



Engagement with Involuntary Clients - A Systematic Literature Review

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Engagement with involuntary clients has always been challenging and social workers are constantly developing strategies to bridge the gap between themselves and these clients. Involuntary clients, i.e. clients who are legally instructed to seek treatment but often struggle with engagement and are viewed as being resistant. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the literature review analysis with regard to theoretical and practical perspectives in the context of dealing with involuntary clients. Moreover, the authors followed the planning, execution and summarising stage to filter the required data. To achieve the paper's objective, 582 journal articles were considered and shortlisted to 62 of the most relevant articles to present the analysis. This research review reveals the importance of engagement with involuntary clients and how social workers can cope with this challenge to offer a conducive environment for such clients. This review is also a value addition in the role of a social worker at the workplace in dealing with involuntary clients by following the practical understanding of the subject matter. Lastly, an opportunity for future researchers to understand global studies and future direction with regard to involuntary client management.

Key words: *Theoretical Perspectives; Practical Perspectives; Involuntary Client; Engagement; Social Work*

Introduction

The social change in some areas around the world has resulted in a paramount rise in social problems concerning family life and social associations (Allan 2014; Barise, 2003). There has been a considerable amount of studies on involuntary social clients (Rooney & Mirick, 2018; Trotter, 2015) although, in this context, very less enquiry has been performed in countries such as Africa, South America, the Middle East and some Asian countries (Barise, 2005; Graham et



al., 2009). The main challenge for social workers is to find the most effective way to engage with clients as individuals. A primary concern is whether social workers can actually achieve a sound level of engagement in order to effectively deal with such clients (Asquith et al., 2005). Without engagement, it is not possible for the social worker and client to collaboratively address issues and generate potential solutions (Doel et al., 2009). For a social work intervention to be effective, it is necessary to create a form of engagement (Beresford & Croft, 2001). Even if social workers create the most inclusive and supportive environments for their clients, information acquired from involuntary clients has limited value until a suitable working relationship is established (Graham et al., 2009).

In this review paper, an overview on the involuntary clients' engagement in the social work segmented was explored. Also, a comprehensive research methodology was developed explaining the study's methodological direction. A discussion of present literature with regard to theoretical and practical perspectives of involuntary clients' engagement within the social work sector was provided, and lastly both the theoretical and practical implications were presented followed by future research direction and conclusion.

Research methodology

The methodological direction of this review is based on three stages such as planning, execution, and reporting. These stages are important and effective to ensure the rigor in the review process (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007).

Planning stage

The first step to identify the core requirements in a systematic literature review is a planning stage. As discussed earlier, there is less literature analysis that summarises the study findings & proposes an in-depth comprehension into the suggestions to academic and practice in this study subject; as a matter of fact there is an active research directed towards the engagement of involuntary clients within the context of social work. This methodical literature review provides a ground to understand the present theoretical and practical viewpoints associated with involuntary clients' engagement. A systematic review was developed to demonstrate the classification framework for this study. This classification outline was originally presented by Ngai and Wat (2002) to recommend a systematic review within the appropriate research papers which maintain unprompted customers in the context of the social work segment. This study's final research classification framework consists of theoretical perspectives, and this direction includes the social conflict and dynamic hybrid model and practical perspectives as the second direction of the research classification framework, and this direction includes clarifying roles and cooperative problem solving. The research classification framework directions and their categories are discussed in-depth next.



Theoretical Perspectives (direction 1)

This direction is divided into two different models: social conflict and the dynamic hybrid model. The social conflict model covers literature on the nature of relationship, negotiation, and advocate along with its criticism. Likewise, the dynamic hybrid model covers literature on the perspective dynamic model and drawbacks of the dynamic model and solutions.

