

Capacity Development of Social Workers in Enhancing Social Welfare Service Delivery

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ABSTRACT

This study examines social workers' capacity development in enhancing social welfare service delivery at Sentra Budi Perkasa Palembang. The study contributes to the literature by explaining the relationship between social welfare human resource development, social workers' competencies, service quality, and welfare outcomes for beneficiaries. Unlike previous studies that primarily describe human resource development as a set of training activities, this research conceptualizes it as a continuous institutional process. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis involving 10 purposively selected informants, including managerial staff, social workers, support personnel, and beneficiaries. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation as well as member checking. The findings indicate that orientation programs, training, competency certification, and further education improve social workers' understanding of tasks, assessment skills, case management capacity, interprofessional collaboration, and adaptive service delivery. However, program effectiveness remains limited because post-training evaluation is not systematically implemented and digital competency development has not yet become a strategic institutional priority. The study concludes that capacity development should extend beyond training participation and focus on strengthening competencies, improving service quality, and enhancing beneficiaries' social functioning.

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1. Introduction

Human resources in social welfare play an important role in the delivery of social services. In social service organizations, program effectiveness is determined not only by the availability of facilities and procedures, but also by the competence, professionalism, and commitment of the human resources responsible for service delivery. Social workers serve as key actors in the processes of assessment, intervention, assistance, advocacy, referral, and evaluation for recipients of social welfare services. Therefore, the capacity development of social workers is a strategic necessity to ensure that social services are delivered in a responsive, inclusive, and sustainable manner.

In the social service literature, human resource development has been widely discussed as an effort to improve employees' knowledge, skills, work attitudes, and professionalism (Sahrul et al., 2022; Sukmana et al., 2023; Vani & Rahayu, 2024).. Previous studies have shown that human resource development in social service organizations is related to training, education, career development, work motivation, and organizational capacity to respond to the needs of service recipients (Hadianti et al., 2017; Pratami et al., 2016; Sulasmi, 2020; Wulandari et al., 2024). However, most existing studies still emphasize employee participation in training programs and have not sufficiently explained how such development processes shape competence, improve service quality, and affect the welfare outcomes of service recipients.

This research gap is important to address because social services differ from ordinary administrative services. The quality of social services largely depends on social workers' ability to understand the needs of service recipients, conduct accurate assessments, develop intervention plans, establish helping relationships, work across professions, and evaluate changes in social functioning. Thus, the capacity development of social workers should not be understood merely as orientation or training activities, but as a process that links human resource development with professional competence, social service quality, and welfare outcomes.

Social workers are part of the human resources responsible for social welfare provision, along with social welfare personnel, social

extension workers, and social volunteers, who support the implementation of social protection, social rehabilitation, social empowerment, and social security (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017; Public Relations FISIP UNPAD, 2024). The Ministry of Social Affairs has developed Sentra and Integrated Sentra as service units that address various social problems through a multi-service approach (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). The transformation from the previous institutional service model into the Sentra model requires social workers to possess more adaptive capacities, as service targets have become broader, more complex, and increasingly dependent on interprofessional collaboration.

Sentra Budi Perkasa Palembang is one of the Technical Implementation Units of the Ministry of Social Affairs under the Directorate General of Social Rehabilitation. This institution provides services to various groups of social welfare service recipients through residential, family-based, community-based, case response, and empowerment services. The shift toward a multi-service mandate has created a need to strengthen the capacity of social workers so that they can conduct assessments, interventions, coordination, documentation, and service evaluations more effectively.

This study offers both conceptual and empirical contributions. Conceptually, it develops a framework linking human resource development in social welfare, social workers' competence, social service quality, and welfare outcomes. Empirically, it demonstrates how orientation, training, competency certification, and further education operate within the context of Sentra Budi Perkasa, including the limitations of effectiveness evaluation and the need to strengthen digital competence.

