

Original Article

Readiness of Social Work Students for Field Instruction and Career

Kerenjoy B. Mangili , Jembert T. Guelbay , Febelyn T. Ananayo , Jocelyn G. Padiangan 
Dulce M. Binumunga , Desiree N. Domingo , Glenn Paulo K. Labasan 

Author Information:

Ifugao State University, Nayon, Lamut,
Ifugao, Philippines

Correspondence:
mangilikerenjoy@gmail.com

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Abstract. This study aimed to assess the perceived readiness for field instruction and career readiness among third-year Bachelor of Science in Social Work students at Ifugao State University. Specifically, it evaluated the respondents' readiness across core competencies related to field instruction and career preparation and examined the relationship between these two variables. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 79 respondents via a standardized questionnaire and analyzed using means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations. The results revealed that students perceived themselves as "Highly Ready" in both field instruction ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.27$) and career readiness ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.30$). Among the competencies, the highest mean scores were observed in the domains of practicing in various contexts and technological skills. Furthermore, the analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between readiness for field instruction and career readiness ($r = .66$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who are better prepared for field instruction are also more confident in pursuing their future careers. These findings underscore the importance of further enhancing field instruction experiences to support career readiness. Based on the findings, it is recommended that experiential learning, skills reinforcement, and mentoring be strengthened during the deployment phase.

Keywords: Field instruction; Career readiness; Student preparedness; Experiential learning; Practicum competencies.

Field instruction, also known as internship or practicum, introduces students to discipline-specific knowledge and allows them to apply classroom theories to real-world settings (Bender, 2020). Washor (2015) defines an internship as an experience-based learning process that links theoretical understanding with practical application and skill acquisition in the workplace. Similarly, Bender (2020) emphasizes that an internship equips students with both professional and soft skills. In today's dynamic workforce, soft skills are increasingly valued alongside technical expertise (Gale et al., 2017). Maio (2018) notes that internships help students develop communication, leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, which are essential for professional success.

In the context of Social Work, the profession primarily focuses on organized social service activities that strengthen relationships between individuals and their environment, promoting personal and social well-being through professional practice as defined under Republic Act 4373. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 39, Series of 2017, Social Work graduates work in various settings—private,

public, or business sectors – addressing social issues affecting children, workers, women, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable groups. Student readiness for field instruction depends significantly on their prior experiences, which influence their learning responses both consciously and subconsciously (Michos et al., 2022; Ahern et al., 2017; Ricee, 2020). Ricee (2020) highlights that meaningful learning experiences foster self-realization and more profound understanding, thereby strengthening students' competence and confidence. Through field instruction, students are introduced to the realities of professional practice, gain exposure to workplace systems, and enhance their creativity and innovativeness in preparation for future employment (Roulston et al., 2020).

Various studies worldwide have explored field instruction and career development in Social Work, focusing on feedback, challenges, and cultural competence. Kourgiantakis et al. (2019) found that constructive feedback enhances professional judgment, self-reflection, and skill development. Meanwhile, Tippa and Mane (2018) identified several challenges in field training in Social Work, such as difficulty finding suitable agencies, a lack of standardized manuals, and insufficient supervision, which limit students' learning experiences. Amanu and Areo (2022) supported these findings, citing issues like limited time, inconsistent supervision, and inaccessible agencies. Conversely, Roulston et al. (2018) discovered that students appreciate routine supervision and guidance that help them understand the role of social workers, while Joubert (2020) emphasized that readiness for practice is a developmental process that builds confidence, resilience, and reflection. Cultural competency is another critical component in Social Work education. Attipoe (2024) highlighted that understanding culture enhances therapeutic relationships between social workers and clients, promoting effective engagement and intervention. Similarly, Finne et al. (2022) revealed that social workers gain cultural competence through interactions with colleagues, supervisors, and clients.

In the Philippine setting, local studies have examined the implementation of CHED's field instruction standards and the well-being of Social Work students. B. Fallorina (2021) found that the field instruction program at Leyte Normal University generally met CHED's standards, although improvements were needed in facilities. Uclaray (2023) reported that stress among Social Work students stemmed from academic, interpersonal, and environmental factors, including workload, agency conditions, and financial limitations. At Ifugao State University, the Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) program, introduced in 2022, requires students to complete 1,000 hours of field instruction – 500 in agency settings and 500 in community settings – as mandated by RA 4373. This requirement allows the university to assess students' preparedness for professional practice and to strengthen the link between education and employment (Abad et al., 2018). Lei and Yin (2019) further suggest that higher education institutions should enhance field instruction through added academic credits to maximize its benefits.

