PERCEPTIONS OF CHALLENGES IN SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION
National Survey Report 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Field Challenge project was organized in 2021 by the Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) partnership. Five Master of Social Work practicum students from the University of Toronto’s Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work were recruited to coordinate this project. The graduate students contributed to the design of the survey, obtained ethics approval, analyzed the data, and wrote this report. The Field Challenge project surveyed undergraduate and graduate students, field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors on their perceptions of the most significant challenges experienced in social work field education. We offer our thanks to everyone who participated in this study.

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SUGGESTED CITATION


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Field Challenge project was designed to capture the perceptions of students, field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors on the most significant challenges experienced in social work field education through a mixed-methods online survey. The Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) is a partnership project that aims to identify and develop sustainable models of social work field education by creating new knowledge through training and mentoring opportunities for students. The Field Challenge project was coordinated by five Master of Social Work (MSW) practicum students as a graduate field placement at the University of Toronto’s Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work who collaborated with the TFEL partnership for this project. An online survey was designed to identify the most significant challenges in social work field education. In total, 155 respondents provided their consent to participate in the survey. The survey included three open-ended questions, including a question asking respondents to identify the most significant challenge experienced in field education, and fourteen Likert Scale questions. However, there was considerable variation in the response rate for each question.

Most respondents agreed that they had experienced challenges in field education when asked about accommodations/accessibility in practicum and the issue of financial compensation. When asked to elaborate on those challenging experiences, respondents noted additional areas of concern in their field education experience, including lack of preparation, support, and training; burden of multiple responsibilities/roles; communication and supervision models; administrative challenges; impact of COVID-19 on online learning and practice; student competition for practicum placements; equity, diversity, inclusion, and access (EDIA); and forms of discrimination based on age, race, appearance, sexual orientation, and health status. The implications of the study and recommendations are provided.
INTRODUCTION

The Field Challenge project was developed to identify and assess the perceptions of challenges experienced in social work field education across Canada by undergraduate and graduate students, field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors. Given the emphasis on field education as a fundamental tenet of social work education programs and its evolving nature, an exploration of challenges in field education is needed to better understand how to strengthen and develop more sustainable models of field education, given the current crisis (Ayala et al., 2017). The purpose of this study was to explore field education challenges from the perspectives of BSW and MSW students, field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors from CASWE-ACFTS accredited social work education programs across Canada.

A team of five first-year MSW students at the University of Toronto joined the TFEL partnership as part of their practicum. Given the interactional nature of challenges in social work field education, the student research team invited the perspectives of all key actors in this survey to understand the challenges currently being experienced in the field. By identifying the challenges in field education, we hope to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about improving practices and developing sustainable models of social work field education in Canada and beyond.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Field education is defined as a “component of social work education where students learn to practice social work through delivering social work services in agency and community settings” (Bogo, 2006, p. 163). In this study, we used the term “field education” to describe social work students’ experiences of learning in a supervised work environment; it is also commonly known as field learning, field instruction, and field practicum. Field education is widely recognized as the signature pedagogy of social work education because of its proven capacity to prepare students to enter the professional field through apprenticeship, experiential learning, and guided reflections (Ayala et. al., 2017; Bogo, 2015; Wayne et al., 2010). However, contemporary research on the context of field education suggests a national crisis, involving agencies’ funding cuts, decreased commitment to education on part of the agency, increased number of social work programs, and a diverse student population (Bogo et al., 2020). Due to high and complex caseloads, many social workers are unwilling or incapable of accepting practicum students. Consequently, there is a lack of supply despite the high student demand for flexible practicum opportunities (Bogo et al., 2020). This has resulted in a scarcity of field placement opportunities for a large student body (Bogo et al., 2020). In response to these long-standing, multi-layered challenges in field education experienced in Canada by social work students, field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors, the Field Education Committee (FEC) of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) formally acknowledged how these challenges have surmounted to an unignorable crisis in social work field education (Ayala et. al., 2017). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has added a significant level of challenge throughout the field education landscape.

The Transforming Field Education Landscape Project (TFEL Project) is concerned with addressing many of the complex challenges in field education surrounding the provision of practicum experiences for students and the integration of research in field education (Transforming the Field Education Landscape [TFEL], 2020). After reviewing annotated bibliographies compiled by the TFEL project on social work field education, we were able to identify a number of challenges from the literature with respect to learning outcomes, accessibility and training, discrimination, supervision and training, and compensation in field education. The next section presents our review of the literature with respect to these challenges documented in the context of field education.

