

Managing the Quantitative and the Qualitative: Innovating on the Dynamics of Performance Measurements, Professional Attitudes, and Quality of Organizational Social Work Services

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ABSTRACT

The Performance Measurement Table (PMT) is a set of forms utilized by social work institutions to assess the performance of social workers. This study examines three key relationships: the connection between social workers' attitudes and the PMT, the relationship between the PMT and the quality of social services, and the link between social workers' attitudes and the quality of social services. The primary objective is to explore the interplay between quantifiable performance metrics and the more subjective, qualitative attitudes of social workers concerning the quality of services provided. The study employs a sequential explanatory research design, in which quantitative data collected from 14 social workers at the Sunshine Social Work Service Center in Dezhou City, China, is further analyzed and contextualized through qualitative discussions. This approach aims to enhance the understanding of how to improve the quality of social services delivered by social workers within institutional settings. The findings suggest that the attitudes of social workers have a greater impact on the quality of social services than performance evaluations alone. When a social worker's attitude does not align with or support the objectives of social service activities, performance evaluations become ineffective in driving meaningful improvements in service quality.

ABSTRAK

Tabel Pengukuran Kinerja (PMT) adalah serangkaian formulir yang digunakan oleh institusi pekerjaan sosial untuk menilai kinerja pekerja sosial. Penelitian ini mengkaji tiga hubungan utama: hubungan antara sikap pekerja sosial dan PMT, hubungan antara PMT dan kualitas layanan sosial, serta hubungan antara sikap pekerja sosial dan kualitas layanan sosial. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi keterkaitan antara metrik kinerja yang terukur secara kuantitatif dengan sikap pekerja sosial yang lebih bersifat subjektif dan kualitatif terkait kualitas layanan yang diberikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian eksplanatori berurutan, di mana data kuantitatif yang dikumpulkan dari 14 pekerja sosial di Sunshine Social Work Service Center di Kota Dezhou, Tiongkok, dianalisis lebih lanjut dan dikontekstualisasikan melalui diskusi kualitatif. Pendekatan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman tentang cara memperbaiki kualitas layanan sosial yang diberikan oleh pekerja sosial dalam lingkungan institusional. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sikap pekerja sosial memiliki dampak yang lebih besar terhadap kualitas layanan sosial dibandingkan dengan evaluasi kinerja semata. Ketika sikap pekerja sosial tidak selaras atau tidak mendukung tujuan kegiatan layanan sosial, evaluasi kinerja menjadi tidak efektif dalam mendorong perbaikan yang bermakna pada kualitas layanan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The demand for social workers is closely tied to the presence of “social problems” within a state, which

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require various approaches to address their underlying causes. Social problems are often associated with socioeconomic status, which can be measured by income levels. According to the World Bank, countries are classified into four income groups: low-income, lower-middle income, upper-middle income, and high-income. Data indicates that countries in Southeast Asia generally fall within the lower-middle and upper-middle income categories. Notably, middle-income countries tend to face persistent social problems, such as community issues, child welfare concerns, and higher rates of drug use, which are more prevalent than in high-income countries (O'Leary et al., 2019). This trend aligns with the relationship between non-communicable diseases and behavioral risks, as lower socioeconomic groups are more likely to consume alcohol and tobacco and have lower fruit and vegetable intake compared to higher socioeconomic groups (Allen et al., 2017).

The presence of social problems necessitates the role of social workers, who assist clients in identifying the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to address these challenges (Michailakis & Schirmer, 2014). In Indonesia, social work is a critical service, particularly given that the country is home to the fourth-largest population in the world. However, concerns remain among Indonesian social work researchers regarding the standards of social work implementation (Susilowati et al., 2017) and the professionalism of social workers (Susilowati et al., 2020). In contrast, the People's Republic of China (PRC), currently recognized as the world's second-largest economy, is experiencing a decline in the number of social workers. Social work plays a vital role in addressing social problems, as social workers are trained professionals equipped with the knowledge and skills to tackle these issues. However, in Indonesia, social work services are neither widely recognized nor considered a formal profession (O'Leary et al., 2019). Similarly, in China, social work is not a popular career choice, and many individuals are uninterested in pursuing it as a profession.