Practical Perspectives (direction 2)

There are two important aspects of practical perspective, clarifying roles and cooperative problem solving. The clarifying roles category covers literature about building a relationship, and clear communication. Secondly, the cooperative problem-solving category covers literature about how a client could contribute in the program, and how this contribution will build trust between the client and staff in social service centres. Following are the study research questions forming a basis of this literature review:

- What are the theoretical perspectives of involuntary clients' engagement within the social work sector?
- What are the practical perspectives of involuntary clients' engagement within the social work sector?

In this review paper, an in-depth search mechanism was used to fulfill the objective of gauging the appropriate online sources (Golder et al., 2014). In this regard the online databases used were, Springer, SAGE, Web of Science and Social Science Humanities. Additionally, data filtration was applied within chosen database bounding the search results (Aleixandre-Benavent et al., 2011). Moreover, a manual review technique was also applied by reading the abstract and papers title (Golder et al., 2014; Pucher, 2013). Moving forward, we read the selected articles with an objective to filter the unrelated studies to avoid confusion and duplication (Ali et al., 2018; Pucher, 2013). Additionally, the backward snowball method was applied, with a precise purpose to determine articles unable to be found from the former strategy (Ali et al., 2018; Wohlin, 2014).

Execution stage

- a) The formation of search terms started with a preliminary investigation utilising distinctive search words, considering an underlying search of articles that are already known to have a place with the study field of the systematic review (Golder et al., 2014). The technique of deciding search terms ends when the underlying arrangement of definitely known articles is found after the underlying pursuit. All the previously mentioned online databases offer the chance to play out a search utilising an advanced search in combination with relevant

material. In the current review, the search utilised the following keywords “Involuntary Clients” AND “Engagement” AND “Social Work”.

- b) Filters were used by utilising all available tools for each database to limit the research results (Aleixandre- Benavent et al., 2011).
- c) A manual checking process was followed by reading the abstract and the title related to the subject matter. This assisted the researcher to stay focused on the paper’s objective (Golder et al., 2014; Pucher, 2013).
- d) Full articles were read and evaluated to comprehend and distinguish the important information (Hu & Bai, 2014; Pucher, 2013).
- e) Backward snowball techniques were utilised to explore the unidentified researches from the main strategy (Spanos & Angelis, 2016).
- f) At the end, quality assessment was followed to ensure the incorporation of quality papers to achieve the desired objectives (Spanos & Angelis, 2016). A checklist was developed to maintain the quality level, the checklist comprises of clear research objectives and problems, data availability, brief explanation of research methodology, results presentation and connection of results with the research objectives (Ali et al., 2018; Spanos and Angelis; 2016). The comprehensive review search result is displayed in Table 1 (please refer to the appendix section).

This systematic literature review was conducted in June 2018. It followed all the required protocols as mentioned in the planning stage. At the beginning the key word identified around 582 journal articles. Hence, after following all the required steps, around 62 articles met the required criterion.

Summarising stage

Table 1 below demonstrates the final number of articles selected for the current literature review. Precisely, once the initial process was completed (keywords), 3515 research papers were found and were related to the subject matter. After the data filtration, the number of articles in this process decrease by 582. Hence, the final papers from the automated search was 582. Then, the researchers followed the manual review by reading the research titles and summary of the researcher’s papers, with the purpose of detecting inappropriate papers to avoid any duplication. As an outcome, 350 papers were detached and then the remaining articles were 232 articles. Subsequently, after reading complete research papers, 169 unrelated articles were detached which resulted in the number of left out articles being 63 articles. The backward snowball technique was then used and from the reading of the references, 8 more papers were

added which then resulted in the number of papers being 71 articles. Hence, the final number of articles after engaging the entire study selection process was turned out to be 62 articles. These 62 articles discourse the four quality assessment standards described earlier. The final number of shortlisted articles resulting from the comprehensive manual review was 62 articles.