This study employs a conceptual framework that connects human resource development, competence, social service quality, and welfare outcomes. Human resource development is understood through orientation, training, professional development, and education, as explained by Kettner (2013). These four components are expected to strengthen social workers' competence, including knowledge, practice skills, professional values, and collaborative abilities. Improved

competence is then reflected in the quality of social services, such as the accuracy of assessment, speed of case response, relevance of interventions, service coordination, and accountability in documentation. Ultimately, high-quality services are expected to contribute to welfare outcomes, including improved social functioning, independence, access to services, and protection for service recipients.

The research problem addressed in this study is how the capacity development of social workers is implemented at Sentra Budi Perkasa Palembang and how it contributes to the quality of social welfare services. The objective of this study is to analyze the forms, processes, effectiveness, and limitations of social workers' capacity development in improving social welfare services.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach was selected (Creswell, J. W., 2019). because this study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the capacity development process of social workers within the institutional context of Sentra Budi Perkasa Palembang. The case study design was used because the research focused on a single institution with specific characteristics, namely a Technical Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs that provides multi-service interventions for recipients of social welfare services.

The research was conducted at Sentra Budi Perkasa Palembang, located at Jalan Sosial No. 441 KM 5, Palembang City. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in capacity development, social service delivery, and service receipt. In this revised study, the number of informants was adjusted to 10 in order to obtain richer data and enable stronger triangulation in the qualitative inquiry.

Table 1. Categories, Number, and Selection Criteria of Research Informants

No	Informant Category	Amount	Reason for Selection
1	Managerial or administrative personnel	2 persons	They understand human resource development policies, personnel administration, and

			institutional support.
2	Social workers at the junior, associate, and senior professional levels	6 persons	They are directly involved in assessment, case management, assistance, case response, and service delivery.
3	Service support personnel, such as social extension workers or instructors	2 persons	They provide perspectives on service collaboration and interprofessional support.
Total		10 persons	

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. The in-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide covering the themes of orientation, training, professional development, education, changes in competence, service quality, and service outcomes. Non-participant observation was carried out by observing service activities, coordination flows, and service documentation practices without direct involvement in the activities. Document analysis was conducted on institutional documents, employee data, training materials, certification records, social reports, service brochures, and supporting literature.

Data validity was ensured through three strategies. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from managerial personnel, social workers, service support personnel, and service recipients. Second, methodological triangulation was applied by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents. Third, member checking was conducted by reconfirming the main findings with key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation remained consistent with the field context.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis was carried out in several stages. First, the researcher read all interview transcripts and observation notes to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. Second, open coding was conducted on statements related to orientation, training, certification, education, competence, service quality, and outcomes. Third, codes with similar

meanings were grouped into categories. Fourth, these categories were developed into major themes, namely the capacity development process, its contribution to competence, its contribution to service quality, limitations in effectiveness evaluation, and the need to strengthen digital competence. Fifth, the findings were analyzed using Kettner’s (2013) framework on orientation, training, development, and education in human service organizations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Institutional Profile and Human Resource Composition of Sentra Budi Perkasa

Sentra Budi Perkasa is a social welfare service institution under the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The institution has a vision to create recipients of social welfare services who are independent, have strong character, and possess dignity. Its service mission includes providing social protection and rehabilitation, strengthening accountable, transparent, and efficient management support for social rehabilitation services, and conducting assessment and advocacy to enhance the independence of service recipients. The service motto, PASTI Social Rehabilitation, which stands for professional, accountable, synergistic, transparent, and inclusive, indicates that service quality is the institution’s main orientation.

The human resource composition at Sentra Budi Perkasa shows that social services are delivered through a combination of structural positions, functional positions, administrative personnel, and operational staff. Employee data from 2024 indicate that the institution has 51 employees. Of this number, 11 are social workers and 7 are social extension workers. This composition demonstrates that social workers constitute the main professional group directly involved in the service process for beneficiaries.