Research on social work in China has increasingly focused on the profession's declining popularity, as highlighted in recent studies (Hu et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2020). Yang et al. (2020) raised concerns about the lack of social perception, public recognition, community participation, and the insufficient competitiveness of social work services. A 2019 study in China revealed that nearly 20% of social workers expressed an intention to leave their jobs. Mediating factors such as job burnout and the possession of a social work degree were found to significantly influence turnover intentions. Furthermore, professional identity was inversely related to turnover intentions when combined with these mediating factors (Hu et al., 2022). To ensure the effectiveness of social work services, the quality of these services must align with the standards of professional practice. Social work is often perceived as a "stressful job" due to its deep involvement in addressing clients' problems, which can lead to job-related stress and negative attitudes toward clients (Blomberg et al., 2015). However, there is limited research exploring whether performance evaluations required by social work institutions contribute to these negative attitudes.

This study has three primary objectives. First, it examines the relationship between social workers' attitudes and their job performance, as measured by the Performance Measurement Table (PMT). Second, it investigates the connection between performance measurement and the quality of social services. Third, it analyzes the link between social workers' attitudes and the quality of social services. The study aims to explain the interplay between quantifiable performance metrics and the more subjective, qualitative attitudes of social workers concerning the quality of services provided.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Webb (2017), as cited in Hu et al. (2022), discusses professional identity in the context of the nature of social work, emphasizing the importance of preserving the profession's core function as a caring and compassionate field. Professional identity refers to a social worker's awareness of belonging to the social work profession. It is an abstract concept, as it reflects how a social worker perceives themselves in their professional role (Wiles, 2017). Wheeler (2017) and Moorhead (2019) argue that professional identity is primarily shaped by attachment and a sense of belonging. Attachment orientation involves the internalization of the core features and norms of social work, including its knowledge base, values, ethical principles, and mission. It also encompasses the development of a commitment to practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, with a particular focus on serving vulnerable populations across all levels. To foster this commitment, social workers must integrate their sense of self, worldview, professional knowledge, and skills (Moorhead et al., 2014).

In contrast, Ryan and Deci (2000) describe the sense-of-belonging orientation as relating to social workers' relationships within the workplace. This includes how they compare and distinguish themselves from other professions while safeguarding against boundary erosion. Professional identity, in this context, is

closely tied to intrinsic motivation, which is defined as engaging in activities “for their own sake” or for the inherent interest and satisfaction they provide. Consequently, professional identity can be understood as an internal drive or motive. However, job burnout may undermine this intrinsic motivation, particularly when social workers are required to comply with various performance evaluations, such as those outlined in the PMT. These evaluations can lead to resistance among social workers, as they may perceive the evaluation process as burdensome or misaligned with their professional values. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Social workers exhibit a resistant attitude toward performance evaluations.

The discussion of social service quality is a significant topic in social work and social welfare studies. Berman and Phillips (2000), as cited in Čiapaite and Vaitkevičienė (2020), identify four structural components that define social quality. The first component, social and economic protection or insecurity, refers to the extent to which systems and structures designed to ensure individuals’ well-being succeed or fail in meeting their essential survival needs. The second component, social inclusion or exclusion, relates to the principles of equality and justice, as well as the structural factors that either promote or hinder these principles. The third component, social cohesion or anomie, involves the processes through which social networks and the infrastructure supporting them are created, maintained, or dismantled. Finally, the fourth component, defeat or empowerment, pertains to the realization – or lack thereof – of human competencies and capacities necessary for full participation in social, economic, political, and cultural processes. These components form continuums that span from the micro-level, involving individuals and communities, to the macro-level, encompassing state institutions. They provide a foundation for evaluating an individual’s quality of life, level of social integration or exclusion, and the overall quality of social work and services. Social work is central to addressing these continuums and ensuring that social services meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

In Lithuania, Dvarionas et al. (2014) argue that the implementation of a truly empowering post-lag model depends on the political will of the parties in power. This model has the potential to genuinely improve the provision and quality of social services, but it could also be used superficially to appeal to voters without meaningful change. According to Čiapaite and Vaitkevičienė (2020), the quality of social services should adhere to three key principles of empowerment. These principles include the participation of social service recipients in decision-making processes, the establishment of dialogue between social service providers and recipient organizations, and the regular collection of feedback from service recipients. These principles are integrated into the PMT, a tool used by social workers to evaluate and improve the quality of social services. Social workers who effectively apply the PMT are expected to deliver higher-quality services by aligning their practices with these empowerment principles. Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Performance evaluation results directly impact the quality of social service projects.