Despite the growing attention to field instruction in Social Work, most studies focus on implementation, challenges, and student well-being, leaving a gap in understanding students' readiness for practicum. Hence, this study aims to assess third-year Social Work students' perceived readiness for field instruction with respect to the competencies set by the Professional Regulatory Board for Social Workers, including communication, the generalist helping process, and the ability to practice in diverse contexts. It also seeks to determine the students' perceived level of career readiness across the core competencies identified by Moore and Thaller (2023), including professionalism, critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, and technology, and to explore the relationship between field instruction readiness and career readiness. The results of this study will provide valuable insights to improve the social work field education and prepare students for effective professional practice.

International folklore scholarship provides essential context for understanding Masbateño narrative traditions. Recent work in Southeast Asian oral traditions demonstrates similar patterns of linear narration in post-colonial contexts (Bauman & Briggs, 2020). In these studies, from Mindanao, document comparable tensions between traditional storytelling practices and modernization pressures (Fagsao, 2016). However, regional scholarship on Bicol and Visayan narrative traditions remains underrepresented in international folklore discourse, despite these traditions' relevance to broader theoretical conversations about cultural transmission and narrative evolution.

Beyond its academic contribution, this research informs the development of educational policy and cultural preservation initiatives. Documenting specific patterns in Masbateño narrative traditions provides an empirical foundation for culturally responsive curriculum materials while developing replicable methodologies for other regional folklore studies. The study's significance lies in its ability to address the generational erosion of oral traditions. It offers practical interventions through the proposed Controlled Shift Narration framework that

balances authenticity with natural evolution across generations.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, using quantitative methods to examine relationships among variables. Quantitative research seeks explanations and predictions that can be generalized to other contexts, aiming to establish and validate relationships that contribute to theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). As Creswell (2003) explained, it uses strategies such as surveys and experiments to collect data through predetermined instruments, producing statistical results that may be predictive and explanatory. Meanwhile, descriptive research examines a situation as it exists, identifying attributes or exploring correlations between phenomena (Williams, 2007). It provides essential knowledge of a subject's nature and guides policy formulation at various levels (Calmorin, 2016). Hence, this method is appropriate for assessing third-year Social Work students' perceived readiness for the 2024–2025 school year and for determining the significant correlation between their perceived readiness for field instruction and career readiness.

Sampling Strategy and Participants

The study was conducted at Ifugao State University during the 2024–2025 academic year. Ifugao State University was located at Nayon, Lamut, Ifugao, Cordillera Administrative Region. The institution offered numerous courses, including the Bachelor of Science in Social Work. The study's respondents were all enrolled third-year Social Work students in the Bachelor of Science in Social Work program at the College of Arts and Sciences, Ifugao State University, for the 2024–2025 school year. These respondents were the pioneers of the Social Work program, being the first batch to enroll when the course was introduced in 2022. Total enumeration was used to determine the number of respondents. The demographic data gathered from the survey provides valuable insights. 99% of respondents were female, reflecting the predominance of women among third-year Social Work students. At the same time, only 1% were male, indicating an underrepresentation of males in the course. The majority of respondents (89%) were in the 21–24 age range, indicating that most third-year students are young adults, while 11% were aged 25–26, suggesting that the group also includes adult learners.

Research Instruments

The researchers gathered the participants' demographic information using a two-item self-report questionnaire that included sex and age. Relative frequencies and percentages were used to describe the students' demographic profile. To assess students' perceived readiness for field instruction, the researchers developed a 40-item survey comprising three subscales: skills in the generalist helping process; ability to communicate orally and in writing in a non-discriminatory manner; and ability to practice across various contexts. Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Completely Disagree) to 4 (Completely Agree), and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation.

