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WHAT INFLUENCES MENTORS' SATISFACTION WITH SOCIAL WORK PRACTICAL TRAINING IN SLOVENIA?

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ABSTRACT

Practical training is essential while preparing for a career in social work. The quality of the practical training available depends on the providers, especially mentors in the field (also known as field mentors, instructors or field supervisors, hereafter referred as mentors). The satisfaction of a mentor is not only important for good mentoring but also for making them willing to mentor another social work student.

Secondary quantitative data from the Centre of Practical Study at a Faculty of Social Work were obtained and analyzed using linear regression and structural models to answer the research question concerning what influences the satisfaction of mentors.

The research showed that mentors are satisfied with the social work practice. Overall satisfaction rises with both the number of motives associated with the school and a

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better assessment of the student involved. Where satisfaction with elements of practice is an independent variable, overall satisfaction is best explained by satisfaction with the content of the practice, student motivation, self-initiative, and the mentor's collaboration with the school.
Understanding what makes mentors satisfied with a practical placement is important for improving the quality of practical training provided in social work. Satisfaction on a higher level can add to a mentor's motivation to participate in the training of social work students. The sub-optimal (no financial and other compensation) system of mentoring in social work means that the factors to which social work schools in this area must pay attention are the content of the practice itself and the quality of the students.

INTRODUCTION

The Bologna Process in Europe stresses the need for quality practical training (hereafter: practice) in higher education in Slovenia (see Govekar, Okoliš and Kranjčec, 2010.; University of Ljubljana Guidelines, 2007). Such training helps ensure that the skills (competencies) needed to perform the tasks for which students are being educated are obtained and are among the few opportunities available for students to be able to confront theory with practice (Noble, 2001.:349). In social work, practical training is an established vital aspect of the study process (Urek, 1995.) and seen as a valuable step in developing professional skills (Al Makhamreh, Al Hadidi and Al Bakar 2015.; Rape Žiberna i Žiberna, 2017.; Bălăuță and Vlaicu, 2017.; Bogo, 2015.; Bogo and Power, 1992.; Cleak et al., 2015.; Engelberg and Limbach-Reich, 2016.; McLaughlin et al., 2015.; Mesec, 2015.; Robertson, 2013.). Social work belongs to the group of helping professions, with the training in practical settings that is important for preparing students for work often being very stressful. Practical training is a complex process whose organization and provision typically involve more stakeholders than other areas of the teaching process at school, making assuring the quality of practical training quite challenging. Bălăuță and Vlaicu (2017.:54) find the quality of the practical training given depends on the agencies (the organizations where practical training takes place) available and the effectiveness of their teaching. Sherer and Peleg-Oren (2005.:316) label the main stakeholders the "learning triangle" and consider that a future expert is formed in the interplay of the mentor at the agency (also known as field mentor, instructor or field supervisor, for the remainder of this text only mentor is used), the school mentor (also known as field liaison, social work teacher, a supervisor or a practice tutor at the school[4]) and the student.

4 Social work in Slovenia has its own school (called the Faculty of Social Work) as part of the University of Ljubljana.

In Slovenia, the implementation (and facilitation) of social work practice entails a coordinator at the school[5], a mentor at the school, a coordinator at the agency, a mentor at the agency (in a smaller agency the mentor is also the coordinator) and the student. Although in international social work literature, mentors are generally referred to as supervisors, field instructors, or field supervisors, here we use the terms mentors and school mentors since we contend the terms mentoring and mentor (see Mellon and Murdoch-Eaton, 2015.) are more appropriate for the student learning process in social work[6] whereas the term supervisor[7] emphasizes other narrower aspects and holds another (distinct) meaning in Slovenia.

The literature (Barretti, 2007., 2009.; Knight, 2001.; Webb, 1988.) shows the very valuable (and as stated by Pack (2018.) complex) role played by both the mentor at the school and mentor at the agency as role models for students in their socialization into social work. The quality of the mentor's work in this area is reflected in the student's satisfaction with the placement (Fortune, McCarthy and Abramson, 2001; Knight, 2001.). Knight (2001.) adds that whether a student perceives a mentor as a role model is associated with how the student views the mentor's particular skills. Students hold very high expectations of practice because they see this training as the most important element of their studies (Sherer and Peleg-Oren, 2005.). Still, some studies (Braye, Perston-Shoot and Thorp 2007.:325) show that whether specific learning objectives are accomplished is sometimes left to chance.

The qualifications of future social workers depend on the support and mentoring they are given. Cavazos (1996.) stated that social work teachers believe the student–school mentor relationship in the classroom is a key element of student growth and learning and that more attention should be given to it. However, less research has considered that mentors need to ensure appropriate relationships with both the student on one side and the school on the other. Martin, Myers, and Brickman (2020.) highlighted the importance of mentors' self-care practices to assist students to develop these positive practices early on in their careers to help sustain workers in the social work (SW) profession.

At the Faculty of Social Work (more specifically, the Centre of Practical Study, hereafter the FSW and the CPS, respectively), years of experience and student feed-

5 Head of the Practice Centre who organizes and coordinates activities related to practice (prepares agreements, tenders, seminars, etc.).