Table 1. Review search results

Database	1 st Strategy	2 nd Strategy	3 rd Strategy	4 th Strategy	5 th Strategy	6 th Strategy
	Keywords	Filtration	Manual scanning	Reading full articles	Backward Snowball	Final Assessment
Scopus	229	87	33	12	12	11
SAGE	1086	82	40	16	16	14
Emerald	446	177	68	14	14	12
Business Source	958	102	52	10	11	10
EBSCO	796	134	39	11	18	15
Total		582	232	63	71	62

Research results and classification

In the research process, the researcher concluded that the maximum available papers in the year 2016 was 10 articles. Moreover, in the year 2005, 2007 and 2017 the total number of articles reported was one each year. Additionally, from the year 2012 to 2016, there is an evidence of maximum article publication in the subject area. Moreover, countries were also taken into consideration where these articles were published together with closely associated topics. The maximum extraction of articles is from USA showcasing 14 articles, followed by United Kingdom (UK) with 4 papers; while the lowest number of articles reported from Sweden, Germany and New Zealand (n=1).

The adoption of the selected articles by database sources was also the part of this review. The researchers identified that, 15 articles emerged from the EBSCO database; 14 articles from the SAGE database; another 12 articles from Emerald; followed by the Scopus database with 11 articles; and, finally, 10 articles from the Business Resource Complete database.

The research topic is organised into two directions: theoretical and practical perspectives of involuntary clients' engagement. Therefore, the combined amount of papers available for theoretical perspectives of involuntary clients' engagement is 35; and practical perspectives of involuntary clients' engagement (n=29). Studies on involuntary clients' engagement surrounding the theoretical perspectives have increased since peaking in 2012, while studies about practical perspectives of involuntary clients' engagement seems to be gradually increasing which is an encouraging viewpoint with regards to involuntary clients' engagement

within the social work. The research discussions derived from these subsequent findings, are presented next.

Research discussion

Direction 1 - Theoretical Perspectives

There are many different models to support working with involuntary clients. The models assist scholars, as well as practitioners, in understanding why involuntary clients display resistance. The research discussion related to the theoretical perspectives include: the social conflict model and dynamic hybrid model. Each of these models is discussed in-depth in the next section.

Social Conflict Model

This model was developed in 1984. The model postulates that practitioners and the involuntary clients do not concur as to the meaning or understanding of the situation (Coleman et al., 2012). As a result of conflicting interest, misunderstanding and resistance is evident in both parties. In research conducted by Huhman (2006), he argues that due to the social conflict, the relationship between the client and the practitioner breaks at the onset of the program and, in most situations, is hard to recover. This is because the practitioner is in a position of power mandated by a family member or law to assist the client overcome the social problem. As a result, the client feels powerless and resentful concerning the situation and is at the mercy of the political will of the practitioner (Brodsky & Titcomb, 2013). The model is based on a political process of relationship building (Sotero et al., 2016). The practitioner is depicted as the political agent and has power over the involuntary client. As per the study conducted by Coleman et al. (2012), rather than focus on the internal disparities of the client, the practitioner focuses on the differences between their perspectives and definition of the problem or the situation. There are three significant perspectives related to the social conflict model—nature of the relationship, negotiation, and advocating. The study explored that, the maximum publication is essentially within the negotiation perspective (6 articles), followed by nature of the relationship perspective with 4 articles, and advocating perspective with 3 articles. The detailed argument of the findings connected to social conflict model perspectives will be addressed next.

Nature of the relationship

In the social conflict model, the practitioner not only defines but also identifies the nature of the relationship (Coleman et al., 2012). Hoffman (2016) identifies various strategies that the practitioner can use to direct or control the behaviour or actions of the client. The first role according to Huhman (2006) is the enforcer role, which involves the use of structured power by the practitioner to impose compliance on the involuntary client. The court/law and the interested family members impose the responsibility to the social worker to assist the client



with interest in his/her feelings attached to the program (Sotero et al., 2016). Based on the work of Duffey and Somody (2011), the intervention process for an involuntary client is a political conquest within the conflicting interest between the individual and the environment.