Maintaining the quality of social services necessitates the adoption of professionalism as a core value. Holm (1985), as cited in Holm (2002), defines a professional attitude as the intention to guide one’s professional practice based on what benefits the patient or client and meets their genuine needs, rather than being driven by personal desires, emotions, or impulses. A professional attitude requires the helper to prioritize the needs of the client over their own. This shift demands a special incentive to relinquish egocentric rewards and adopt alternative attitudes and values that align with professional standards. Such development is an integral part of the professionalization process. This concept implies two specific requirements. First, it is essential to recognize that the relationship between the helper and the client is inherently unequal and non-reciprocal. A professional attitude encompasses respect, attention, care, empathy, and the application of professional knowledge to meet the client’s needs. However, placing similar expectations on the client is psychologically unrealistic, given their vulnerable position as someone seeking assistance. Second, professional helpers must cultivate self-awareness. This study assumes that all individuals, including professional helpers, operate on multiple levels simultaneously – conscious and unconscious, adult and primitive, rational and irrational.

Rogers (1957), as cited in Holm (2002), argues that a professional attitude is closely tied to a humanistic approach, which emphasizes compassionate communication. This perspective highlights that individuals may consciously adopt a professional stance or believe they are adhering to a principle, while unconsciously deviating from it. Only when professional helpers are aware of their own emotions and desires can they regulate and manage them effectively. This self-regulation ensures that personal feelings do not take precedence in interactions with clients or in the circumstances surrounding their care. A professional attitude,

therefore, requires helpers to consistently prioritize the needs of the client over their own. From this understanding, it can be assumed that the attitude of social workers is a critical factor in delivering high-quality social services. Based on this premise, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Social workers' attitudes directly affect the quality of social service projects.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The Dezhou Sunshine Social Work Service Center (SSWSC), established in 2015, is the first social work agency in the region and the only organization in the area to be recognized as one of the top 100 social work service agencies nationwide. It has also been awarded the prestigious 5A-level social service agency rating, the highest possible distinction. As the largest organization in terms of project numbers and organizational scale locally, SSWSC is highly representative of social work practices in the region.

This study adopts a Sequential Explanatory Research design, which not only serves as a research strategy but also outlines the data analysis process. The research begins with the collection of quantitative data through a questionnaire designed with a Likert scale. The statistical results are analyzed using WPS statistical tools, and all survey data undergo Spearman correlation analysis with SPSS 27.0 to generate the first phase of quantitative results. Based on these findings, the second phase involves qualitative analysis using open-ended questions to further explain the quantitative data. This phase focuses on issues with strong correlations and significant impacts on performance evaluation. The qualitative data is then analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's attitudes toward the study. The study employs purposive sampling to select research participants. Since the focus is on a single social work agency, SSWSC, the research subjects consist of 14 social workers from the organization. These social workers are primarily graduates of social work programs or hold professional social work qualifications. Their responsibilities include planning, implementing, and evaluating social service projects, such as designing and recruiting for educational group services for youth, implementing these services, and summarizing their outcomes. The 14 selected social workers are those responsible for four key social service projects: drug rehabilitation services, community service projects, veterans' service projects, and rural service projects. The decision to select a sample of 14 social workers is supported by Baker and Edwards (2012), who argue that a small sample size in qualitative research reduces the burden on researchers while still being sufficient to achieve meaningful results. In qualitative research, a sample size exceeding 12 participants is often considered adequate to reach the saturation point, where no new information is likely to emerge.

From June 7 to June 12, 2024, the researcher collected Performance Measurement Tables (PMTs) from SSWSC, covering the period from May 2022 to May 2024. To ensure consistency in the research sample, employees who had left the organization, those with short tenure, and those whose performance evaluations were significantly impacted by COVID-19 were excluded. Ultimately, 166 PMTs from 14 eligible social workers, covering the period from June 2023 to May 2024, were selected as the sample for analysis. From June 15 to June 18, 2024, the researcher collected data on attitudes toward performance evaluations through questionnaires administered to the selected participants. Additionally, quality assessment materials for six social work service projects corresponding to the selected participants were gathered. From June 24 to June 28, 2024, based on the first phase of quantitative analysis, three categories with strong correlations were identified: (1) performance evaluation indicators meeting project requirements, (2) performance evaluations being helpful for work, and (3) performance evaluation results accurately reflecting work performance. To further explore these issues, eight open-ended questions were designed for the second phase of the study. The second-phase survey was conducted with participants whose responses showed high correlations with these identified issues.

4. DEFINITION AND SCORING

This section defines and explains the measurement of each hypothesis in the study. It is organized into three subsections corresponding to the three hypotheses: the evaluation criteria for social workers' attitudes, the criteria for the PMT, and the criteria for assessing the quality of social work projects.