6 Where an experienced social worker, highly regarded, empathic person (the mentor) guides another individual (the mentee - student) in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning and personal and professional development (Mellon and Murdoch-Eaton, 2015.). The mentor acts more like a role model, senior colegue to a student than the one that controls or checks the students work and knowledge. Mentoring has a more general development focus around the interaction between a mentor and a mentee, and steers away from measuring performance, change, although considering such change to be a desirable outcome of self-improvement (Mellon & Murdoch-Eaton, 2015).

7 Mellon & Murdoch-Eaton (2015) state that supervision refers to management overseeing the performance operation of a person which we understand as just a small part of the role of a mentor. The supervisor is seen as an advisor who cooperates with professionals in the supervision process, a systematic and continuous process of taking care of professional and personal development (Videmšek, 2021.).

back reveal that quality mentors are essential for quality practice and that it is important that mentors are satisfied with the practice (its organization/implementation). The fact there is no system in place for compensating SW mentoring at the agencies and that the mentors are not financially (or otherwise) compensated for their efforts makes it all the more important that such work gives them satisfaction. If we are to maintain and increase their satisfaction, it is imperative to understand what shapes their satisfaction, as we noted previously (Rape Žiberna and Žiberna 2017.:215) since, as Baum (2007.:1100) shows, in some countries only half the mentors reported positive feelings (including satisfaction) after the mentorship had ended. Pack (2018.) notes that in Australia some agencies may require financial compensation from the school for participation in practical training, and similar requests have been made by a few agencies in Slovenia.

Attention should be paid (in both the design and evaluation of practical training) to the following aspects/stakeholders:

- students;
- school mentors;
- teachers and the coordinator at the school:
- the users of social work services; and
- mentors.

In particular, the last two categories are neglected in social work in Slovenia when it comes to evaluating and planning practical training. We do not yet have a way to systematically monitor and study how different stakeholders view FSW placements. In the 2014/2015 academic year, the CPS conducted the first systematic data collection, also covering mentors. The results were obtained from secondary data and are used in the present text to determine what shapes the satisfaction of mentors since, even though they are just one overlooked aspect (within the complexity of practice), we believe it is worth paying more attention to these days because it may provide a basis for preparing measures to increase the satisfaction of mentors, attract and retain quality mentors, and thereby improve the quality of practical training.

MENTORING IN AGENCIES

Ghosh and Reio Jr. (2013.) established that mentoring has over 40 different definitions dating back to 1980. Mentoring, as understood in this paper, is characterized by a formalized arrangement (a signed cooperation agreement) that includes a person who is (usually) employed by the agency involved, and a student who performs work as a requirement of their study program. Mentoring is often not a formal part of the scope of the work of a social worker, even though such work is implicitly imposed in the Code of Ethical Principles in Social Care for employees who work in the

area of social protection, and explicitly by Article 24 of the Code of Ethics for Social Workers of Slovenia (Codes of Ethics, 2006.).

Mentors in agencies have a difficult task, with Bogo (2015.:218) stating they must balance their work and time between providing services to users, drawing parallels with theory, and giving support to students. They must balance their everyday work for the organization with training the students (Hay and Brown, 2015.:701). Effective mentoring thus requires the mentor to devote considerable time (Allen, 2003.). Forte and La Made (2011.:74) see mentors as assistants to social work teachers by incorporating the conceptual contributions of different disciplines and professions into learning within practical work. They regard them as crucial for connecting theory with practice and believe mentoring can be an important component for developing both the mentor's and student's careers (Allen, 2003.). Wayne, Raskin and Bogo,(2006.) found social workers' workloads are typically not reduced if they mentor students and, in certain cases (Bogo and Power, 1992.), they established large fluctuations in mentoring and several other trends unbeneficial for quality mentoring (see Rape Žiberna and Žiberna, 2017.). Hay and Brown (2015.:712-713) note that the agencies providing practical placements are not paid for this and thus expect their voice to be considered in this partnership.

The positive effects of practice most highlighted by agencies and the reasons for deciding on participating in the student training are the professional development of the employees, the contribution the students can make to improving the organization's work and helping to train (and becoming familiar with) future colleagues and professionals in the area. It is hence no surprise that organizations view the personal characteristics and the organization–student match as very important (Engelberg and Limbach-Reich, 2016.:565; Hay ans Brown, 2015.:704). The literature therefore shows that potential factors in quality practical training from the perspective of agencies and their mentors may be divided into:

- factors related to contact with the profession (professional development) and the school;
- a sense of mutual benefit and help;
- organizational factors (potential for relief and compensation);
- the personal characteristics of the student; and (associated with that)
- matching the student with the organization.

According to McLaughin et al. (2015.), especially the last two factors reveal the importance of the mentor's influence on the choice of participating students. In Slovenia (at the time of collecting the data and writing this paper), organizations that train students for social work do not apply any selection procedures[8] and generally make more vacancies available than there are interested social work students. Similarly, as reported for New Zealand in Hay and Brown (2015.:701), in Slovenia there

8 However, some require specific pre-training for students before they start working.

is no requirement that placements occur within a statutory (government) context. In Slovenia, placement within the statutory context is chiefly available in the social protection field in organizations called Centers for Social Work (CSWs). Social work at a CSW is wide-ranging and demanding. Agencies receive no funding expressly for practice placements and rely on the goodwill of their employees to support and mentor students on placements.