Table 2. Summary of Sentra Budi Perkasa Employees in 2024

No	Position Name	Number of people
1	Head of Center	1
2	Head of the General Administration Sub-Section	1

3	Social Worker	11
4	Social Counselor	7
5	Nurse	2
6	Instructor	3
7	Planner	1
8	State Budget Financial Institution	2
9	Guidance or Counseling Counselor for Former Social Illness Sufferers	1
10	Social Problem Rehabilitation Analyst	1
11	Financial Report Preparer	1
12	Social Problem Rehabilitation Analyst	1
13	State Property Analyst	1
14	Training Materials and Productivity Manager	1
15	Data and Information Analyst	1
16	State Property Manager	2
17	Service Administration	4
18	General Administration	3
19	Electrical and Building Engineering	1
20	Security Officer Commander	1
21	Security Unit	1
22	Community Service Officer	4
Total		51

Source: Sentra Budi Perkasa, 2024

The table not only presents the number of employees but also illustrates the institution's service capacity structure. Social workers and social extension workers constitute the core of service delivery because they interact directly with recipients of social welfare services. Meanwhile, administrative and operational personnel support the smooth implementation of service processes. With 11 social workers responsible for handling various working groups and multi-service programs, capacity development becomes essential to ensure that each social worker is able to perform broader roles. This composition also indicates that service quality cannot be separated from cross-role coordination. Social workers require support from data management, administration, instructors, health personnel, and institutional management so that social interventions can be implemented in a sustainable manner.

3.1.2. Social Workers' Capacity Development Based on Kettner's Framework

Orientation serves as the initial stage in the capacity development of social workers. Within Kettner's framework (2013), orientation helps employees understand the organization, work units, programs, procedures, and the tasks they are expected to perform. At Sentra Budi Perkasa, orientation is obtained through two pathways, namely central orientation for civil servants and institutional orientation when social workers begin their duties at the Sentra. This orientation introduces service values, organizational structure, workflow, service standards, and the responsibilities of social workers.

When linked to competence, orientation helps social workers understand their position and the limits of their authority within the service system. This understanding is important because social workers do not work individually, but operate within a service system that involves leaders, working groups, support personnel, beneficiaries' families, and external networks. Effective orientation contributes to service quality by clarifying procedures, accelerating work adaptation, and reducing errors in task implementation.

Social worker training at Sentra Budi Perkasa is primarily conducted through the Center for Education, Training, and Professional Development of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The types of training attended include hypnotherapy training, assistance for Children in Conflict with the Law, assistance for persons with disabilities, interprofessional collaborative social rehabilitation, and case management and response training. Within Kettner's framework (2013), training aims to improve knowledge and skills so that employees can enhance their performance in their current jobs.

In terms of competence, these training programs strengthen assessment skills, helping communication, special case handling, understanding of social vulnerability, and collaborative work. Their impact on service quality can be seen in social workers' ability to respond to cases more appropriately, understand beneficiaries' needs more comprehensively, and formulate more relevant intervention steps. However, the effectiveness of training cannot be assessed

adequately if it is measured only by participant attendance. Evaluation should focus on changes in work behavior, the quality of social reports, the accuracy of interventions, response speed, and changes in beneficiaries' conditions after services are provided.

Furthermore, professional development is carried out through social worker competency certification administered by the Social Work Certification Agency. Certification is not merely administrative evidence, but also recognition of professional competency standards. In the context of social services, certification strengthens the legitimacy of social work as a profession with established standards of knowledge, skills, values, and ethics.

Certification contributes to service quality because it encourages social workers to perform their duties based on professional standards. Certified social workers are expected to be better able to uphold the ethics of helping relationships, prepare accountable assessments, and conduct interventions according to beneficiaries' needs. Thus, professional development through certification serves as a bridge between human resource development and accountability in social service delivery.

Social workers who pursue further education are supported through study assignment schemes or study permits. Several social workers have completed master's degrees in relevant fields, particularly social work and social welfare. According to Kettner [16], education is oriented toward long-term capability development, enabling employees to assume higher levels of responsibility. Further education also strengthens social workers' ability to connect theory and practice. Mastery of areas such as case management, social policy, social protection, social services, and program evaluation helps social workers analyze social problems more critically. Its impact on social services is reflected in their ability to design more structured interventions, engage in reflective practice, and contribute to service innovation.