Challenges in Field Education

Social work field education programs heavily rely and depend upon social work service agencies and organizations to provide practical learning opportunities for students (Bogo & Globerman, 1995). There are significant rising challenges with the recruitment of high-quality practicums in agencies with field instructors for social work students due to staff shortages, agency pressures, demanding workloads in agencies, time constraints, and insufficient resources (Kendall, 2002; Wayne et al., 2006). Moreover, many universities have their own policies and procedures guiding their field education curriculum, which often contribute to conflicts between university priorities and those of the practicum setting and the priorities of students (Wayne et al., 2006). Similarly, university hiring practices create challenges for faculty liaisons, faculty members, and field instructors in field education. For example, by hiring faculty staff in limited-term positions or on part-time contracts with multiple roles and responsibilities in social work programs, field staff has limited power or longevity in their role to implement feedback into the field education curriculum (Wayne et al., 2006).
The lack of training for generalist practice and limited opportunities to combine theory with practice at the macro level in social work is another challenge in field education (Carey & McCardle, 2011). Consequently, this affects students’ learning outcomes in field education. Thus, social work scholars indicate that holistically radical reform approaches are required to address rising challenges and barriers in field education (Wayne et al., 2006).

Limited opportunities in social work field education, especially in healthcare settings, is another challenge experienced by social work students. Held et al. (2017) found that “…social work students did not always have the opportunity to work with other disciplines in their field placements” (p. 438). Despite the complex and interdisciplinary nature of healthcare settings, there is often a lack of adequate resources to support interdisciplinary learning and placement opportunities for social work practicum students. Consequently, this lack of opportunity for students to pursue learning in healthcare placements hinders students’ ability to develop skills that are needed to fully participate in interprofessional healthcare settings in future practice (Held et al., 2017).

The lack of adequate national data available in healthcare clinical settings poses challenges to social work field education (Bogo, 2015). Held et al. (2019) identified several challenges, namely the gap between the Master of Social Work (MSW) curriculum and practice and understanding its role in healthcare field education, advocacy in team-based work, and understanding various professional codes of ethics (Held et al., 2019). Additionally, implementing social work research curriculum in field education is recognized as a challenge (Burdick & Cox, 2001; Cameron & Este, 2008).

Changing Contexts

The COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted all societies, from how we interact with each other to the way in which we work. As a result, field education had to make a dramatic shift to virtual environments and consider virtual social services delivery and implementation. Many, if not all, academic institutions, field instructors, and students alike have had to adapt due to the evolving circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21. The necessary training that should have taken months to prepare individuals for the online platform was undertaken nearly overnight. As explained by Barsky (2019), the need for training, role-play, debriefing, and clarification of agency policies, all contribute to the comfort of students when it comes to participating in clinical practice in a virtual setting. Additionally, Craig et al. (2017) stresses the importance of effectively preparing students for field education through the use of simulation-based learning (SBL). Professional competencies and exposure to “the real-world clinical environment in a low-risk context” allow students to develop the necessary skills for clinical practice in field education (Craig et al., 2017, p. S47).

The literature demonstrates that students feel an immense amount of stress and anxiety when it comes to field education (Hemy et al., 2016). Students are often concerned with confronting personal and emotional challenges, regarding their ability to balance personal responsibilities with academic requirements, as well as learning and competence, such as dealing with clients and the placement agency. Students engage in a sort of “balancing/juggling” act when it comes to the multiple roles that they manage including caring for family or simultaneously holding employment while studying and completing field education (Hemy et al., 2016). The importance of having flexible and accessible placements, as identified by Ryan et al. (2011), means offering students the option of work-based or part-time placements which can help alleviate the challenge of managing multiple responsibilities.
Discrimination

Racism and discrimination have also been identified in the literature as challenges in field education. Bernard (2013) states that “unless there is acknowledgement of the role of white privilege, white educators and practitioners will fail to understand the subtle dynamics of racism” (p. 1673). This is not only true when discussing racism, but also all forms of discrimination. In a survey conducted by Bhuyan et al. (2017), it was determined that while the social work profession and program may endorse social justice values, graduates reported limited opportunities to learn about anti-oppressive practices and applying social justice theories in their field education. Lastly, Gair et al. (2015) reported that many Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander social work students experienced subtle and overt racism as everyday features of their field placements.