Each case of mentoring entails a unique set of circumstances and the motives for mentoring can be important (Allen, 2003.:148). As Eby et al. (2006.) point out, past mentoring experience can play a key role in predicting a positive or negative decision to become a mentor again. Motives for mentoring can be roughly divided (as noted by Allen, 2003.:139, 141) into those directed at others (assistance to the individual, organization) and those directed at oneself (personal improvement, satisfaction). Motives related to updating knowledge and staying in touch with school form part of this second category.

In their meta-analysis, Ghosh and Reio Jr. (2013.:110) find, similarly to Eby et al. (2006.), that employees who provide mentoring are on average more satisfied with their work and more committed to the organization than those who do not, and that the mentors' experience of the quality of mentoring is associated with both greater job satisfaction and greater career success of the mentor.

Given that:

- several studies in various fields (Rape Žiberna, 2010; Dimec Časar et al., 2008.; Gardulf et al., 2008.; Prosen, 2010.; Suffrin, Todd and Sanchez 2016.; Svetlik, 1998.; Viseu et al., 2016.) note the importance of job satisfaction for both the quality and continued performance of such work;
- mentors are generally not financially, materially (sometimes not otherwise) compensated for their social work mentoring (Rape Žiberna and Žiberna, 2017; Hay and Brown, 2015.; Wayne, Raskin and Bogo2006.); and
- mentoring becomes part of a mentor´s everyday work responsibilities, it is very important that mentors are satisfied with the practical training themselves.

Mentors' satisfaction with practical training can be explained by satisfaction with certain traits of both students (motivation, personality traits) and mentors (Bălăuță and Vlaicu, 2017.:55; Coohey, French and Dickinson2017.; Hay and Brown, 2015.; McLaughlin et al., 2015.; Mesec, 2015.), agency and student matching (Hay and Brown, 2015.), past mentoring experience (Eby et al., 2006.), and motives for engaging in mentoring (Aryee, Chay and Chew1996.; Dalton, Thompson and Price1977.; Ghosh and Reio Jr., 2013.). According to some studies (Allen, 2003.), the latter relate to different demographic characteristics of mentors. As noted by several authors (Eby et al., 2006.; Ghosh and Reio Jr., 2013.:110; Suffrin, Todd and Sanchez2016.), there is a link between satisfaction with their work and the performance of the mentoring.

METHODOLOGY

Research questions

The research seeks to address the gap in identifying the factors in social work which influence the satisfaction of mentors (Rape Žiberna and Žiberna, 2017.:215; Suffrin,Todd and Sanchez,2016.) in Slovenia. In this research, we consider the research question of which factors influence or contribute to the overall satisfaction of mentors with the FSW's practices conducted at agencies.

While mentors' satisfaction and the related dimensions have already been analyzed (see Rape Žiberna and Žiberna, 2017.; Kodele, Kustec and Rape Žiberna, 2021.), the questions of what influences overall satisfaction and how the different dimensions of satisfaction contribute to overall satisfaction have yet to be systematically answered. We believe such analysis is important while considering practice in terms of a) ensuring the quality of both practical learning and mentoring and b) collaboration between agencies and the FSW.

Population and sample

The population comprises professional employees who were mentors (in different agencies across Slovenia) of students of the FSW in an undergraduate Bologna program in the 2014/2015 academic year. According to the FSW CPS, 242 mentors (those who had offered mentoring to at least one student of the FSW in Slovenia) were active in the mentioned academic year. In June 2015, all those meeting the conditions defined above were invited by e-mail to participate in an online survey conducted by the FSW Centre for Practical Study to evaluate student practical training, among whom 108 mentors (44.6% of those invited) participated in the survey.

Instrument and method of data collection

The data were collected as part of the evaluation of practical training at the FSW in the 2014/2015 academic year (conducted by the CPS at the FSW). Two online surveys were conducted (using the 1KA (1KA, 2020) tool for web surveys) – one for students and the other for field and school mentors, such that the evaluation, similar to Higgins (2017.), covered aspects of the three stakeholders of practical training. The extensive questionnaire[9] for mentors contained over 70 questions (of different types), with data being collected between 9 June and 30 September 2015. Respondents on average took about 17 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

9 Questionnaires were prepared by the members of the CPS at the FSW and pre-tested.

In addition to demographic data and a general assessment of the placement, the questionnaire included questions about the mentors' motives for this type of work, their assessment of the importance of various aspects (such as the organization and content of the practice, students, mentoring, support for mentoring) for successful practice, and a fairly detailed assessment of satisfaction with the field placement in the 2014/2015 academic year. In this analysis, only particular closed-ended questions (regarding the importance of elements, motives, satisfaction, and certain demographic information) from the questionnaire for mentors from the agencies are considered, as described in the sections below.