4.1. Social Workers' Attitude Evaluation Criteria

In this study, social workers' attitudes toward performance evaluations are measured using two dimensions,

Table 1. The evaluation of the current performance evaluation system and the evaluation of the performance evaluation results

Evaluation of the Performance Appraisal System	Mean	Median	Evaluation of Performance Appraisal Results	Mean	Median
Very familiar with the performance appraisal system	4.07	4	Get detailed feedback after the performance review	4.29	5
Satisfaction with the performance appraisal system	3.71	4	The feedback method of performance appraisal results is effective	4.21	4
Performance reviews are helpful for work	3.71	4	The resulting feedback content helps to improve the work	4.07	4
The evaluation criteria of performance appraisal are clear	4.07	4	The publication of performance appraisal results is fair, impartial, and transparent	4.29	4
The performance appraisal process is fair and impartial	4.14	4	Performance appraisal results are a true reflection of job performance	3.71	4
The indicators of PMT meet the requirements of the project	3.64	4	Performance appraisal has a motivating effect on job performance	4	4
synthesis score	3.89	4	synthesis score	4.095	4.167

Table 2. Indicators for the performance assessment

Project Name	Case	Activity	Publicity	Article
Xinqu community social work project	0.0567	0.0691	0.0865	0.0680
Anti-drug social work project	0.0362	0.0623	0.0742	0.0689
Rural social work project	0.0467	0.0533	0.0731	0.0783
Gulou retired military social work service project	0.0544	0.1219	0.0287	0.0842
Liuyuan retired military social work service project	0.0555	0.0604	0.0876	0.0699
Chahe community social work service project	0.0808	0.0800	0.0785	0.0603

Table 3. Indicators for the quality assessment

Project Name	Official Assessment	Duration	Honor	Innovation	Total Point
Xinqu community social work project	10	15	14	77	116
Anti-drug social work project	10	15	27	112	164
Rural social work project	10	10	7	11	38
Gulou retired military social work service project	10	5	0	3	18
Liuyuan retired military social work service project	10	5	0	2	17
Chahe community social work service project	10	5	0	2	17

Table 4. Social workers' attitude towards performance evaluation

Indicators	N	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient
Satisfaction with the performance appraisal system->The evaluation criteria of performance appraisal are clear	14	0.004	.720**
Satisfaction with the performance appraisal system->The indicators of PMT meet the requirements of the project	14	0.001	.786**
Satisfaction with the performance appraisal system->The publication of performance appraisal results is fair, impartial, and transparent	14	0.001	.782**

as outlined in Table 1: the evaluation of the current performance evaluation system and the evaluation of the performance evaluation results. A 5-point Likert scale is employed in the questionnaire, with responses ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The average score is used to assess the overall attitudes of social workers. The first phase of the questionnaire consists of 19 questions. Of these, six questions gather basic demographic information about the respondents, while the remaining 13 questions assess their attitudes toward performance evaluations. Two key questions specifically evaluate the performance evaluation system and the performance evaluation results, using a Likert matrix scale. To ensure the reliability of these questions, the researcher calculated Cronbach's α coefficient, which was 0.869 for the performance evaluation system and 0.800 for the performance evaluation results. These values, falling within the range of 0.7 to 0.9, indicate good internal consistency of the scale.

4.2. Performance Measurement Table (PMT) Criteria

The Performance Measurement Tools (PMTs) are primarily developed by organizational leaders and management in collaboration with project funders, aligning closely with the requirements of social work service projects and funding units. The effectiveness of performance evaluation outcomes has a direct influence on both the quality of project services and the assessments conducted by project funding units. The performance evaluation forms collected for this study encompass four categories: drug rehabilitation services, community service projects, veterans service projects, and rural service projects. These categories include evaluation indicators comprising 17, 14, 17, and 18 items, respectively. To ensure consistency across the research subjects, this study excluded indicators that reflected category-specific differences or showed insignificant variations in overall scores. Ultimately, four indicators were retained as the evaluation standards for the performance assessment form, as outlined in Table 2: casework, activities, articles, and media publicity. To address variations among the four sets of PMTs, all data were standardized using the weighted average method.

4.3. Quality of Social Work Project Criteria

The quality assessment of the projects analyzed in this study is defined by four key aspects, as outlined in Table 3, based on the preferences of local funders: official evaluation results (official assessment), project sustainability (duration), received honors and awards (honor), and project innovation (innovation). Each project that meets the qualification standard is awarded a baseline score of 10 points. For project sustainability, the scoring is determined by the project's duration: projects lasting less than 3 years receive 5 points, those lasting 3–5 years receive 10 points, those lasting 5–10 years receive 15 points, and projects exceeding 10 years receive 20 points. Honors and innovation are scored according to their level of recognition: national-level achievements are awarded 3 points, provincial-level achievements 2 points, and municipal-level achievements 1 point. The cumulative score from these four aspects represents the project's overall quality score.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

In its early stages, the Dezhou Sunshine Social Work Service Center (SSWSC) operated with a small number of social workers and a limited number of service projects. During this period, the agency's leadership was able to effectively manage both the quantity and quality of project services. It was not until early 2019 that SSWSC officially introduced a performance evaluation system. Since the system was directly tied to social workers' salaries, many employees expressed concerns that their income might decrease if they were unable to meet their performance targets. As a result, there was considerable opposition to the implementation of the performance evaluation system. However, recent survey results indicate that the majority of social workers now support the performance evaluation system.

