Article

The social worker's role in educating youth on the dangers of rumour spreading

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Abstract: The study aimed to identify the role of the social worker in raising youth awareness about the dangers of rumours. The study employed a descriptive methodology and involved a sample of 122 students from Al Ain University. A questionnaire consisting of 10 items was used as the primary tool for data collection. The findings revealed that the mean score for the social worker's role in raising youth awareness about the dangers of rumours was high, reaching 3.68. Additionally, the results showed that the mean scores for proposals to enhance the role of social workers in raising awareness about the dangers of rumours also stood at 3.68, indicating a high level. Furthermore, the study found no statistically significant differences at the significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the role of the social worker in raising youth awareness about the dangers of rumours attributed to the gender.

Keywords: social Worker, youth awareness, rumours, descriptive methodology, gender differences

1. Introduction

Youth are considered the cornerstone of life due to their vitality, physical energy, and creativity, as well as their aspirations and innovative ideas. A bright future is built upon the seeds planted by the youth, and without them, there is no future. The future of any nation relies entirely on the enthusiasm and achievements of its youth. Without their contributions, a nation cannot progress (Matar, 2019).

Youth is the stage following childhood and adolescence and precedes old age. It combines the energy and enthusiasm of children with the wisdom and maturity of adults. However, as more youth engage with social media platforms, the impact of rumours becomes increasingly evident. Rumours can influence their personalities, prompting them to make poor decisions for themselves and their families. Rumours may also foster hostility by targeting individuals or ideas, undermining their image, and inciting aggression. Furthermore, rumours have

psychological effects, weakening young people's trust in societal beliefs and norms, lowering morale, and undermining their psychological resilience (Fahmi, 2018).

A rumour is defined as information or beliefs transmitted by people without relying on credible references to confirm their validity. It may involve false or fabricated information or contain a small element of truth (Salem, 2016).

Rumours directly influence the collective mindset, leading to gradual psychological and social impacts. They can demoralize individuals, causing frustration and a sense of helplessness that affects productivity and slows societal progress. Economic stagnation, over time, renders a country's economy less attractive to foreign investments, directly impacting local stability. Hence, society must unite to combat such issues, with social workers playing a pivotal role (Sulaiman, 2020).

The social worker plays a crucial role in shaping social policies to achieve social welfare, thereby strengthening social cohesion within society. They operate through official and civil society organizations dedicated to social welfare and sustainable development, guided by the ethical principles of their profession (Al-Zahrani, 2017). Additionally, social workers act as educators, using media to raise public awareness about critical social issues, encouraging individuals to actively participate in sustainable development initiatives.

Universities also share responsibility in this area, as they can collaborate with students to implement social programs that address these issues. This study tackles an important topic: the spread and impact of rumours in societies. Its goal is to generate findings that assist decision-makers in formulating effective social policies. Furthermore, it provides recommendations for curbing the spread of rumours and highlights the pivotal role of social workers in addressing societal challenges.

1.2. Problem

Youth represent the largest demographic in most societies and play a crucial role in driving social development across various fields. Harnessing their potential requires investing in their talents and energies to build and advance societies through strong partnerships between the public and private sectors. To achieve this, it is essential to address and combat harmful rumours that negatively affect youth and the reputation of the country. Social workers are at the forefront of this effort, tasked with raising awareness and promoting a culture of truth-seeking and critical evaluation of information from an early age (Al-Mahlawi, 2018). This study seeks to answer the following question: **What is the role of social workers in educating youth about the dangers of rumours?**

1.3. Objectives

1. Identify the role of social workers in educating youth about the dangers of rumours.

2. Propose strategies to enhance the role of social workers in combating rumours.

3. Examine the statistical significance of the social worker's role in educating youth about rumours, considering gender (male and female).

1.4. Questions

1. What is the role of social workers in educating youth about the dangers of rumours?

2. What are the recommendations for enhancing the role of social workers in combating rumours?

Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant effect at the level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the social worker's role in educating youth about the dangers of rumours, attributed to gender (male and female).