Analysis

Based on data collected in the CPS survey (2014/2015), alongside individual satisfaction with different aspects of practice and overall satisfaction of the mentor (in the form of a calculated index), we included the following variables (presented below in more detail together with the result of each analysis):

- student's year/grade of study;
- frequency of the mentor's participation to date;
- demographic characteristics of the mentor (gender, age, educational background, seniority, organization in which they work);
- the mentor's motives; and
- the mentor's assessment of the student.

We used the linear regression method (Fox 2008.) to assess the impact of the mentors' different characteristics and their perceptions on their overall satisfaction with the practice and determine the impact of partial satisfaction on their overall satisfaction.

Unfortunately, the data include quite a few missing values. While this is not a problem for univariate analysis since most variables have less than 10% of missing values, it is a problem for multivariate analysis (linear regression and structural equation models). In our case, this means that some models could be estimated on less than 40 units (which is unacceptable with 9 independent variables). We thus used multiple imputations with a fully conditional specification (van Buuren, 2012.; van Buuren et al., 2006.). Although multiple imputations often produce fairly good results even where there is a large proportion of missing data, we nevertheless excluded units that lacked values for more than 40% of the variables included in the regression analyses. Accordingly, all multivariate analyses were performed on imputed data for 87 units.

For an overview and especially an illustrative demonstration of how overall satisfaction (both directly and indirectly across individual dimensions of satisfaction)

is influenced by the different characteristics of mentors and their perceptions, we would ideally use a structural equations model (Kline, 2011.) because some variables are hidden (not directly measured). However, the small number of units makes this impossible. We thus made Likert scales[10] for the hidden variables based on selected indicators, which were then included in the Path analysis model. On one hand, this is a special form of structural equation model in which all variables are directly measured, while on the other it is in fact equivalent to merging the results of several linear regression models (Kline, 2011.).

In this work, we use statistical inference methods solely to obtain a minimal estimate of the uncertainty of the estimates under the assumption of simple random sampling. When discussing the results of the linear regression and structural equation models, unless explicitly stated otherwise, we only comment on results that were statistically significant at the 5% level.

RESULTS

In this section, we first briefly outline some descriptive statistics of the variables used in further analysis, where they are more formally introduced and described. This is followed by two regression models and a combined structural equation model. In the first regression model, we try to explain a mentor's overall satisfaction first with the characteristics of that mentor and his/her agency and the mentor's perceptions. In the second regression model, we attempt to explain the same variable (the mentor's overall satisfaction with the practice) with their satisfaction with different aspects/elements of the practice. Finally, we seek to join the two models to create a more comprehensive model for explaining mentors' satisfaction with such practice.

The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. Among others, on average, mentors' overall satisfaction with practice is shown to be high at 8.347 on a 10-point scale. On average, they were very satisfied with their own contribution, the students' motivation and self-initiative, with what they had gained as mentors, the content of the practice, and the collaboration with the FSW. They were the least satisfied with the students' prior knowledge (average 3.8 on a 5-point scale).

10 Cronbach (Cronbach, 1951.) values for all computed Likert scales except one were acceptable (between 0.76 and 0.97) (Taber, 2018.:1278), while the Likert scale for Satisfaction with the mentor's (own) contribution had Cronbach 0.61, which is often still described as acceptable, satisfactory or sufficient (Taber, 2018., Fig. 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the data, excluding variables measuring satisfaction with individual elements of practice

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Mentor's overall satisfaction with practice	8.347	1.421	4	10
Motives expressing the desire to cooperate with the FSW	2.218	1.955	0	7
Age	41.193	8.873	25	60
Seniority in SW	12.999	9.960	0	37
Assessment of the student	3.959	0.775	1.5	5

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the mentors' satisfaction with individual elements of practice

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Planning and monitoring	4.177	0.715	2.33	5
Content	4.056	0.708	2.25	5
Students' prior knowledge	3.812	0.852	1	5
Students' motivation and self-initiative	4.284	0.883	1	5
Mentors' gain	4.177	0.770	2	5
Collaboration with the FSW	4.053	0.590	2.5	5
Own contribution	4.369	0.611	2.5	5

Explaining the mentors' satisfaction with the practice with 'non-satisfaction' variables

Using linear regression, we first examined how overall satisfaction can be explained by the mentors' personal characteristics (assumed to influence mentors' satisfaction in studies like Jobst et al., 2018.), type of organization (noting the characteristics of the organization are important as e.g. Suffrin, Todd and Sanchez, 2016. argue), and the mentor's assessment (or perception) of the student (Murphy, 2011.).
As mentioned, due to reliance on secondary data the variables used are limited by data availability. The independent variables considered are (the variable names used in the tables are given in brackets):

- The student's year of study (yearStudy). We included it in the regression as a nominal variable. Year 1 was selected as the base category such that the effects for the remaining years are included in the regression.
- How often they had already participated in a practice (pastPart). The scale here is ordinal, with categories this year for the first time, two academic years, three academic years, four or more academic years. However, in order to simplify the analysis (and reduce the number of estimated parameters, which is important for such a small number of units) we included it in the model as an interval variable.
- Gender (gender). The coefficient shows the impact of being male.
- Age (age).
- Education not in social work (eduNotSW). The coefficient shows the impact of not being a social worker by education.
- Social work seniority (senioritySW).
- Whether the mentor works at a CSW (worksCSW). The coefficient shows the impact of working at a CSW.
- How many personal motives were listed from the 7 motives that indicate a desire to work with the FSW (motivesFSW).
- The mentor's assessment of the student (studentAssess). Average score based on the assessment of a student based on 10[11] items, for each item both before and after the practice, on a scale from 1 (min.) to 5 (max.).