Negotiation

Based on the social conflict theory, the second role of the practitioner is to serve as a negotiator. The role is also known as the labor relations model (Quinney, 2016). Through the veil of a negotiator, the practitioner tries to bargain with the involuntary client through acknowledging his rights and trusting that he/she will make a competent choice and adhere to it. If the involuntary client fails to adhere to or abide by the promises, he/she made earlier, the practitioner will be forced to assume the role of an enforcer in the program (Franklin, 2015). If the individual or the client decides to alter or change some aspect of his/her life, the practitioner serves the role of providing expert help within the therapeutic context (Lee, 2016). Although the involuntary client may be in conflict with the environment or social problem that is being dealt with, the relationship with the practitioner is on a separate dimension (Meichenbaum, 2013).

Advocating

The third role that the practitioner can adopt is the role of an advocate (Turney, 2012). Under this model, the relationship that is formed is explicitly based on the client's interests. Based on research by Turney (2012), he asserted that the goal is to deal with the conflict through changing the demands or the social context of the client. Just like the enforcer, the practitioner is a political actor but leans on the client's side as opposed to the institution (Dominey, 2013). The major difference between the role of an advocate and a coach is that an advocate presents him/herself as a willing and able agent to act based on the interest of the client (Dominey, 2013). A coach acts as a guide or a facilitator in order to support the client interactions with the agency (Watson, 2014). A practitioner acting as a coach is more covert and less visible to others (Watson, 2014).

This model is reflected in most of the mainstream literature relating to social conflict theory. However, a challenge of this model of social conflict is that it puts the practitioner in a potentially vulnerable position. Randall (2015) argued that the particular weakness of this approach is the assumption of a commonality of interests between the two parties. In practical terms, there is very often a significant gap between the interests of the parties involved, at least as the client perceives them.

Dynamic Hybrid Model

Involuntary clients are usually adverse to intervention and need higher levels of energy to persuade them to participate and accomplish progress and meaningful results (Coleman et al., 2012). According to research by Smith et al. (2011), they anticipated a model that has an emphasis on engagement in reply to the circumstances. The authors further contended that endurance, as well as trust building, is essential to initiate the engagement process. Trust and continuity are built through the acknowledgement and recognition of small gains, progress or achievements (Smith et al., 2011). Upon building trust, the practitioner proceeds to place more effort and focus on critical aspects of the case such as communication and information sharing with the involuntary client solution (Coleman et al., 2012; Howe et al., 2018). There are two main important categories related to the social conflict model: perspectives of the dynamic model; and drawback of the dynamic model and solution. The detailed discussion of the findings associated to the dynamic hybrid model elements will be addressed next.

Perspectives of the dynamic model

Models that are centered on relationship building employ high levels of engagement techniques in the intervention programs (Smith et al., 2011). Most scholars in the discipline have recognised the multifaceted role of social workers in collaborating with attorneys, monitoring the client, offering therapeutic service and problem solving (Trotter, 2015). The dynamic model uses various theories such as the cognitive behavioral model, strength-based therapies and motivational congruency approaches. This is because a reliance on a single model does not consider the diverse nature of social work. This model is dominant in most of the western nations due to its evidence-based practice or approach (Duffey & Somody, 2011). In research conducted by Rooney (2009) and Trotter (2015), both authors reported that most social workers are highly reflective on the client's problem. This approach combines available evidence from studying the client and applying the various knowledge, experiences and beliefs of social work to the client. Trotter (2015) also investigated the use of direct practices by practitioners in social work. Such models dominate in countries like Australia and incorporate several components in providing a solution (Howe et al., 2018).

Criticism of the dynamic model hybrid model

Despite its ability to effectively solve the problem, the case management approach carries its own drawbacks as an approach for involuntary clients (Rooney, 2009). A substantial body of research postulates that the model falls short across the various spectrum of outcomes associated with involuntary clients (Trotter, 2015). Scholars view the model's approach as tight and constrained with respect to measurable outcomes of a program (Trotter et al., 2012).



