and resource deficiencies demonstrated suggest that the social welfare service delivery cannot be effective without sufficient institutional supports. Ensuring adequate office facilities, transport, technology, and communication systems is crucial in improving operational efficiency (Eshiotse et al., 2023; Ijon et al., 2023).

Second, budgetary limits and late allocation of funds have negative impact on program continuity and staff morale. Timely and adequate funding on one hand, but also the required professional environment to sustain the motivation and accountability of staff, is fundamental not only for the delivery of services, but also, along with the mobilization of services, to maintain the reaction of concerned stakeholders.

Third is the absence of continuous professional development, which affects the capacity of the welfare officer to respond appropriately to new social needs. Structured and regular training programs using updated modern methodologies are important for improving professional competence, ethical concerns,

and adaptive problem solving (Bogo et al., 2022; Choy-Brown et al., 2020).

Fourth, at the same time that overt political interference was limited, subtle pressures of governance are able to influence mood and decision-making. Strengthening the institutional safeguards, ensuring transparency, and establishing the accountability mechanisms are required to ensure the professional autonomy of the officers and upkeep of the ethical standards (Banks et al., 2020; Reamer, 2018).

Recommendations

Government and project administrators should focus on up-gradation of offices with proper furniture, sanitary conditions, transport, and IT infrastructure for efficient service provision. Provide adequate and on-time operational budgets for the welfare programs with channels to monitor and hasten disbursement of funds to prevent disruptions in the system. Implement policy and program actions to simplify bureaucratic functionalities and procedures and lower procedure barriers for beneficiaries, especially in rural areas, in order to increase access and equity in service provision. Introduce policies to mitigate political influence, improve transparency, and respect for decision-making autonomy of officers to ensure that ethical standards are upheld throughout all service delivery activities. Promote awareness programs to educate beneficiaries about the available welfare services and procedures, reducing the information gaps and enhancing the utilization of the services.

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