To assess career readiness, an 80-item survey was developed to evaluate eight subscales: professionalism, communication, career and self-development, critical thinking, teamwork, equity and inclusion, leadership, and technology. The same 4-point Likert Scale was used, and results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation. The researchers ensured the content validity of the instruments by developing 65 conceptualized test items, which were evaluated by three experts through a content validation process using a 3-point Expert Validation Instrument that rated each item as Essential, Useful but not essential, or Not necessary. The validated items were then pilot tested among third-year Bachelor of Science in Social Work students at Kalinga State University using a Google Form survey, which participants completed in under an hour. The reliability of the 65 items was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.90, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

After determining the validity and reliability of the constructed test, the researchers sought permission to conduct the study by sending a letter to the Program Chairperson of Social Work and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, allowing them to survey social work students. Upon approval, the researchers personally distributed and administered the instrument to ensure 100% questionnaire retrieval. Furthermore, when administering questionnaires, the researchers addressed any questions or requests for clarification from respondents. After the respondents completed the questionnaire, the researchers collected the questionnaires. After successfully retrieving the questionnaires, the data were collated and tabulated. Then, appropriate statistical tools were

employed to derive the necessary data for interpretation and further analysis.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tools were utilized to analyze and interpret the data: (1) Frequency and Percentage were employed to describe the respondents' demographic characteristics, particularly their age and gender; (2) Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were used to determine the perceived readiness of third-year social work students for field instruction; (3) Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were also applied to assess the respondents' perceived level of career readiness; and (4) Correlation Analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the students' perceived field instruction readiness and their career readiness.

This study used a 4-point Likert Scale to measure respondents' readiness, with mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 4.00. The descriptive interpretations were as follows: Completely Agree (4.25–4.00), indicating that the student is fully prepared and equipped with the necessary competencies to perform effectively in the field; Agree (3.25–2.50), suggesting that the student meets the requirements for field instruction and consistently demonstrates the needed competencies; Disagree (2.49–1.75), denoting that the student exhibits some skills and abilities but requires improvement to achieve proficiency; and Completely Disagree (1.74–1.00), indicating that the student lacks the essential skills and abilities and needs extensive training and guidance.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents were fully informed about the purpose of the study and were made aware that the results would be used solely for data analysis. They experienced no harm or psychological distress during the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any time, either before or during the study. The researchers ensured that each participant felt valued and respected and maintained honesty and transparency throughout the entire process. The study results were reported truthfully, without fabrication or misrepresentation, and all information was kept strictly confidential. The respondents' privacy was safeguarded, and the collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes. After the statistical analysis was completed, the researchers securely disposed of the data by shredding all related documents.

Results and Discussion

Perceived Level of Field Instruction Readiness

Table 1 shows the level of readiness in the skills in the field instruction. The findings in Table 1 indicate that social work students' overall readiness for field instruction is high ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.27$), suggesting they generally perceive themselves as well prepared for practicum experiences and possess a solid conceptual understanding of social work competencies. Among the three competency domains, the highest mean score was for "ability to practice in various contexts" ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.20$), indicating a "Highly Ready" level. Students showed strong agreement in respecting diversity, recognizing vulnerable groups, and understanding community organizing principles, aligning with George and Rahul (2020), who underscored the significance of cultural competence in social work education. However, endorsement of negatively worded items suggests possible overestimation of abilities and limited real-world exposure, underscoring the need for greater community immersion and ethical, scenario-based learning to bridge the gap between perceived and actual competence.

In the domain of "ability to communicate orally and in writing in a non-discriminatory manner," students also demonstrated high readiness ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.46$). They particularly excelled in creating inclusive environments, engaging in cultural competence training, and supporting diverse populations, consistent with Heffernan, Dauenhauer, and Cesnales (2023), who advocate continuous development of cultural responsiveness. Nonetheless, responses to certain negatively framed items revealed difficulties in maintaining objectivity, avoiding value imposition, and consistently using gender-fair language. Despite this, students' disagreement with the statement about avoiding personal biases ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.60$) suggests awareness of ethical decision-making and the importance of objectivity in professional practice.