Supervision and Training

Social work students' ability to integrate the theoretical and conceptual classroom learning into practice in their field education experience is of critical importance. Bogo et al. (2017) state that despite education, practice, and knowledge in social work field education, there are several prominent challenges that have been rising for field instructors in teaching and guiding students about social work skills in practice due to structural issue[s] in the agency (Bogo et al., 2017). There are many barriers to field education supervision, including the lack of empirical research on supervision models. The evolving organizational contexts of field agencies, such as financial cuts, shortages for reimbursement coverage, and re-organization in hospital social work settings pose challenges for social work field education (Bogo & McKnight, 2006). Furthermore, research literature indicates that training to prepare students’ communication skills in field education raises some concern, as few students feel well prepared to apply these skills in their field settings (Fox & Higgins, 2018). Due to increasing challenges and barriers, Bogo et al. (2017) stress the need for a re-modeling of supervision and training for social work field education to fulfill educational requirements.

Financial Compensation

Financial compensation has long been a topic for discussion when it comes to social work field education in Canada. Nevertheless, practicum most often consists of hundreds of hours of unpaid work. Hemy et al. (2016) found that students who reported not having enough money, or those who have no choice but to remain employed while simultaneously completing their studies “experience more significant levels of psychological distress and stress than those who do not have to work” (p. 220). Furthermore, Collins et al. (2010) add that students commonly experience fatigue and emotional exhaustion as a result of feeling overwhelmed. Dealing with competing responsibilities, students may have to decide between meaningful learning and simply getting by. Ryan et al. (2011) found that due to the lack of financial compensation, students often juggle many responsibilities, including paid employment, which affects the way they can apply themself academically. Students may be satisfied with simply achieving a passing grade, rather than aspiring for higher grades, thereby adopting “a strategic or shallow approach to learning” (Hemy et al. 2016, p. 222). Similarly, if students are fortunate enough to pick their own placements, they often modify their preferences and make decisions based on practicality, rather than educational richness and preference, in order to manage their other competing responsibilities (Collins et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2011).
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to learn about the perceptions of challenges experienced by undergraduate and graduate students, field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors in Canada. As a fundamental tenet of social work education, examining the challenges experienced is crucial to better understand ways to strengthen and develop more sustainable models of field education. This study was approved by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary. In January 2021, five practicum students from the University of Toronto prepared to launch a cross-sectional survey across Canada.

The survey questions were informed by an extensive review of completed annotated bibliographies compiled by the TFEL project and consultations with TFEL members. The survey questions were designed to learn about the most significant challenges experienced in field education and to assess the perception of the respondents on the major challenges identified in the literature on field education. The survey consisted of three open-ended and fourteen closed-ended, Likert-scale questions that were organized in five sections: introductory question (one open-ended question), learning outcomes (four closed-ended questions), accessibility and training (two closed-ended questions), challenges and barriers (one open-ended and two closed-ended questions), supervision and support (four closed-ended questions), compensation (two closed-ended questions), and conclusion (one open-ended question). The questions were created in English and translated into French and reviewed for context to ensure that the survey was consistent and understandable in both languages. The survey was piloted using a sample of four students and field educators to ensure that the questions were relevant and appropriate for respondents. Both English and French surveys were launched online on SurveyMonkey in April 2021 and the links were distributed through CASWE-ACFTS accredited institutions across Canada. In addition, the survey links were posted on the TFEL website, published in the TFEL monthly newsletter, and advertised on social media (Twitter/Facebook). Due to the affiliation with the University of Toronto, the student researchers personally reached out to their peer groups, colleagues, and the Graduate Students Association of the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto, who distributed the survey through their listserv. The researchers recruited respondents through promotion and outreach to existing networks (through TFEL, personal, and professional relationships) and snowball sampling. The intended sample size was 100 respondents. In total, 155 respondents provided consent to participate in the survey, but there was considerable variation in the response rate for each question.

While analyzing the data, each response was considered separately to ensure that all responses were given equal emphasis. Multiple-choice questions were used to collect demographic information from the respondents. Likert-scale questions inquired about participants’ experiences and perceptions of commonly identified field challenges. Open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to identify themes and patterns across responses. The open-ended questions invited qualitative responses on perspectives of field challenges in three key areas: the most significant field challenge experienced, impact of discrimination, and any other field challenges that were not covered in the survey. To ensure transparency, participants were provided with the opportunity to receive emailed responses. All participants were required to provide informed consent at the beginning of the survey and could withdraw from the survey at any point.