The dependent variable is the mentor's overall satisfaction, calculated as the average overall satisfaction gauged by two identical questions at the beginning and end of the questionnaire on a scale from 1 to 5.

Table 3 shows that on a level of significance 5% only the effects of student assessment (studentAssess) and number of FSW-related motives (motivesFSW) are statistically significant. On the level of 10%, age, seniority in SW (senioritySW), and not having a social work education (eduNotSW) have a statistically significant effect as well. Greatest satisfaction is shown to be associated with mentors who:

- rated their students better (if the student assessment on average increases by one unit on the scale from 1 to 5, the score for overall satisfaction rises by 0.830 if the other variables remain the same);
- expressed a higher number of motives for the practice that indicate a desire to work with the FSW (the overall satisfaction rises by 0.169 of a point for each of the 7 possible motives);

11 Knowledge about theory, knowledge regarding legislation and codes of ethics, knowledge about organization, ability to do tasks on their own, ability to plan their work, ability to participate in teamwork, ability to use (and write) the language of social work, accountability and reliability and understanding of a broader personal, social context of experts from experiences.

- do not have a social work education (the satisfaction score is 0.549 of a point higher on a 5-point scale than those possessing a social work education);
- have worked longer in social work (satisfaction generally rises by 0.040 of a point for each year); and
- are younger (satisfaction generally drops by 0.048 of a point for each year).

These variables (student assessment, motives, education, age) are among the most important even when looking at standardized coefficients (beta). These are all variables where the standardized coefficient (beta) is greater than 0.17 as an absolute value. The model can explain 39.8% of the variability in the sample.

Table 3. Regression coefficients for the model of the influence of the mentors' characteristics and perceptions on their overall satisfaction

	Coefficient	**Beta**	**Standard error**	**t**	**degrees of freedom**	**Significance level**
Constant	6.251	0.000	1.093	5.720	62.333	0.000
yearStudy2	-0.524	-0.132	0.446	-1.175	69.349	0.244
yearStudy3	-0.231	-0.081	0.366	-0.631	64.850	0.530
yearStudy4	-0.234	-0.066	0.439	-0.532	66.008	0.596
pastPart	0.040	0.033	0.130	0.310	49.326	0.758
Gender	-0.576	-0.113	0.524	-1.099	54.510	0.276
Age	-0.048	-0.301	0.024	-1.970	57.576	0.054
eduNotSW	0.549	0.176	0.317	1.733	65.448	0.088
seniority SW	0.040	0.279	0.023	1.753	54.868	0.085
worksCSW	-0.363	-0.116	0.330	-1.101	62.514	0.275
motivesFSW	0.169	0.233	0.071	2.391	68.911	0.020
studentAssess	0.830	0.453	0.177	4.698	71.126	0.000

We checked whether the linear model assumptions were met. Light heteroscedasticity is present, which although it does not affect the estimates of the regression coefficients, affects the estimation of their standard errors and therefore (further) reduces the validity of the statistical tests. Two variables – age and seniority in the field of SW – exhibit low multicollinearity (the variance-enhancing factors (VIFs) average out to about 2.5).

Explaining the mentors' overall satisfaction with the practice with their satisfaction with individual elements of the practice

We were interested in how satisfaction with individual aspects/elements of the practice contributes to overall satisfaction (the same dependent variable as before). These were not included in the previous regression since it is assumed that the previously used variables mainly influence overall satisfaction through these partial satisfactions. Due to an insufficient number of units and multicollinearity, we did not include all individual variables in the regression. Still, based on theory and the available data for some dimensions of satisfaction we created several (composite) variables (all original variables were measured on a scale from 1 to 5, where a higher value means greater satisfaction):

- Satisfaction with the planning and monitoring of the practice (planMonitor) – namely, the average of the mentors' assessments of satisfaction with the planning of student activities, with the school's written instructions and materials for assignments, and with the school's gathering of the data on all participants' satisfaction with the implementation of the practice.
- Satisfaction with the content of the practice (content) – that is, the average of satisfaction scores given for the number and complexity of the tasks that students have, the topics and competencies to which the tasks are related, as well as with the flexibility and ability to adapt the tasks to the agencies.
- Satisfaction with the students' motivation and self-initiative (studMotInit) – namely, the average of satisfaction scores for the students' motivation and self-initiative.
- Satisfaction with the student's prior knowledge (studKnow).
- Satisfaction with what the mentor gains from the practice (mentGains).
- Satisfaction with collaboration with the FSW and support for the mentor (collabFSW) – namely, the average score given for satisfaction with the contact and consultation with the school's mentor (from the FSW), with the seminar (at the FSW) for mentors and general collaboration with the FSW.
- Satisfaction with the mentor's (own) contribution (ownCont). This is the average of satisfaction with the mentor's (own) motivation and with what they could offer the student.