Table 1. Level of Readiness of the Skills in the Field Instruction

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Skills in the Generalist Approach | | | |
| I can demonstrate social work theories to real-life client cases/situations. | 2.87 | 0.42 | Agree |
| I have no knowledge of the fundamental guiding principles and intervention methods in working with individuals and families.* | 2.94 | 0.56 | Agree |
| I can apply appropriate theories, models, approaches, principles, and best techniques in the helping process. | 2.83 | 0.46 | Agree |
| I cannot perform the worker's roles, tasks, activities, and skills needed in social work practice.* | 3.10 | 0.56 | Agree |
| I can apply the theories and models in the assessment and planning for clients. | 2.84 | 0.41 | Agree |
| I am not able to apply social work values and principles in working with individuals, groups, and communities.* | 3.16 | 0.57 | Agree |
| I can adapt intervention models and approaches to specific client situations. | 2.94 | 0.43 | Agree |
| I am not able to illustrate the appropriate use of recordings and documentation.* | 3.11 | 0.51 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 2.97 | 0.13 | Agree |
| Ability to Practice in Various Contexts | | | |
| I cannot understand theoretical frameworks, perspectives, approaches, and models, nor the importance of community integration and the ethical practice issues/dilemmas that may arise in working communities.* | 3.00 | 0.65 | Agree |
| I can apply appropriate methodologies, strategies, and tools for analysis in social investigations/assessments. | 2.90 | 0.39 | Agree |
| I cannot recognize the vulnerable and marginalized populations.* | 3.20 | 0.53 | Agree |
| I cannot understand the principles of community organizing practice.* | 3.11 | 0.60 | Agree |
| I can respect diverse ethnic and cultural groups, including those with special needs. | 3.52 | 0.50 | Agree |
| I can conduct ongoing capacity-building activities, including assessing and evaluating organizational processes, programs, activities, and goal attainment. | 2.98 | 0.46 | Agree |
| I can apply communication protocols for bringing needs and resources together, linking people with the resource system to support the sustainability of the organization, the individual, and the family. | 3.02 | 0.49 | Agree |
| I can apply logical, analytical, and critical thinking to assess community dynamics to promote people's empowerment and social justice. | 2.87 | 0.46 | Agree |
| I can examine the integration of values, ethics, and principles of social work practice with individuals, families, and groups. | 2.92 | 0.45 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.06 | 0.20 | Agree |
| Ability to Communicate, Orally & In Writing, In A Non-Discriminatory Manner | | | |
| I cannot use non-discriminatory, gender-fair, and gender-sensitive/responsive language.* | 2.92 | 0.77 | Agree |
| I strive to create a safe and welcoming environment where my client feels valued and respected, regardless of their background. | 3.33 | 0.62 | Completely Agree |
| I can participate in ongoing training to improve my cultural competence and understanding of diversity. | 3.32 | 0.62 | Completely Agree |
| I am not committed to understanding and respecting my clients' cultural values, beliefs, and practices.* | 3.24 | 0.64 | Agree |
| I make judgments or impose my own values on others, instead of supporting their self-determination.* | 3.21 | 0.70 | Agree |
| I actively seek out resources and support to better serve individuals from diverse backgrounds. | 3.05 | 0.42 | Agree |
| I avoid personal biases in making decisions, and I base my decisions on relevant facts.* | 1.92 | 0.60 | Agree |
| I fail to ensure that all individuals have equal access to resources and that their voices are not heard in the decision-making processes.* | 3.10 | 0.62 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.01 | 0.46 | Agree |
| Overall Column Mean | 3.01 | 0.27 | Highly ready |

Note: Some items in this table are reverse-worded. Please consider the inverse interpretation when reviewing these statements. Items are marked with an asterisk (*).

The “skills in the generalist helping approach” domain showed a slightly lower but still substantial mean score ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.13$), reflecting moderate readiness. Students rated themselves highly in applying social work principles, documentation, and performing professional roles, supporting Swain and Day's (2018) assertion of the foundational role of social work principles in effective intervention. However, some indicated challenges in applying values in practice, underscoring the importance of experiential learning, case simulations, and stronger collaborations with field agencies to enhance competence. These findings, consistent with NASW (2017), Rogers and Cooper (2020), and Reith-Hall and Montgomery (2023), highlight the vital role of communication, experiential

learning, and supervision in preparing students for real-world practice. Overall, while students exhibit high readiness for field instruction, continuous improvement in experiential and assessment strategies remains essential to ensure that perceived readiness aligns with actual professional capability.

Perceived Level of Career Readiness

Table 2 shows the perceived level of career readiness across the career competencies. The results in Table 2 indicate that third-year social work students' overall career readiness is high ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.30$), suggesting they generally perceive themselves as well-prepared for future professional roles. The highest mean score was observed in the technology domain ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.22$), categorized as "Highly Ready." However, students' agreement with negatively worded statements, such as their unwillingness to learn or participate in technology training, suggests possible confusion or response bias. These findings highlight the importance of fostering adaptability to technological advancements. Reamer (2018) emphasized that professionalism in social work extends beyond rule compliance, encompassing digital proficiency and ethical use of technology—skills often best developed through mentorship and applied experience. This view aligns with that of Byars-Winston et al. (2019) and Kim and Leeheesu (2018), who advocate institutional initiatives, such as training workshops and professional development programs, to promote workplace flexibility and equitable access to opportunities.