Direction 2 - Practical Perspectives

Research conducted by Ferguson (2007) recognised the role of engagement as a practical instrument, as well as an effective tool for management of emotional and relational aspects of an intervention program. It needs to establish both practical and relational senses for the involuntary and non-voluntary clients to be receptive to the program. Based on research by Hoffman (2016), he extends the scope of engagement in a social program by referring it to an individual's level of participation and connection with key social institutions such as the family and the community. The research discussion related to the practical perspectives include: clarifying roles; and cooperative problem solving. Each of these practical perspectives are discussed in detail in the next section.

Clarifying Roles

Clarifying roles means discussing the purpose of the intervention clearly with the client, conveying the social worker's twofold role as assistant and social supervisor, and conversing about concerns relating to the use of power and privacy (Trotter, 2014). There are two main important perspectives related to the clarifying roles—relationship and communication (Trotter, 2015). The maximum studies are truly within the communication perspective (8 articles), followed by relationship perspective with 3 articles. The detailed discussion of the results connected to clarifying roles model perspectives will be addressed next.

Relationship

Most engagements work well when practitioners create friendly spaces in which the clients can participate (Hilario & Maniago, 2014). Watson (2014) investigated the impact of creating a friendly space or a conducive environment for engagement in a campus recovery house for youths. The research found out that a friendly environment led to quicker recovery or attainment of results as opposed to hostile spaces. A program does not have to be established according to the desires of client, but must be carefully tuned in order to be perceived as friendly by the recipients. According to research by Hilario and Maniago (2014), they recognise the importance of building an appropriate environment for the development of youth and children placed in social programs. These researchers provide an example of a well-designed youth centre in facilitating and supporting service delivery. Friendly spaces go further to appreciate diversity of different individuals in a program (Dominey, 2013). This signifies different approaches are tailored to match the specific needs of the client (Dominey, 2013).

Communication

Studies conducted in this area show that the resistance from involuntary clients emanates from their difficulty or struggle to understand the underlying problem that is affecting them (Ames,



2016). It is evident that their miscommunication regarding the problem affects the engagement process (Hilario & Maniago, 2014). A survey conducted by Cohn et al. (2016), shows that involuntary clients need clarification on each and every contact point during the intervention. Contrary to involuntary clients, voluntary clients require minimal coercion in order to participate in the program. Minimal communication concerning the clarifications of various aspects is needed (Tanyi et al., 2010). Through communication, each party's duties, obligations, areas of control and the expected results or consequences are made clear (Cheung, 2013).

Cooperative Problem Solving

Cooperative problem solving involves working with the client's interpretation and perception of the problem, constructing modest, attainable objectives which are those of the client rather than the social worker, and articulating approaches and steps with the client to attain these goals (Trotter, 2014). There are two main important perspectives related to the cooperative problem solving (contribution, and trust). The maximum publication is essentially within the contribution perspective (7 articles), followed clinical by trust perspective with 3 articles. The thorough discussion of the findings associated to the cooperative problem- solving perspectives will be addressed next.

Contribution

Research suggests that clients are likely to feel better as well as contribute to the program if they are allowed to prepare, and be informed and supported throughout the program (Rooney, 2009; Thunberg et al., 2015). Children are capable of partaking in various meetings or conferences if they are prepared in advance by social workers or advocates who are positive concerning their contribution in the program. Scholars have also suggested that social workers are also able to support user engagement by acting as advocates or helping client access independence or medication services (Watson, 2014). According to research conducted by Pope and Kang (2011), they go further to clarify that support through engagement is crucial in situations where the client has a negative issue that is difficult to express.

Trust

A trusting relationship is a key feature of engagement in most programs. Based on a research by Mcgarvey et al. (2013), they assert that involuntary clients have a high level of distrust when it comes to seeking social services. Bureaucracies and discriminatory experiences worsen the perception and the ability of the client to open up to the practitioners. The occurrence of such events in a program creates difficulties associated with engagement and development of lasting relationships. As purported by Turney (2012), to build trust and a positive relationship, spending time through regular and planned contact will portray one's commitment to the



program—thereby allowing the client to participate and be committed to achieving the stated goals and plans. Table 3 illustrates and summarises previous studies related to involuntary clients' engagement within the social work sector.