The results are shown in Table 4 and reveal that satisfaction with the content of the practice (content) contributes the most to the mentor's overall satisfaction. If the average of this set is increased by 1 point on average, overall satisfaction rises by 0.988 of a point (if the other variables remain the same). The variable satisfaction with student motivation and self-initiative (studMotInit) has a reg. coefficient

of 0.501 and the variable satisfaction with cooperation with the FSW (collabFSW) a reg. coefficient of 0.572. Very surprising results emerge as well, for instance, that satisfaction with the student's prior knowledge (studKnow) and what the mentor receives from participating in the practice (mentGains) negatively affect overall satisfaction. While these effects are not large (but also not negligible) and are not statistically significant even on a level of significance of 10%, they are certainly unexpected and in all likelihood are at least partly due to the small sample size and the (albeit not excessive) multicollinearity between the variables. In some ways, these two effects facilitate the great impact of satisfaction with the content because all of these partial satisfactions are positively correlated.
The model was able to explain 34.6% of the variability of the dependent variable in the sample. Here, mild heteroscedasticity can again be observed, but not any major problems with multicollinearity (VIFs range from 1.1 to 2.6).

Table 4. Results of the regression model of the impact of "partial satisfaction" on overall satisfaction

	Coefficient	Beta	Standard error	t	degrees of freedom	Significance level
Constant	2.110	0.000	1.394	1.514	66.383	0.135
planMonitor	0.018	0.009	0.276	0.064	71.134	0.949
Content	0.988	0.492	0.304	3.247	66.033	0.002
studMotInit	0.501	0.311	0.186	2.688	73.418	0.009
studKnow	-0.324	-0.194	0.207	-1.564	71.561	0.122
mentGains	-0.250	-0.136	0.242	-1.033	55.337	0.306
collabFSW	0.572	0.237	0.281	2.034	57.750	0.047
ownCont	-0.007	-0.003	0.257	-0.027	74.650	0.979

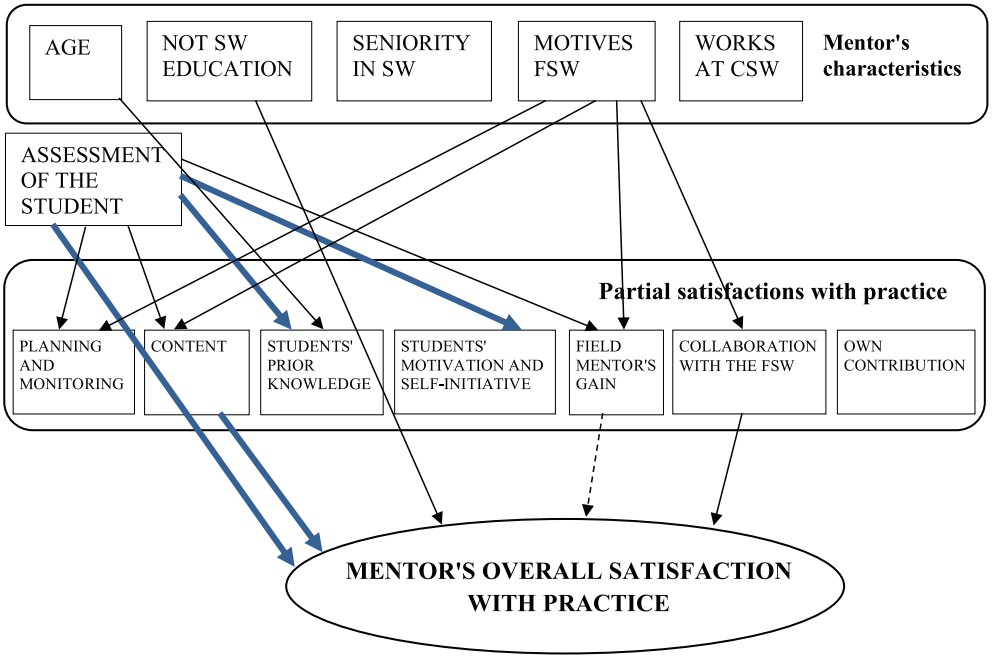
A combined model explaining the mentors' satisfaction

The two models presented thus far can be combined to better explain overall satisfaction (the proportion of explained variability in this case actually rises to 55.7% in the sample). We do not present the results/coefficients of this model because of the estimation of so many parameters, as well as the fact that most first-model variables (characteristics and perceptions of mentors) influence the variables from the second model (elements of satisfaction with practice), make the results less clear. In order to illustrate the intertwining of the variables from both models and to see how the mentors' traits and perceptions influence overall satisfa-

ction both directly and through individual elements of satisfaction, we conducted a structural equation model analysis in the last step. Here, we assumed a model where selected characteristics of the mentors (the most important variables from Model 1, more specifically the motives FSW, age, eduNotSW, worksCSW, and senioritySW) affect a student's assessment (studentAssess), and all of these variables together affect individual elements of satisfaction. Finally, we allowed all previously mentioned variables (dependent or independent) to affect overall satisfaction. The results of the model are shown in the sketch in Figure 1. For a better view, only statistically significant (at a 5% risk level) effects are shown in the figure, thinner arrows have a smaller impact – the values of standardized coefficients (by how many standard deviations the dependent variables change if the independent variable increases by one standard deviation) are below 0.4, and thicker arrows have a greater impact (0.4 or more). Negative coefficient values are shown by dashed arrows.