5.1. Attitude of Social Workers Towards Performance Evaluation

The overall evaluation was conducted using a Likert scale, divided into four levels: 1.0–2.0 (Very Dissatisfied), 2.1–3.0 (Dissatisfied), 3.1–4.0 (Generally Satisfied), and 4.1–5.0 (Satisfied or Very Satisfied). Social workers rated the performance evaluation system with an overall score of 3.89, indicating general satisfaction. The lowest score, 3.64, was assigned to the item "Performance evaluation indicators meet project requirements." Similarly, the items "Satisfaction with the current performance evaluation system" and "The performance evaluation helps your work" both received scores of 3.71, also reflecting general satisfaction. In contrast, the clarity of the evaluation indicators and the fairness and impartiality of the evaluation process both scored

above 4, indicating satisfaction or high satisfaction. The median score for these indicators was 4, suggesting that while social workers are generally satisfied with the performance evaluation system, certain aspects still require improvement.

The overall score for the evaluation of the performance assessment results was 4.095, with a median of 4.167, reflecting satisfaction or high satisfaction. However, among the six questions assessed, only the item "The performance assessment results accurately reflect my work performance" scored below 4, at 3.71. This result indicates that this specific issue requires further investigation and improvement.

As shown in Table 4, social workers' satisfaction with the performance evaluation system is strongly correlated with three key factors: clear and precise performance evaluation standards, performance indicators that align with project requirements, and the fair, just, and transparent publication of performance results. The correlation coefficients for these factors are 0.720 ($p < 0.01$), 0.786 ($p < 0.01$), and 0.782 ($p < 0.01$), respectively, indicating a very strong positive relationship with satisfaction. In other words, when performance evaluation standards are clear, indicators meet project requirements, and results are published fairly and transparently, employees report higher levels of satisfaction with the performance evaluation system. One social worker shared their perspective in the second phase of the open-ended questionnaire:

"Ever since I listened to the knowledge you shared with us, followed the recommended WeChat public accounts, and received the anti-drug materials from our team, I've written a case study and an article about a base's publicity. Both were published by the Shandong Social Work Association and Dezhou Evening News, respectively. At first, I couldn't believe it, but it proves that learning is never a bad thing."

In the second phase of the open-ended questionnaire survey, social workers also addressed the three issues that received lower scores in the evaluation. First, they noted that performance evaluations help them identify areas for improvement in their work. They emphasized that the various training programs organized by the institution are effective in addressing the issues highlighted in the evaluations. Second, social workers provided suggestions for refining performance evaluation indicators. While these suggestions differ slightly from the current evaluation form, the differences are not significant. Overall, social workers expressed general satisfaction with and support for the performance evaluation process.

5.2. Performance Evaluation Results Directly Reflect the Quality of Social Service Projects

To examine the relationship between PMT results and the quality of social service projects, a heatmap was created to visualize these correlations. Heatmaps display the strength and direction of correlations between variables, with colors closer to red indicating stronger positive correlations and colors closer to blue indicating stronger negative correlations. The heatmap reveals that case scores (0.68) and activity scores (0.53) have a strong positive correlation with project quality, whereas publicity scores (-0.09) and article scores (-0.23) show relatively weak or negative correlations. This finding highlights the importance of rigorous performance assessment designs in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of social service projects. Previous research has shown that projects lacking robust evaluation frameworks often fail to achieve their intended outcomes and, in some cases, may even produce adverse effects (Lorenzo Moledo et al., 2021).

These results suggest that among the performance assessment metrics, casework and activities play a significant role in improving project quality, while publicity and articles have a comparatively minor or negligible impact. Conducting detailed performance evaluations and reflecting on the results can provide a deeper understanding of project outcomes and help enhance project quality. Such evaluations are essential for identifying and addressing project deficiencies, thereby promoting continuous improvement. The researchers also analyzed the weighted average scores of the total performance assessment metrics for each PMT item, which ranged between 85 and 87 points. When these scores were compared with project scores derived from social service project evaluation criteria, the impact was found to be minimal. Consequently, due to the influence of sample selection in this study, it cannot be conclusively determined that performance assessment results directly reflect the quality of social service projects.

