SW 3720 INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT

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**Introduction**

My interest in social work developed due to the social problems I observed in our society. There are so many serious social issues that should be resolved. However, in order to get mastered in skills that would help in addressing the social problems, I chose Social Work as a field of career. It is a vast field that needs more public interactions and communications. It is the demand of the area that a social worker should support his or her community and family during adverse situations. The difficult times make people more vulnerable. Therefore, the role of the social worker can help them improve their lives. A social worker provides guidance and advocacy to the people. He or she also tries to find the factors behind any serious issue existing in society.

Similarly, this paper aims to identify the interview skills of mine as a social worker through a real interview experience with a 35 years old person. As I mentioned above that, I have an interest in social problems, so I decided to interview a person on a theme based on "Suicide as an emerging issue?" I knew a person who had lost one of his loved ones due to suicide. I preferred this theme because it is a sensitive issue and it would help in assessing the social work interviewing skills. The person selected for the interview is a 35 years old man who had seen his younger brother committing suicide by jumping from the 6th floor of a building. He lives in my neighborhood and doing a job at a software house. He is an Asian American, and the country of his origin is Japan. He belongs to a middle-class family. Moreover, the interview was conducted at his house, and it continued for an hour. An interview guide was prepared, consisting of open questions related to the topic. In addition, this paper has briefly described the social work experience.

**Discussion**

1. **The verbal and non-verbal behavior**

It needs high skills to study the verbal and non-verbal behavior of a person while interviewing. I had to observe the verbal and non-verbal signals of the interviewee throughout the interview. Initially, when I met the person, I found that he welcomed me with a smile and an eye contact. We shook hands then he offered me a seat in his sitting room. However, once the interview started, it was detected that the facial expressions of the interviewee changed. Each question of mine was making him remember the incidence of his brother, and he seemed a little upset. However, he managed to respond to each question. His voice shrilled while telling about the incidence of his brother. He appeared helpless, and there were signs of regret in his eyes. It was a depth interview consisting of both structured and unstructured types of interview questions. When he would feel difficult to speak, he would remain silent for a while. I offered him a glass of water whenever I felt the disturbance in his behavior. However, I took great care while asking the questions. Knowing the sensitivity of the matter, general questions were asked which made the interviewee answer more easily. The behavior was interpreted by observation and by remembering the concepts from the textbook. Notepad was used to note down the responses of the interviewee.

Moreover, the verbal response was saved for further interpretation later on. However, it was also assessed during the interview that the person was very open to the questions. No such response would be considered as an excuse for answering a specific problem. The interviewee answered all the questions wisely. At the same time, he also shared his personal views about the increasing rate of suicides in the United States.

1. **The Verbal and Non-Verbal Messages**

It was observed that the verbal and non-verbal messages of the interviewee were congruent. It was easier to understand the process of communication of the person through verbal and non-verbal ways. For non-verbal communication, the gestures, eye contact, body language, and facial expression were observed. Moreover, the other non-verbal elements like voice quality, speaking style and emotions were also observed. Allowed the interviewee to get involved in a more in-depth conversation that builds empathy. It also helped in making the person get comfortable with the interview. For instance, when the person was asked about the suicide incidence of his younger brother, his facial expressions changed. He took a long breath, and there were signs of grief on his face, and his voice changed. However, he was initially told about the nature of the questions and permission was already taken. Therefore, there was not any resisting behavior shown by the person.

All the open-ended questions were of the same nature. During the conservation, Change talk strategy was applied to know the reasons for the matter. During the interview, any negative comment was avoided and just facilitated through the questions to engage the interviewee. However, sympathy was shown through the hopeful words whenever required. The interviewee would take breaks during the responses and would share the stories from the past about his brother. I kept reflective listening and would observe what he was saying, and I used words like *I can understand* and *you are very brave.* At the same time, it was felt that interviewee was comfortable with the questions. He openly discussed all the good and bad elements related to the incidence. He was also pleased to share his personal experiences and family conflicts with me. There was not any reluctant signal given by the interviewee.

1. **Verbal and non-verbal communication patterns of an interviewer**

From the lessons and concepts, I have learned about the role of social worker as an interviewer. Therefore, I was ready to apply all the ideas from the textbook about motivational interviewing techniques. However, during the interview I felt the sensitiveness of my topic; many times there were situations that I had to control my emotions. The responses to the questions very painful. Nevertheless, the questions were already prepared, at that time there were no emotions. It was challenging to ask the client "how do you feel when somebody talks about those incidences?' compared to writing the question.