The mentors' demographic traits alone do not affect how they assessed the students. The influence of mentors' individual traits and perceptions on partial and overall satisfaction is interesting. The influence of age has a positive effect only on satisfaction with the students' prior knowledge, meaning that older mentors are more satisfied with such knowledge. While not statistically significant on the 5% level, age has a negative, non-negligible effect (std. coefficient around -0.2) on overall satisfaction and satisfaction with cooperation with the FSW (hence older mentors are less satisfied) and a similarly-sized positive effect on satisfaction with the students' motivation and initiative. Almost the opposite pattern (with weaker effects) is found concerning the impact of seniority in social work. While interpreting the results, care should be taken since these two variables have quite opposite effects but are relatively strongly correlated (Pearson's linear correlation coefficient is 0.71). However, the variables with cooperation with the FSW as a motive for participation in the practice and student evaluation are responsible for relatively strong and expectedly positive effects on almost all satisfaction factors.

Figure 1. Sketch of a model of the influences on mentors' satisfaction



We do not describe other results (hence the effects on overall satisfaction) here as they are similar to those described above in the two regressions. It is worth mentioning that the model explains 57.4% of the variability of overall satisfaction and between 10.3% (self-evaluation of the mentoring) and 38.3% (the motivation and initiative of students) of the variability of individual partial satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

In this article, we are trying to explain the satisfaction of mentors from the agencies based on data from an FSW CPS evaluation of practice at the FSW in the 2014/2015 academic year. The article's main goal is to explain the overall satisfaction of mentors and different dimensions of field-mentoring satisfaction. The mentors' average overall satisfaction with the practice in Slovenia is relatively high (slightly exceeding 8 on a 10-level scale). We examined the satisfaction of mentors from several perspectives. First, we established how it is influenced by the mentors' perceptions and characteristics and their assessment of the student. Here, we established that overall satisfaction is most influenced by the mentor's assessment of the student and that the number of motives associated with the desire to work with the FSW and to keep in touch with the profession cited by the mentor. Both impacts

are positive. Although in our data mentors who expressed greater satisfaction with school collaboration reported greater overall satisfaction with practice, prior research indicates that school support is very important, yet unrelated to the decision to offer more mentoring to students in the future (Bogo and Power, 1992.).Among the mentors' demographic characteristics, age and education in SW of the mentor and number of years worked in SW proved to be significant variables. The older the mentor, the greater their satisfaction with the student's prior knowledge. The latter can probably be explained by the mentors' need to update their knowledge by working with the students. Yet, in terms of education, our research shows that mentors who are not social workers by education are generally more satisfied with the FSW practice than mentors who are social workers. This is perhaps explained by the fact that these mentors possess an insight into in-the-field practice in their own profession. It may be that the social work practice is more refined and structured and that students are usually well prepared when commencing the placement compared to students from other disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology). Namely, social work is one of the few study programs in Slovenia with a long tradition of organizing such practice since even before the Bologna reform practical training was viewed as a very important aspect of the study process. Considering the importance of practical training for social work, calls have already been made that "[e]xcellence in field education [practice] must become a priority for the profession and for all social work educators […]" (Bogo, 2015.:321). In the UK, where mentors must undergo training to act as a mentor[12], all mentors are shown to need support after training (Waterhouse, McLagan and Murr,2011.). On the other hand, from the mentors' perspective, support for mentoring from the government and the leadership of the agency is very important but not sufficiently expressed (in terms of work relief, financial compensation, and events within the agency concerned with mentoring). As long as the situation provides little by way of encouragement on the systemic level (like in Slovenia, with no financial and almost no non-financial benefits), it seems the factors that a social work school in such a situation must pay extra attention to in order to maintain mentors' overall level of satisfaction are the content of the practice itself and the quality of the students. Additional and closer cooperation between mentors and the school could be beneficial in this respect. The positive influence of the mentor's overall assessment of the student on satisfaction with what the mentor gains is also interesting, where it appears that by better preparing and selecting students schools can increase the satisfaction of mentors and easily attract[13], retain,[14] and select mentors. The selection process for future social work students and matching students with appropriate agencies could be steps in this

12 This obligation does not exist in Slovenia.

13 Bogo and Power (1992.:178-190) find that more experienced mentors "[…] are likely to offer a better quality field experience […]".

14 Eby et al. (2006.:438) found that mentors who point to greater benefits of mentoring (in the short term) indicate a stronger intention to be a mentor again.

direction. Although this may be especially challenging for schools of social work that have large numbers of students, additional effort should be made to ensure resources for the selection process and matching if practical training is considered an essential part of the education. As stated by Hay and Brown (2015.:711), "[…] if the admission process and the process for assessing readiness for placement do not explicitly assess and consider the capabilities of the applicant, this might be a missed opportunity to identify whether students are ready for the challenges that a placement will bring".