1.5. Literature review

The review includes studies related to the current research topic: the role of social workers in educating youth about the dangers of rumours. It comprises both Arab and international studies. Shatla (2021) Examined the impact of rumours on violence and intellectual security among Libyan university students. The study highlighted Facebook as the most commonly used platform for spreading false news, particularly during periods of terrorism and conflict. Recommendations included awareness campaigns and media monitoring. Hassan (2021) Investigated the effect of social media applications on spreading false news and its impact on public perception and national security in Egypt. The study emphasized the need for monitoring news sources and addressing the origins of rumours. Mubarak (2021) Focused on the role of websites and applications in shaping young people's awareness and handling fake news. Daniel (2021) explored the types of rumours circulating on social media and the strategies to counter them. Using qualitative research, the study revealed the necessity of addressing rumours and mitigating their harmful effects on young people to safeguard society and maintain its stability. Al-Salama (2020) Analysed the stages and causes of rumours and strategies to combat them. Results revealed that public interest significantly influences rumour spread, highlighting the need for reliable information dissemination. William (2017) Investigated the psychological and social motivations behind spreading rumours online. Recommendations included regulatory oversight and promoting credible news sources

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample and Sampling

Table1

The distribution of the study sample members according to personal variables.

Variable	Level	Social Workers
	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	69
	Female	53
	Total	**122**
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	86
	Postgraduate Studies	36
	Total	**122**
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	23
	5-10 years	37
	More than 10 years	62
	Total	**122**

Table (1) shows that the number of social workers in the study sample reached **69 males**, representing **56.6%**, while the number of female social workers in the sample was **53**, representing **43.4%**. For students, the number of males in the sample was **345**, accounting for **56.6%**, while the number of females was **265**, representing **43.4%**. The highest percentage of the sample's distribution based on the educational qualification variable was for the **Bachelor's degree**, at **70.5%**, while the lowest percentage was for **Postgraduate studies**, at **29.5%**. Similarly, the highest percentage of the sample's distribution based on the teaching experience variable was for the level of **more than 10 years of experience**, at **50.8%**, while the lowest percentage was for **less than 5 years of experience**, at **18.9%**.

2.2. Tool

The present study utilized a questionnaire consisting of two sections:

• The first section focuses on the demographic characteristics of the study sample, such as (gender, age, educational status, employment status, monthly income, and family size).

• The second section contains items aimed at answering the study's questions and achieving its objectives, comprising 10 items divided into two main axes:

1. Axis One: The role of the social worker in raising youth awareness about the risks of rumours. It includes 5 items:

o Explaining to youth the negative impact of rumours on the country's economy.

o Providing youth with the necessary knowledge about the risks of rumours.

o Highlighting the dangers of rumours on their intellectual security.

o Assisting youth in protecting themselves intellectually from the threat of rumours.

o Teaching youth how to confront rumours.

2. Axis Two: Proposals to enhance the social worker's role in raising youth awareness about the risks of rumours. It includes 5 items:

o Organizing training courses for social workers to enhance their expertise.

o Providing material and moral incentives for social workers.

o Reducing administrative burdens on social workers to allow them to focus on training and engaging with youth.

o Appointing specialists among social workers to lead programs addressing rumours.

o Recognizing and rewarding social workers who present outstanding initiatives in combating rumours.

Validity of the Study Instrument

To ensure content validity, the initial version of the questionnaire was reviewed by a group of experts. They evaluated the clarity of the items, linguistic phrasing, and their relevance to the study's field, suggesting adjustments and noting areas for improvement.

A five-point Likert scale was adopted to respond to the items, as follows:

- Very High (5 points),
- High (4 points),
- Moderate (3 points),
- Low (2 points),
- Very Low (1 point).

Reliability of the Study Instrument

To verify the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha (α) formula was used, as shown in Table (2).

Table (2): Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficients of the Questionnaire

Tool	Internal Consistency Reliability
Questionnaire	0.82

It can be observed from Table (2) that the internal consistency reliability value of the questionnaire is (0.82), indicating the good construction and validity of the scale for the purposes of this study.

Correction of the Study Tool

To assess the mean scores of the study tool, its sections, and the related items, the response level was determined based on the five-point Likert scale, calculated as follows:

Thus, the category length is (1.33), and the response levels were as follows:

- Low level (1–2.33).
- Medium level (2.34–3.67).
- High level (3.68–5).

Statistical Methods

The study used frequencies and percentages to identify the demographic characteristics of the study population, and mean averages and standard deviations to answer the study's questions.

educates youth on how to confront rumours," with a mean of (3.43), while the lowest was item (3), which states: "The social worker clarifies to youth the dangers of rumours on their intellectual security," with a mean of (3.08).

3. Results

3.1. First question results: "What is the role of the social worker in raising awareness among youth about the dangers of rumours?

To answer this question, mean averages and standard deviations were extracted to assess the social worker's role in educating youth about the risks of rumours.