Table 2. Level of Career Readiness

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Professionalism | | | |
| I am not confident in my ability to maintain a professional demeanor when interacting with clients, colleagues, and supervisors in the social work setting.* | 2.81 | 0.62 | Agree |
| I understand, and I adhere to the ethical guidelines of social work practice. | 3.29 | 0.46 | Agree |
| I am unwilling to dress appropriately for professional social work settings.* | 3.40 | 0.56 | Completely Agree |
| I am not confident in my ability to handle confidential information with discretion.* | 2.95 | 0.73 | Agree |
| I embrace accountability for my mistakes and am punctual when attending meetings and appointments. | 3.05 | 0.55 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.10 | 0.24 | Agree |
| Communication | | | |
| I cannot easily adapt my communication style depending on the client's situation.* | 2.62 | 0.61 | Agree |
| I am skilled at preparing case reports based on information collected through interviews, case notes, and documentation. | 2.44 | 0.53 | Disagree |
| I cannot actively listen to and understand my client's different problems.* | 3.10 | 0.43 | Agree |
| I can express my thoughts and feelings openly and honestly to my colleagues so they can understand. | 3.06 | 0.44 | Agree |
| I will not provide clients with clear, concise information about their rights and choices.* | 3.22 | 0.61 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 2.89 | 0.34 | Agree |
| Career and Self-Development | | | |
| I am not open to new challenges to push myself out of my comfort zone.* | 3.19 | 0.67 | Agree |
| I am open to constructive criticism and use it as an opportunity to improve. | 2.98 | 0.58 | Agree |
| I am not willing to collaborate/network with other professionals in my field to receive mentorship and guide my career growth.* | 3.38 | 0.49 | Completely Agree |
| I am confident I can adapt to and excel in a constantly changing social work setting. | 2.89 | 0.51 | Agree |
| I am not ready to pursue additional education or training to advance my career and keep learning. | 3.10 | 0.62 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.11 | 0.19 | Agree |
| Critical Thinking | | | |
| I am ready to make choices based on sound evidence, ethical considerations, and sound reasoning. | 2.94 | 0.54 | Agree |
| I cannot look at and understand complicated society problems and come up with reasonable solutions.* | 2.94 | 0.62 | Agree |
| I am looking for knowledge and evidence to support my conclusion. | 3.11 | 0.57 | Agree |
| I cannot think critically about my own work and find ways to make it better.* | 3.13 | 0.55 | Agree |
| I can spot beliefs and biases, pay attention to them, and question them. | 3.08 | 0.33 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.02 | 0.10 | Agree |
| Teamwork | | | |
| I am not ready to give other people jobs and work well with others to reach our common goals.* | 2.89 | 0.60 | Agree |
| It is not important to me that my team members' thoughts and ideas help us get better | 3.38 | 0.49 | Completely Agree |

| | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| results.* | | | |
| I am ready to give others jobs and work well with them to reach our common goals. | 2.97 | 0.40 | Agree |
| I think what my coworkers have to say is valuable and important. | 3.22 | 0.52 | Agree |
| I am not able to talk to my boss or coworkers to set goals that we can all work toward.* | 3.25 | 0.60 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.14 | 0.20 | Agree |
| Equity and Inclusion | | | |
| I promise to work with clients from diverse backgrounds and to understand their individual needs and experiences. | 3.16 | 0.48 | Agree |
| I am not ready to stand up to racism and discrimination when I work with clients and coworkers.* | 3.00 | 0.58 | Agree |
| I am not afraid to work with people from underrepresented groups and fight for their rights. | 3.06 | 0.59 | Agree |
| I am not in favor of rules that encourage fairness at work in order to keep good relationships.* | 3.32 | 0.53 | Completely Agree |
| I am not committed to working for social justice and fairness for the weak.* | 3.22 | 0.52 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.15 | 0.13 | Agree |
| Leadership | | | |
| I am not sure I am ready to take on the responsibilities of leadership, and I can't get others to work together toward common goals.* | 2.98 | 0.68 | Agree |
| I am confident in my ability to lead and facilitate groups, individuals, and communities. | 2.87 | 0.49 | Agree |
| I am not comfortable with public speaking and presentations.* | 2.50 | 0.71 | Agree |
| I have a strong sense of volunteerism in unforeseen situations. | 2.92 | 0.55 | Agree |
| I am not open to receiving feedback on my leadership approach.* | 3.27 | 0.60 | Completely Agree |
| Column Mean | 2.91 | 0.28 | Agree |
| Technology | | | |
| I am proficient with technology commonly used in social work practice, including electronic health records, databases, and communication tools. | 2.84 | 0.55 | Agree |
| I am not willing to learn new technologies to enhance my tech skills.* | 3.37 | 0.55 | Completely Agree |
| I am aware of the ethical considerations involved in using technology in social work practice. | 3.08 | 0.45 | Agree |
| I am not willing to participate in a training session to improve my tech skills.* | 3.32 | 0.53 | Completely Agree |
| I am aware of the importance of cybersecurity in collecting personal data. | 3.29 | 0.58 | Agree |
| Column Mean | 3.18 | 0.22 | Agree |
| Overall Column Mean | 3.06 | 0.30 | Agree Highly ready |

Note: Items with an asterisk (*) are reverse-coded.

In the domains of equality and inclusion ($M = 3.15, SD = 0.13$) and teamwork ($M = 3.14, SD = 0.20$), students rated themselves as "Highly Ready." They expressed support for equity and collaboration but also agreed with contradictory, negatively framed statements, suggesting internal inconsistencies or misinterpretation of items. This pattern suggests that while students value inclusivity, they may lack the active engagement needed to promote it. Scarborough (2019) underscored that policy framing significantly influences support for diversity, reinforcing the need for value-based education, immersive learning, and equity audits. Likewise, McMullin (2024) emphasized the need to foster genuine teamwork and collaboration in early social work training, which can be strengthened through curriculum revisions that incorporate collaborative simulations and group projects.

The domains of career and self-development ($M = 3.11, SD = 0.19$), professionalism, and critical thinking also reflected strong readiness levels, though with noted discrepancies. Students' agreement with negative items, such as resistance to mentorship, new challenges, and continuing education, contradicts the aims of career development. Montgomery (2017) proposed the mentoring roadmap model to help learners refine their professional identity and establish networks for advancement. Furthermore, although professionalism was rated high, responses indicating weak accountability underscore the need for continuous ethical modeling, as Reamer (2018) emphasized. The critical thinking domain ($M = 3.02, SD = 0.10$) indicated that students could make informed decisions but struggled with complex analysis and reflection. Fox (2021) suggested integrating reflective assignments and critical incident analyses into the curriculum to strengthen analytical competence.

Leadership ($M = 2.91, SD = 0.28$) and communication ($M = 2.89, SD = 0.34$) emerged as the lowest-rated domains, though still within the "Highly Ready" range. Students reported low confidence in public speaking and professional documentation, but high agreement with both positive and negative communication items, indicating a need for instrument clarification and skill development. Gilliam et al. (2017) and Mahesh and Miller (2024) highlighted the value of structured leadership training grounded in strengths-based principles, while Reith-

Hall and Montgomery (2022) and Hamlin et al. (2024) emphasized that communication skills training can improve competence, self-efficacy, and empathy. Overall, while students demonstrate high perceived career readiness, inconsistent responses suggest that experiential learning, mentoring, and curriculum refinement remain crucial to translating perceived readiness into actual professional competence.

Conclusion

The study found that social work students generally perceive themselves as moderately prepared for their fieldwork and future careers. However, variations were observed in their level of agreement with both positive competency indicators and negative items. This suggests gaps in the application of skills and in overall professional readiness. While students demonstrated confidence in areas such as ethics, teamwork, and critical thinking, they showed lower proficiency in communication, leadership, and technological integration. The strong correlation between perceived field-instruction readiness and career readiness underscores the critical role of practical experience in developing competent future professionals. These insights underscore the need to address existing developmental gaps through targeted interventions in both field education and academic programs.

Contributions of Authors

All researchers actively contributed to the writing, editing, data collection, and overall direction of the study.

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Conflict of Interests

No conflict of interest.

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