This review of previous studies has identified that the provision of involuntary social services is based on theoretical boundaries, models and experiences influencing the expertise of social workers. Previous studies were conducted between 2011 – 2016 and mainly covered the regions such as, USA, UK, Australia, China, South Korea, Sweden, Germany and New Zealand respectively (Cheung, 2013; Hoffman 2016; Pope and Kang 2011; Smith et al., 2011; Thunberg et al., 2015), Such theories include rational, cultural, client-centred and behavioural cognition approaches. There already exists several best practice guides that focus specifically on the aspect of engagement with involuntary clients and the best methods for social workers to achieve desired outcomes. Overall, most of the previous studies emphasise the importance of engagement with involuntary or resistant clients in order to enable social workers to actually have a positive impact.

Implications for Theory

The models presented support scholars, as well as practitioners, in the understanding of resistance by involuntary clients. The models also help in determining the best course of action or combination of models in order to achieve the desired results. The research discussion related to the theoretical perspective includes the social conflict model and dynamic hybrid model. By comprehending the stated models in detail, it may help researchers to apply any of the models while developing the theoretical foundation of their chosen study area. Moreover, in the context of involuntary clients, applying the stated models would add value in the theoretical foundation by having a concrete theoretical foundation.

Implications for Practice

Emphasis should be placed on clarifying the role of the social worker, especially in an authoritative setting, where they have multiple simultaneous responsibilities when their clients are involuntary. In order to improve engagement skills amongst social workers, regular team meetings—possibly weekly, or at least monthly—must be encouraged. At these team meetings, senior social workers can work with more inexperienced personnel to evaluate cases, underscore successes and the lessons that can be learnt from them, and examine failures and how they can be avoided in the future. It may be useful, once involuntary clients have completed their course of work with their social workers, to solicit their feedback on what aspects encouraged them to engage more with their social workers and what aspects discouraged engagement. The social support centre needs to employ more senior social service workers to protect the trustworthiness of the engagement process with involuntary clients. This will surely enhance effective engagement with involuntary clients.



Future Research Directions

In this review, only 62 research papers were shortlisted and considered to be appropriate for this study, from the number of publications which happened between the year (2012-2016). The over-all subject of the publications in the years 2001-2018 personified the knowledge of the theoretical and practical standpoints of involuntary clients' engagement within the social work segment. There is a lack of pragmatic researches on the overall value of involuntary client engagement within the social work sector, representing the lack of rigor depth in this area although, an encouraging discovery is the even distribution of research articles presented in the EBSCO and SAGE databases. It is also important to understand the social context when it comes to engagement between social workers and involuntary clients. Social context can include political, cultural, religious, ethnic and gender-based factors that may differ from region to region and country to country. This is an area where there is relatively less research; therefore, social workers may be required to lean more on instinct and also the experiences of their seniors and peers in order to include this perspective in their engagement with their involuntary clients.

Conclusion

There is still relatively less literature on dealing with involuntary clients than studies dealing with voluntary clients. Further, there is virtually no literature that explores what different socio-cultural contexts may do to impact the engagement of social workers with involuntary clients. As noted in this research review, there was relatively no research conducted in African, South American, Middle Eastern, and some Asian countries. For example, in a conservative religious society, would engagement entail different aspects than in a liberal society? How would being an involuntary client in a developing nation be different from being one in a developed nation with a far more developed social work structure provided by the state? These are areas that need to be explored further by researchers and could be potential areas of future research. Apart from this, there is also a relative paucity of more recent literature, i.e. research performed in the past ten years, on the subject of engagement with involuntary clients by social workers. Therefore, it can be stated that this gap also may need to be filled with fresh research that can bring together new knowledge and practices in this field.

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