Some studies suggest that relying solely on performance assessment results to evaluate the quality of social service projects may overlook the complexity and diversity of these initiatives. For example, the success of social service projects is not only reflected in performance metrics but also in client satisfaction and broader social impact.

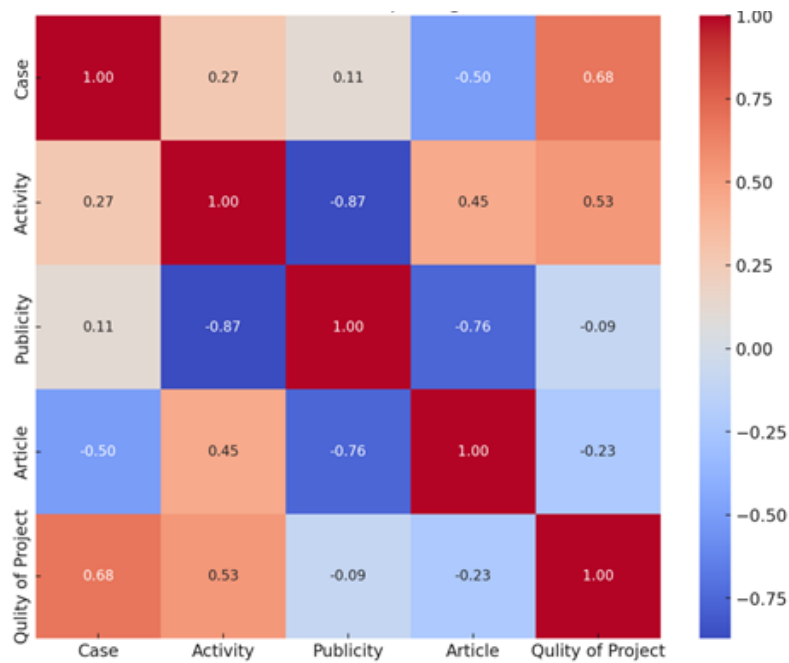


Figure 1. Correlation matrix heatmap

Overemphasis on performance metrics may lead project implementers to prioritize measurable indicators at the expense of addressing actual client needs, ultimately affecting overall project effectiveness and service quality (Alomoto et al., 2022). The literature emphasizes that social service organizations should adopt multidimensional performance evaluation frameworks to assess project outcomes comprehensively (Lorenzo Moledo et al., 2021). These frameworks should incorporate not only financial indicators but also factors such as organizational resilience, innovation capacity, and the utilization of social capital. Additionally, the dynamics of leadership teams and stakeholder involvement play a critical role in influencing performance, particularly when organizations respond to environmental changes and crises. These findings demonstrate that social service organizations can significantly enhance project quality through diversified collaboration, innovation, and data-driven evaluation methods. By integrating these factors, organizations can ensure that social service projects effectively meet client needs and achieve their intended social objectives.

5.3. Social Workers' Attitudes Directly Impact the Quality of Social Service Project

To examine the impact of social workers' attitudes on project quality, researchers used SPSS to conduct a statistical analysis of the Spearman correlations between variables related to social workers' attitudes and project quality. All variables analyzed showed statistically significant correlations with project quality at a significance level (Sig, 2-tailed) of less than 0.05. The correlation coefficients for eight variables and project quality are presented below, where a negative sign ('-') indicates a negative correlation, and larger numerical values represent stronger correlations:

Variables with Strong Negative Correlations:

- Clarity of performance evaluation criteria (-0.635, Sig. 0.015)
- Availability of detailed feedback after performance evaluation (-0.734, Sig. 0.003)
- Fairness and transparency of performance evaluation results (-0.580, Sig. 0.030)
- Insufficient professional skills when meeting certain indicators (-0.681, Sig. 0.007)

Variables with Strong Positive Correlations:

- Lack of detailed performance evaluation indicators and vague evaluation standards (0.582, Sig. 0.029)
- Unreasonable performance evaluation indicators, optional to accomplish (0.673, Sig. 0.008)
- Insufficient incentives in performance evaluation (0.553, Sig. 0.040)
- Lack of feedback (0.592, Sig. 0.026)

The findings suggest that several factors influence the quality of social service projects. Negative correlations indicate that clearer performance evaluation standards and more effective feedback mechanisms

could enhance project quality. Conversely, positive correlations highlight the importance of reasonable performance evaluation indicators and incentive mechanisms in improving project outcomes. Survey responses from social workers further support these findings, confirming the hypothesis that social workers' attitudes directly influence the quality of social service projects. In addition to the research hypothesis, two core concerns regarding performance evaluation were identified:

- 1. **Insufficient Feedback**
Social workers widely identified inadequate feedback as a critical issue in performance evaluations. This is supported by the correlation coefficients, which show that insufficient feedback negatively impacts various aspects of performance evaluation, including the level of detail, the effectiveness of feedback methods, the helpfulness of feedback content, and the fairness and transparency of results. These findings underscore the importance of providing effective feedback to improve the fairness and transparency of performance evaluations, thereby motivating staff to enhance their performance.
- 2. **Fairness, Justice, and Transparency**
Social workers also expressed significant concern about the fairness, justice, and transparency of performance evaluation results. The analysis revealed strong positive correlations between these factors and six other variables. This indicates that higher levels of fairness, justice, and transparency in performance evaluations lead to greater satisfaction with the evaluation system. Additionally, these factors contribute to clearer and more precise evaluation criteria, fairer evaluation processes, more realistic indicators, and more detailed and effective feedback after evaluations.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the critical role of feedback mechanisms and fairness in performance evaluations. Addressing these concerns can improve the quality of social service projects and enhance social workers' satisfaction with the evaluation process.

6. DISCUSSION

This study comprises three primary objectives. The first objective is to examine the relationship between social workers' attitudes and their work performance, as measured by the Performance Measurement Tool (PMT). The second is to investigate the connection between performance measurement and the quality of social services. The third is to analyze the link between social workers' attitudes and the quality of social services. The findings indicate that the combination of these three hypotheses demonstrates that both social workers' attitudes and performance evaluation are critical factors in improving the quality of social services. This research, which specifically focuses on these three interconnected areas, confirms a significant relationship between social workers' attitudes, performance evaluation, and the quality of social services.

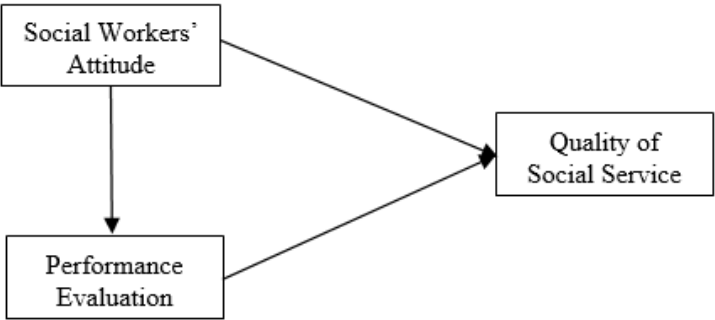


Figure 2. The proposed hypothetical model

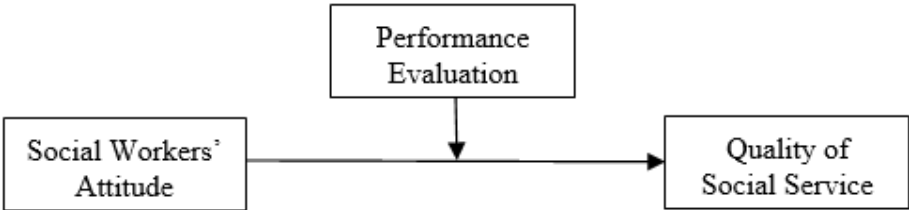


Figure 3. The final version of social service quality assurance in Sunshine Social Work Service Centre (SSWSC)

At the initial stages of the research, the study proposed the hypotheses illustrated in Figure 2. However, the results revealed that performance evaluation functions as a mediating variable, while the quality of social services serves as the dependent variable. In contrast, social workers' attitudes are identified as the independent variable. This revised framework is depicted in Figure 3.

The study determined that performance evaluation may not be suitable as an independent variable because performance assessment metrics, such as cases and activities, significantly contribute to improving project quality. However, performance evaluation is only indirectly connected to the quality of social services when combined with the independent variable, social workers' attitudes. Social workers are more likely to perform effectively and ensure higher-quality social services when guided by performance assessment metrics, which serve as a compass or direction for their work, as noted in their qualitative responses. Performance evaluation, on its own, does not have a direct relationship with the quality of social services. Neither poor nor strong performance evaluation can independently impact the quality of social services without the active role of social workers who follow the performance metrics.

The third hypothesis in the study demonstrates that social workers' attitudes directly influence the quality of social services. This finding further supports the conclusion that social workers' attitudes play a more significant role as an independent variable in determining the quality of social services than performance evaluation. When a social worker's attitude does not align with the goals of social service activities, performance evaluation becomes irrelevant. Conversely, when a social worker's attitude supports social service activities, performance evaluation becomes relevant and contributes to higher-quality social services.