With survey responses in both English and French, all French responses were translated into English by the research team using Google Translate and then examined by a bilingual team member to ensure that the translations were accurate. The survey results led to two separate data files – one
for English and one for French responses – which were merged into a single Excel file for analysis. The data were carefully reviewed and examined to remove surveys that were left entirely blank (for instance, if an individual consented to the survey but skipped all responses). The process of data analysis is presented in the next section.

To analyze the qualitative data, an initial codebook was created based on the first batch of completed surveys downloaded on April 14, 2021, which included 41 responses. All open-ended responses were coded by multiple coders to ensure inter-coder reliability. All five student researchers individually coded the responses to the first open-ended question (“Tell us about the most significant challenge you experience in social work field education.”), as all researchers agreed that this question most clearly and extensively responded to the objectives of the survey. Two researchers (L.K. & S.P.) coded the second open-ended question (“Have you personally experienced discrimination in field education based on your own identities? Please elaborate.”) and three researchers (A. N., R. R., & Y. S.) coded the third open-ended question (“Are there any other field challenges you have experienced that were not covered in the sections before? If so, please specify.”). After creating codes from the initial batch of responses, all five researchers collectively discussed their individual analyses of the data to develop the master codebook, which was used to code the remaining completed surveys. Any responses that were different from the codes initially developed were analyzed by all researchers, and these codes were subsequently added to the master codebook. This two-step process of data analysis was adopted due to time constraints.
RESULTS

The results of the survey are presented in this section. First, the demographic data is presented to introduce the characteristics of respondents, including their role in field education, geographic location, and gender, racial and cultural identities. The results of the Likert-scale type questions are presented using descriptive statistics, organized in five topic areas: learning outcomes, accessibility and training, challenges/barriers, supervision and support, and financial compensation. The results of the open-ended questions regarding the most significant field challenges are presented and explored using thematic analysis. This section is organized in two sub-sections: the first section lists seven significant challenges, and the second section displays the diverse forms of discrimination experienced in field education, as well as perceptions of discrimination in field education.

Demographic Data

The survey collected 155 responses from respondents in 7 provinces. It is important to note that out of the total 155 survey respondents, only 79 respondents (50.97%) responded to these demographic questions. For all demographic questions, respondents were asked to select all options that applied to their circumstances. As such, the demographic data was intended to capture the multiple roles and identities of respondents in field education, thus, the demographic data often had a higher than 100% response rate. For example, 60% of the respondents were either BSW or MSW students and 47.50% were either field instructors or external field instructors at agencies hosting practicum students. Social work faculty members, including field coordinators/directors and practicum administrative staff, were least represented (13.75%). Table 1 presents the role of survey respondents in field education.

Table 1. Respondents’ Role in Field Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents Role in Field Education</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW Student</td>
<td>26.25%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW Student</td>
<td>33.75%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Representation of Students:</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Instructor</td>
<td>38.75%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Field Supervisor</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Representation of Field Personnel:</td>
<td>47.50%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Coordinator / Director</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External MSW Supervisor</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicum Administrative Staff (school)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty-Field Liaison</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Representation of Faculty Personnel:</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of respondents (34.18%) had less than 1 year of experience in field education, and a similar number of respondents (31.65%) had 5+ years of experience in field education. Over a quarter of respondents (25.32%) had 1-2 years of experience in field education, and only 8.86% of respondents had 3-5 years of experience (see Table 2).

Table 2. Years of Experience in Field Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience in Field Education</th>
<th>Answered: n=79</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected all that applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 Year</td>
<td>34.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Years</td>
<td>25.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 Years</td>
<td>8.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ Years</td>
<td>31.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This survey represented responses from 7 out of 13 provinces and territories in Canada (see Table 3). Most respondents were located in Newfoundland and Labrador (38.75%), Alberta (26.25%), and Ontario (18.75%), which cumulatively represented 83.75% of total respondents.