However, some of the strategies from the book like, affirmation, summaries, supporting statements and feedbacks helped me to keep the interviewee engaged in the interview. I would use the affirmation statements in response to the person’s comments. These statements helped me identifying the strengths and feelings of the interviewee about the incidence. At the same time, summaries helped in linking the stories by reflecting on the story and moving to the next topic. For instance, I tried to relate that “*since the incidence, you seem quite reserve ..."*

Moreover, I showed sympathy by using statements supporting self-efficacy. I would respond to the painful stories with sighs of grieve and tried to increase the self-confidence of the person. In order to make the interviewee feel better statements like “*You have a courageous heart that gives a sign of encouragement to the family members of yours"* were used.

All of these techniques were very useful in making the interviewee feel comfortable. His face would lighten up with positive gestures from me. Moreover, I also maintained silence when it was needed during the interview.

1. **Questioning Methods used for the Interviews**

I was very conscious about the questions I was going to ask the interviewee. Therefore, I prepared an interview guide on the day before the interview. All the questions were supposed to find out the pain that was felt by the family members who experienced losing a loved one to suicide. Moreover, it also aimed to the views and opinions of the affected people about the topic. Therefore, I preferred to use open-ended questions that will help to dig deeper into the matter. At the same time, through this question, it was easier to know the feelings and opinions of the interviewee. These open-ended questions were like "what is suicide to you?", "what change do you feel in your life after the incidence?" and "what do you want Government to do for you?" All this question helped to obtain the primary information. Telling the Interviewee about the type of questions made him calm. I also used silence by giving a chance for the interviewee to gather the ideas and opinions. I even paused for a few seconds between each question. Unlike the closed-end questions, open-ended questions gave a chance to provide general information about the problem.

1. **Skills used for Empathy in an interview**

Using empathy is one of the useful techniques to create a friendly connection with the interviewee. However, he was my old neighbor, so it was not that difficult for both of us to process the interview. It plays a significant role in understanding the situation of a person. When an interviewer willingly listens to the interviewee, then it would be easier for the interviewee to open to the interviewer. It is not necessary that every interviewee may open up to the questions of the interviewer. Therefore, the interviewer should make the interviewee feel relax in the setting. I showed empathy through my non-verbal and verbal communication. In order to make the interviewee feel better, kept an eye contact that was demonstrating my active listening and interest in the response. Respect is what that matters the most for people, and it is imperative to maintain respect during the interview. Although the interviewee knew me, empathy made the interviewee trust in me more during the meeting. The environment was informal, so both of us engaged in some conservations from daily life other than the topic.

1. **Strengths of the Interviewee**

It is easier to find out the strengths of the interviewee while conducting an interview for social work. There are some elements that measure the strengths of the interviewee. The person I chose to interview was very good at communication; even English is not his first language. Secondly, he listened to my questions with great attention and eye contact with me while I was asking a question. Thirdly, I felt in my interviewee that he is very flexible and he responded to each item with a humble and polite tone. It was also observed that the person is confident. There were not any nervousness or anxiety signs in the person. There were not any signs of hesitant words, tremors, irregular gestures, frequent eye movement, and high-pitch voice. It kept him calm and rational. However, some of the emotional moments were due to the situations based on the questions, but those were normal. There was not anything odd about the interviewee, and all of his strengths help him to answer the questions in a sophisticated manner being a responsible member of the society.

1. **Future Implication for the Social work interviews**

After conducting the interview, I realized that there some are some essential elements for conducting social work interviews that would make the interviews more efficient in the future. However, in this case, it was easier for me to do an interview with a person whom I knew already. Moreover, I was also aware of the incidence that I was interviewing about, but it would be different for the interviews going to be conducted in the future. While preparing for this interview, I came to know about many different skills that facilitate active communication, ensure empathy and can get the attention of an interviewee. The dynamic interaction between the interviewer and interviewee will be ensured through the behavior of the interviewer. Whether the interviewer is following all the formal requirements of conducting social work interviews. At the same time, using friendly and impatient ways to maintain empathy.

Furthermore, if I got a chance to conduct the same interview again, I would be more careful about the sequences of questions. I would not rapid fire instead give an opportunity to the interviewee to express himself more openly. I would learn more effective ways to make the environment more comfortable and also learn to provide feedback to the client about the problem being discussed.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this assignment has helped me to identify my interviewing skills by experiencing a social work interview experience with a young man. It assisted me in finding out many significant elements related to social work interviews. Using the topic of my interest helped me to know the opinions of a person from society. Moreover, using non-verbal and verbal communications and empathy, I was able to observe the interviewee in-depth. After conducting the interview, I realized that there some are some essential elements for conducting social work interviews that would make the interviews more efficient in the future.

**References**

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