Table 3

Mean Averages and Standard Deviations of the Social Worker's Role in Raising Awareness Among Youth About the Dangers of Rumours

Rank	Item	Mean Average	Standard Deviation
1	The social worker explains to youth the negative role of rumours on the country's economy.	4.05	0.44
2	The social worker provides youth with the necessary knowledge about the dangers of rumours.	4.01	0.58
3	The social worker helps youth protect themselves intellectually from the dangers of rumours.	3.69	1.07
4	The social worker educates youth on how to confront rumours.	3.43	1.50
5	The social worker clarifies to youth the seriousness of rumours on their intellectual security.	3.08	1.87

It appears from Table (3) that the mean averages for the social worker's role in educating youth about the dangers of rumours ranged from (3.08 to 4.05). The table also shows that (5) items received a high rating, with the highest being item (1), which states: "The social worker explains to youth the negative impact of rumours on the country's economy," with a mean of

(4.05) and a high rating. The lowest was item (4), which states: "The social worker helps youth protect themselves intellectually from the dangers of rumours," with a mean of (3.69) and a high rating. Meanwhile, two items received a medium rating, with their means ranging from (3.08 to 3.43), with the highest being item (5), which states: "The social worker

3.2. second question results: What are the suggestions to activate the role of the social worker in educating youth about the dangers of rumours?

To answer the second study question, the mean averages and standard deviations of the suggestions to activate the social worker's role in educating youth about the dangers of rumours were extracted.

Table 4

The arithmetic means and standard deviations of the proposals to activate the role of the social worker in raising awareness among young people about the dangers of rumours.

Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Organizing training courses for social workers to increase their expertise.	4.42	0.86
2	Financial and moral motivation for social workers.	3.63	1.16
3	Reducing administrative burdens on social workers to allow them to focus on training and connecting with young people.	3.59	1.25
4	Appointing specialists from social workers to raise awareness through programs to combat rumours.	3.52	1.13
5	Honouring social workers who present outstanding initiatives to combat rumours.	3.22	1.14

It is clear from table (4) that the mean ratings of the study sample on the proposed suggestions to activate the role of social workers in raising awareness among young people about the dangers of rumours reached an overall mean of (3.68) with a high degree, ranging from (3.22 to 4.42) across its items. The table also reveals that there is one item that received a high rating, which is item (4) with the statement: "Appointing specialists from social workers to raise awareness through programs to combat rumours," with a mean of (4.42). Meanwhile, the other items received medium ratings, with their means ranging from (3.22 to 3.63), with the highest mean being for item (1) with the statement: "Organizing training courses for social workers to increase their expertise," with a mean of (3.63), and the lowest being for item (2) with the statement: "Financial and moral motivation for social workers," with a mean of (3.22).

3.3. The hypothesis result: There is no statistically significant effect at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the role of the social worker in raising awareness among young people about the dangers of rumours due to the gender variable (Male, Female).

To test the hypothesis, the means, standard deviations, and (T) values were calculated as shown in the following table:

Table 5

Results of the (T) Test According to the Gender Variable

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	(T)	Significance Level
Male	3.6831	0.58579		
Female	3.7600	0.47659		

It is clear from Table (6) that there is no statistically significant effect at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the role of the social worker in raising awareness among young people about the dangers of rumours due to the gender variable (Male, Female), as the significance level of the (F) value was (0.195), which is greater than the significance level (0.05).

4. Discussion

Based on the previous section of the study's findings, it was evident that social workers play a critical role in raising awareness among youth about the dangers of rumours. This aligns with the results of Shatleh (2021), Hassan (2021), Mubarak (2021), and Al-Malkawi (2021), which highlighted that social workers significantly contribute to reducing the spread of rumours among youth through continuous awareness efforts delivered via lectures, meetings, and guidance.

To enhance the role of social workers in the community, the findings suggested that they can implement various social programs and initiatives aimed at curbing rumours and raising awareness about their harmful effects on individuals and society. These findings are consistent with those of Al-Sharif (2021), Ghazi (2020), and Al-Sharbine (2020), which emphasized that social workers must possess a high level of skills to effectively conduct workshops and deliver impactful lectures, particularly in the area of awareness regarding the dangers of rumours.

The results also confirmed that there were no significant differences between male and female social workers in their ability to promote awareness about the risks and harms of rumours. This indicates that both genders receive equal attention and support from social and educational institutions.

The study faced several obstacles, including a small sample size and the reliance on a questionnaire for data collection. It also recommended conducting further research on this topic within different communities, using diverse methods and tools. Additionally, the study emphasized the importance of recognizing the role of social workers in society and empowering them to support youth in various areas, particularly in combating the dangers of rumours.

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