Table 3. Geographic Location of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Answered: n=80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected all that applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>26.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>38.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 presents the survey respondents’ multiple identities and social positions, such as their gender identities, sexual orientations, racial/ethnic identities, and identities related to disability. The majority of respondents described themselves as female (85%), heterosexual (78.75%), and white / Caucasian (79.75%) and did not identify as a person with a disability (85%). As such, there was limited representation of diverse identities and experiences in the sample (see Table 4).
Table 4. Respondents’ Identities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Identities</th>
<th>Answered: n=80</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected all that applied.</td>
<td>Percentage of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agender</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td><strong>85.00%</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-binary / non-Conforming</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-spirit</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to self-describe</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientations</th>
<th>Answered: n=80</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected all that applied.</td>
<td>Percentage of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heterosexual</strong></td>
<td><strong>78.75%</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pansexual</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to self-describe</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Identities</th>
<th>Answered: n=79</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected all that applied.</td>
<td>Percentage of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biracial</td>
<td>1.27%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asian</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.53%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>8.86%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2.53%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Likert-Scale Questions

Learning Outcomes. The first part of the questionnaire included four questions in relation to learning outcomes in field education. Out of 155 total survey respondents, these findings represent 83 respondents (53.55%). Seventy-two respondents (46.45%) chose to skip these questions. Most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the field education setting allows for flexibility in strengthening personal learning development (see Figure 1). Respondents also agreed that field education adequately prepares students for social work practice after graduation (see Figure 2).

When asked to respond to the following statement, “I have the opportunity to integrate research activities into field education,” most respondents agreed (39.76%), some disagreed (19.28%), some strongly agreed (18.07%), and the minority of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (13.25%) or strongly disagreed (9.64%). Thus, there were mixed perceptions amongst the respondents about the opportunity to integrate research activities into field education. Similarly, when asked to respond to the following statement, “I have the opportunity to integrate curriculum and theory into field education,” most respondents agreed (57.83%), some strongly agreed (21.69%), some neither agreed nor disagreed (13.25%), and the minority of respondents disagreed (4.82%) or strongly disagreed (2.41%). These responses indicate that there is a predominant perception amongst respondents that there is opportunity to integrate curriculum and theory into field education.
Accessibility and Training. The survey examined perceptions of accessibility and training in the field education setting. Out of 155 total survey respondents, these findings represent 83 respondents (53.55%). Seventy-two respondents (46.45%) chose to skip these questions. Questions explored respondents’ perceptions of their ability to access accommodations (such as modifications made to accommodate physical, mental, and emotional needs) and training in support of their role in field education. Many respondents experienced challenges accessing accommodations in field education (see Figure 3). This response indicates that accessibility is a challenge in field education. Also of note, the majority of respondents agreed that they had access to training that made them feel prepared for their role in the field setting (see Figure 4). Given that 20.48% of respondents either disagreed (16.87%) or strongly disagreed (3.67%) to this statement, and 21.69% neither agreed nor disagreed, a notable number of respondents perceived training as a challenge to preparing for their role in field education.
Challenges and Barriers. The survey examined perceptions of discrimination as a challenge or barrier in field education. Out of 155 total survey respondents, the findings in this section represent 84 respondents (54.19%). Seventy-one respondents (45.81%) chose to skip these questions. Most respondents did not agree that they had experienced or witnessed racism in field education (see Figure 5). Similarly, the majority of respondents did not agree that they experienced challenges or barriers due to racial or cultural differences in field education (see Figure 6). However, given the insight from the demographic data that shows respondents were predominantly white, female, and heterosexual, these respondents do not experience discrimination based on race in Canadian field education. As such, further exploration of racism and discrimination as a challenge in field education is needed for future research.
Supervision and Support. The survey examined respondents’ experience of field supervision and wellness and self-care in field education. Out of 155 total survey respondents, these findings represent 83 respondents (53.55%). Seventy-two respondents (46.45%) chose to skip these questions. As seen in Figure 7, most respondents agreed (53.09%) or strongly agreed (19%) that they were satisfied with their field supervision experience. Relatedly, when asked to respond to the following statement, “I am satisfied with the communication and liaison between the practicum office and field agency,” most respondents agreed (48.19%), some neither agreed nor disagreed (16.87%), some disagreed (16.87%), and the minority of respondents strongly agreed (14.46%) or strongly disagreed (3.61%).