LIMITATIONS

This paper has three sets of limitations. The first relates to the data gathering. The analysis is based on secondary data, meaning the instrument itself was not adapted to the needs of the analysis while the data (gathered in 2015.) are relatively old. We do not believe the latter is a bigger problem since subsequent gatherings of such data (not as complete, with a very limited set of variables) about practical training reveal a similar situation in the field of mentors' satisfaction in Slovenia. The second set of limitations refers to the analysis. We decided to explore the topic from a quantitative perspective (and not 'in-depth') since some data for similar topics exist and to be able to obtain a broader sense of the topic by taking into account data from a bigger number of units and to address the subject of human satisfaction as is often the case in some other professions (e.g. Chi and Gursoy, 2009.). The analysis is more complex due to the considerable missing data, which we addressed statistically. In some parts of the analysis, we applied statistical inference methods, which is problematic as our sample may only be assumed to be probabilistic if the results were generalized solely to active mentors, while at the same time, the dropout would be completely random. Therefore, we are aware of the potential bias of the non-random sampling. The last set of limitations refers to our reasoning for some results in the discussion. Our study is observational and not experimental/casual. Therefore, while in the paper we talk about influences or contributions (to make the language clearer), we should only talk about potential influences or associations among variables. We thereby cannot conclude whether the overall assessment of a student affects the various dimensions of satisfaction (especially those relating to students), or whether the impact operates more in reverse (e.g., satisfaction with the student's motivation and initiative and their satisfaction with their prior knowledge influences the mentor's overall assessment of the student), or whether these variables are only correlated due to effect of some other (unknown) variable. Since only quantitative analysis was conducted, more qualitative studies are needed in the future to achieve an in-depth insight into how professional workers (of different educational backgrounds and levels) view the po-

sitive sides and challenges of practical training in social work and what are their related suggestions. It would be interesting to research why, despite the relatively high satisfaction of mentors with practice in social work (for instance in Slovenia), judging from the contacts with mentors and other social workers the decision to offer more mentoring to students (in the future) is not easy.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we argue that, by understanding what influences mentors' satisfaction with practice, we can improve the quality of practical training in social work by attracting and retaining quality and satisfied mentors. The results show that the content of the practice itself and the mentor's overall assessment of the students exert the greatest influence on mentors' overall satisfaction. The overall assessment of the student also influences the mentor's satisfaction with the student's motivation and initiative, and their satisfaction with the student's prior knowledge. We find this information particularly important because these are aspects/elements of practical training that the school can (at least partly) influence. We suggest that schools involve mentors (perhaps through action research) as much as possible in shaping social work practical training and also discuss more broadly what knowledge and skills social work students need to work in social work practice.

ETHICS

This paper builds on secondary data collected as part of an evaluation of a study program conducted by University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work (more specifically, the Centre of Practical Study). At the time of gathering the data, ethical approval for this kind of data gathering in Slovenia was not needed since the participants were adults and the survey did not contain sensitive topics.

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ŠTO UTJEČE NA ZADOVOLJSTVO MENTORA S PRAKTIČNOM NASTAVOM SOCIJALNOG RADA U SLOVENIJI

SAŽETAK

Praktična nastava nužna je tijekom pripreme za profesiju socijalnog rada. Kvaliteta dostupne praktične nastave ovisi o nositeljima nastave, posebice mentorima (poznatim kao terenski mentori, instruktori ili supervizori, u ovom radu nadalje koristit će se termin mentori). Zadovoljstvo mentora nije samo važno za dobro mentorstvo, nego i zato da mentori budu voljni mentorirati i druge studente socijalnog rada.

Sekundarni kvantitativni podatci iz Centra za praktični rad na Fakultetu socijalnog rada prikupljeni su i analizirani koristeći linearnu regresiju i strukturalne modele kako bi se odgovorilo na istraživačka pitanja o tome što utječe na zadovoljstvo mentora.

Istraživanje je pokazalo da su mentori zadovoljni s praksom u socijalnom radu. Ukupno zadovoljstvo povećava se s brojem motiva povezanih s fakultetom i s boljom procjenom studenta uključenog u praksu. Dok je zadovoljstvo s elementima prakse nezavisna varijabla, ukupno zadovoljstvo najbolje se objašnjava zadovoljstvom sadržajem prakse, motivacijom studenata, samoinicijativom i mentorovom suradnjom s fakultetom.

Razumijevanje onoga što mentora čini zadovoljnim s praksom važno je za poboljšanje kvalitete praktične nastave koja se organizira u socijalnom radu. Veća razina zadovoljstva može povećati motivaciju mentora da sudjeluje u nastavi studenata socijalnog rada. Neoptimalni sustav mentoriranja u socijalnom radu (bez financijske ili druge kompenzacije) znači da su čimbenici na koje fakulteti socijalnog rada u tom području moraju obratiti pažnju sadržaj prakse i kvaliteta studenata.

Ključne riječi: kvantitativno istraživanje; terenska supervizija; praksa socijalnog rada; obrazovanje u socijalnom radu; podučavanje vještina