The data from the attitude evaluation system for social workers indicate that social workers are generally satisfied with the current system, with a score of 4.095. This suggests that clear performance evaluation standards can help maintain the professionalism of social workers' attitudes. This aligns with Holm's (1985, as cited in Holm, 2002) definition of professional attitude, which emphasizes the intention to prioritize the genuine needs and demands of clients over personal needs, feelings, or impulses. Institutional or organizational guidelines for social workers can help override personal conflicts of interest, fostering an objective and professional attitude in delivering social services. Performance evaluations, when effectively implemented, can further encourage social workers to enhance their professionalism.

Comprehensive assessments should become a standard practice to support the professionalism of social workers and improve the effectiveness of social service projects. This is consistent with Moorhead et al. (2014), who argue that social workers must integrate their sense of self, worldviews, professional knowledge, and skills to establish a strong commitment to their profession. The findings of this study suggest that improving the quality of social service projects requires innovation, collaboration, and effectiveness tailored to client needs.

These results also align with Holm's (1985, as cited in Holm, 2002) assertion that a professional attitude requires prioritizing the needs of clients over personal interests. Holm further emphasizes that special incentives are necessary to shift away from egocentric rewards and foster alternative, value-driven attitudes as part of the professionalization process. The quality of social services is a fundamental responsibility of social workers, and the process of professionalization, supported by feedback mechanisms, can help improve social workers' attitudes and enhance the quality of social services they provide.

7. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

This study has three primary objectives. The first objective is to examine the relationship between social workers' attitudes and their job performance, as measured using Performance Measurement Tools (PMTs). The second objective is to investigate the connection between performance measurement and the quality of social services. The third objective is to analyze the link between social workers' attitudes and the quality of the social services they provide. The overarching aim is to explore the interplay between quantifiable performance metrics and the more subjective, qualitative aspects of social workers' attitudes concerning the quality of services delivered.

The findings indicate that the first hypothesis—that social workers oppose performance evaluation through PMTs—is not supported. On the contrary, most social workers express support for performance evaluation, viewing it as a tool to identify and address shortcomings in their work, which ultimately enhances the quality of services provided. The results also reveal that performance evaluation outcomes have a direct impact on the quality of social service projects, with both positive and negative effects observed. This

highlights the need for further refinement of the scientific validity and effectiveness of current PMTs. Additionally, the influence of organizational management practices and external environmental factors on the quality of social service projects warrants further consideration. The study finds that positive attitudes among social workers toward performance evaluation contribute to favorable outcomes in social service projects. Conversely, negative attitudes toward performance evaluation can adversely affect project outcomes.

While this research successfully addresses its stated objectives, it acknowledges certain limitations. The data used in this study were derived from a single institution, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. As a result, these conclusions may not be directly applicable to other institutions. Future research is strongly encouraged to incorporate more diverse datasets and involve multiple institutions to enable comparative analysis and broader applicability of the findings.

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Appendices 1. Average scores of social workers in PMT raw data

Code	Case	Activities	Publicity	Article
C1	5.4167	10.9333	13.5000	12.0833
C2	5.8333	12.1042	13.5000	10.4167
C3	3.7000	12.2000	11.6000	11.0000
C4	4.4000	14.3000	11.0000	8.5000
C5	3.2500	10.8750	11.0000	10.8333
C6	4.7500	20.5833	5.8333	12.9167
C7	4.0909	9.0000	10.1818	11.3636
C8	5.0000	9.1067	14.0417	13.8889
C9	4.7500	20.5833	2.5000	11.0417
C10	4.7500	20.5833	5.0000	11.3750
C11	4.8333	20.5833	1.6667	13.5000
C12	4.7500	20.5833	5.0000	12.2500
C13	7.0833	13.6667	10.9375	15.0000
C14	4.5000	9.6600	13.9750	13.5000

Appendices 2. Project quality evaluation raw data

Project Name	Official Assessment	Duration	Honor			Innovation		
			National Level	Provincial Level	City Level	National level	Provincial level	City Level
Xinqu community social work project	Qualified	8 years	0	4	6	4	9	47
Anti-drug social work project	89.5/100	9 years	2	6	9	23	3	37
Rural social work project	Qualified	4 years	0	3	1	2	2	1
Gulou retired military social work service project	Qualified	2 years	0	0	0	0	0	3
Liuyuan retired military social work service project	Qualified	2 years	0	0	0	0	0	2
Chahe community social work service project		①	0	0	0	0	0	2

① the project will end on June 30, 2024, after one year, and the project funders have explicitly not renewed it.