When asked to respond to the following statement, “Appropriate and adequate resources are offered to support my wellness in field education,” most respondents agreed (38.55%), some
disagreed (21.69%), some neither agreed nor disagree (20.48%), and the minority of respondents strongly disagreed (9.64%) or strongly agreed (9.64%). Thus, there were mixed perceptions amongst the respondents about whether appropriate and adequate resources were offered to support their wellness in field education. Similarly, as seen in Figure 8, most respondents agreed (47.56%) or strongly agreed (14.63%) that wellness and self-care were prioritized in field education. These findings indicate that supervision and support of individuals’ wellness and self-care do not pose significant challenges to individuals in field education.

Figure 7. Satisfaction with Field Supervision Experience

![I am Satisfied with my Field Supervision Experience](image)

Figure 8. Wellness and Self-Care in Field Education

![Wellness and Self-Care are Prioritized in Field Education](image)

**Compensation.** The survey examined the impact and perceptions of financial compensation in relation to individuals’ role in field education. As seen in Figure 9, most respondents strongly agreed, and many agreed that they should be financially compensated for their role in field education. Similarly, as seen in Figure 10, most respondents strongly agreed, and many agreed that financial
compensation (or lack of) impacted their experience in field education. However, out of 155 total survey respondents, these findings represent 84 respondents (54.19%). Seventy-one respondents (45.81%) chose to skip this question. Given that the majority of individuals are not compensated for their involvement in social work field education in Canada, except for some practicum students in Quebec, these findings suggest that financial compensation poses consequential challenges to individuals’ experiences in field education. As such, it is imperative that future research exploring solutions to challenges in field education address the role of financial compensation.

Figure 9. Financial Compensation for Role in Field Education

I Believe I Should Be Financially Compensated for my Role in Field Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>11.90%</td>
<td>26.19%</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10. Impact of Financial Compensation on the Field Education Experience

I Believe Financial Compensation (or lack of) Impacts the Field Education Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>17.86%</td>
<td>13.10%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Challenges Experienced in Field Education

The survey asked respondents to identify the most significant challenge experienced in field education. Open-ended questions asked respondents to identify their perceptions of the most significant challenges in field education, and to identify any additional challenges that were not covered by the Likert-scale type questions. Seven themes were identified based on the analysis of these questions, revealing some of the most significant challenges that respondents experienced in field education. The most significant challenges were:

1. Lack of preparation, support, and training
2. Burden of multiple responsibilities and roles
3. Communication and supervision challenges
4. Administrative challenges
5. COVID and online learning and practice challenges
6. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access (EDIA)
7. Competition and unfair practicum placement selection procedures

Each of these challenges are presented and discussed in the next section.

Lack of Preparation, Support, and Training. Many respondents described having encountered difficulties in field placements due to the lack of preparation, support, and training. Both students and field instructors reported insufficient training and resources provided by the school and the field agency to support their role in field education. Some student respondents reported having insufficient education and support from either the faculty or the field agency in their journey of navigating their role at the field placement. Students had trouble having “access to specific courses in a [second-degree] program” (Respondent 79, Q2) and the field agency sometimes failed to offer the necessary preparation and support to students for them to complete their work. Moreover, some students felt unsupported by their field instructors, saying that “field instructors have high expectations but do not train or guide students and are looking for students to help them in their overwhelming job as opposed to designating time to train students” (Respondent 37, Q9). The perceived lack of preparation, support, and training can lead to students feeling “like additional helping hands, but the support as a student was not present” (Respondent 8, Q2) and concerned whether they will have adequate experiences to work in the field.

Field instructors more frequently reported on students lack of preparedness and lack of readiness for placement posed a major challenge in field education. These challenges were generally noted with a comment on students not showing enough initiative to improve or to complete tasks assigned. For instance, respondents shared: “I find that sometimes the students are not prepared and do not take the initiative to help grow their knowledge” (Respondent 77, Q2). Further, another respondent stated, “I have experienced challenges when we are given a student who is not at the level expected and are sometimes defiant towards the requirements set out by the school ...” (Respondent 81, Q2). Faculty liaisons also identified preparation- and support-associated challenges. As indicated by a survey respondent “a major difficulty is understanding the practice context of the agencies where students are working in their practicum” (Respondent 2, Q2).