3.1.3. The Linkage between HR Development, Competence, Service Quality, and Welfare Outcomes

Based on the research findings, social workers' capacity development forms an interconnected relationship. First, human resource development through orientation, training, certification, and further education strengthens social workers' competence. Second, this competence influences service quality by improving the accuracy of assessment, case management skills, interprofessional coordination, and service documentation. Third, better service quality is expected to contribute to the welfare outcomes of beneficiaries, such as improved social functioning, greater independence, increased access to support, and protection from social risks.

In practice, this relationship has not yet operated ideally, as limitations remain in post-training evaluation and the use of digital technology. Social reports are still largely submitted manually and through WhatsApp groups. This condition indicates that social workers have demonstrated a strong commitment to service delivery, but the case documentation and monitoring system still needs to be strengthened so that services can be delivered more quickly, securely, systematically documented, and easily evaluated. Strengthening digital competence is therefore an important need in modern social service organizations, particularly to support case response, reporting, follow-up monitoring, and coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce Kettner's view [16] that employee development in human service organizations includes orientation, training, development, and education. However, this study also shows that these four components cannot be understood separately. Orientation provides the basis for adaptation, training strengthens work-related skills, certification establishes professional standards, and further education expands analytical and career capacities. Together, these components form a chain of capacity development that influences the quality of social services.

Compared with previous studies that have largely emphasized human resource development at the level of general management or have merely listed training programs (Pratami et al., 2016; Sukmana et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2024), this study shows that the contribution of capacity development should be examined in relation to changes in competence and service quality. Thus, the main contribution of this study is to clarify that human resource development in social welfare services should be evaluated based on its benefits for social work practice and the outcomes of beneficiaries, rather than merely on the existence or absence of training programs.

Practically, these findings emphasize the need for Sentra Budi Perkasa to develop a more measurable capacity development evaluation system. Evaluation can be conducted before training, immediately after training, and several months after training to assess changes in work practices. Evaluation indicators may include increased knowledge, changes in service behavior, the quality of case documentation, response speed, interprofessional collaboration, beneficiary satisfaction, and changes in social functioning.

Therefore, the capacity development of social workers at Sentra Budi Perkasa Palembang should be directed toward two main areas. First, professional competence should be strengthened through orientation, training, certification, and further education that are aligned with service needs. Second, data-based evaluation and documentation systems should be strengthened so that the impact of capacity development can be measured more clearly. Through these two directions, human resource development will not merely function as an administrative activity, but as an institutional strategy to improve the quality of social services and support the achievement of welfare outcomes for beneficiaries.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the capacity development of social workers at Sentra Budi Perkasa Palembang is carried out through orientation, technical training, competency certification, and further education. These four forms of development contribute to improving social workers' competence, particularly in understanding their

duties, conducting assessments, providing assistance, managing cases, collaborating with other professionals, and maintaining service professionalism. This improvement in competence is related to the quality of social services, as social workers become better able to deliver services that are responsive, targeted, and aligned with the needs of recipients of social welfare services. The main contribution of this study is to clarify the conceptual relationship between human resource development in social welfare, social workers' competence, social service quality, and welfare outcomes. Thus, this study does not merely describe orientation, training, development, and education programs, but also demonstrates that the effectiveness of capacity development should be assessed based on changes in work practices and the benefits of services for beneficiaries. Another important finding is the need for a more measurable post-training evaluation system and the strengthening of social workers' digital competence so that documentation, reporting, coordination, and case monitoring can be carried out more effectively

This study has limitations because it was conducted in a single institution; therefore, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization. However, through the expansion of informants and data triangulation, this study provides an in-depth understanding of social workers' capacity development practices within the context of the Sentra. Future research may develop an evaluation instrument for assessing the effectiveness of social worker training by measuring changes in competence, service quality, beneficiary satisfaction, and social functioning outcomes more systematically.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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