Burden of Multiple Responsibilities and Roles. Taking on a role in field education, whether as a field instructor or a practicum student, while having multiple commitments and responsibilities outside of field education, was noted by many respondents as the most significant challenge in the
field that often led to stress and burnout. Among those who have experienced such a challenge, many discussed struggles associated with finding enough time to complete all the tasks at home, at school, and at work. For example, according to Respondent 24 in Q2, it was challenging to find “time to provide adequate supervision and mentoring to students when also fielding one's own work.” This challenge not only negatively impacted respondents’ ability to fulfill their role in field education, but also influenced the quality of service that they provided to the client, as stated in the response.

On a related note, one respondent commented on the challenge they experienced because of a change of environment and learning process. As high achievers at school, they found it hard to get used to frequently making mistakes and learning in a field placement.

Many respondents noted the financial burden associated with having multiple responsibilities on their shoulders. Unpaid placements for many students meant “working a full-time job without pay while still needing to pay tuition” and respondents reported difficulties in making ends meet or engaging in self-care (Respondent 31, Q9). Students often had to choose between their paid job and field placement. The lack of financial compensation may contribute to creating inequities for people who wish to enter the field of social work. One respondent commented that “only privileged people can pursue social work, perhaps contributing to the under representation of some communities in social work” (Respondent 7, Q9).

Communication and Supervision. All respondents consistently commented on how the lack of communication, or ineffective communication, had negatively impacted field education. Communications included those between faculty and field instructor, between faculty and students, between external field instructor and the field agency (where the supervised students do their placements), and so on. Students expressed that they lacked a clear understanding of how things work in field education because the university did not provide enough information after enrolment. Similar results occurred when there was a disconnect between the field instructor and the agency, which made it difficult for field instructors to provide supervision.

Communication between field instructor and students was often framed by respondents as supervision challenges. Although not directly perceived as communication issues, unsatisfactory supervision could largely be addressed by more effective communication. Many student respondents felt their supervision was inadequate, even disappointing. Multiple supervisors were perceived by students to create challenges with respect to “[not] develop[ing] much of a relationship with either of the supervisors” (Respondent 97, Q2). Some students expressed disappointment towards field instructors who were perceived to provide little or bad supervision. It was believed that there should be more communication to improve the supervisory relationship between the field instructor and the student, as suggested by a respondent:

I think there needs to be more dedicated spaces for supervision. I have lived experience in the system I'm working in, but there’s nowhere to debrief about that. My field instructor doesn’t get much supervision, so as a result neither do I. (Respondent 49, Q9)

Administrative Challenges. Administrative challenges refer to issues within the faculty and/or the field agency that influenced students’ experiences in field education. Recruiting people to serve as field instructors presented a major challenge for field education coordinators/directors who work in the practicum office. Finding suitable, high quality, and reliable placements and field instructors for students was challenging. For example, a respondent shared the challenge of “finding enough
placements that fit with student interests and having them confirmed in a timely manner” (Respondent 36, Q2). Many students indicated that their placements did not align with their learning objectives or career goals. Students felt strongly about having the ability to select or choose their placements, instead of being randomly assigned by the system:

[the most significant field challenge to me is] lack of ability to choose my placement. My placement was determined by a lottery system that does not reflect my learning or future employment goals. (Respondent 18, Q2)

**COVID and Online Learning and Practice.** The survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, and the pandemic itself and the resulting virtual learning were commonly discussed by respondents as the most significant field challenge they experienced. People’s stress levels were already high during the pandemic, making it even harder for them to adapt and change the way they work and learn when there were ever-changing COVID restrictions. Working and learning from home on virtual platforms created barriers for field instructors and students to engage in hands-on direct practice, and the former found it additionally challenging to supervise and support their students online. For students, being online made them feel isolated, with very limited peer support mentally and academically. Many worried about not having the same experiences as other graduates, which was perceived to potentially exclude them from many forms of future potential employment opportunities.

**Competition or Unfair Practicum Placement Selection Procedures.** Responses to Q9 reflect the same themes that were frequently discussed by respondents in Q2, as examined above. Nonetheless, the theme that was noted as a field challenge (as asked in Q9), yet not described as the most significant challenge, is Competition or Unfair Practicum Placement Selection Procedures. The survey results show that there is a perception of competition for placements among students that could offer a better chance to secure future employment (e.g., placement at agencies with more resources):

There is a certain unspoken culture/precedent of students being offered work after their placement is complete. However, this does not happen for every student, and I do perceive slight competition between students in hopes of being considered for future work at the placement. I don't know that this is a challenge that could be eliminated (competition for limited jobs is a reality!) but perhaps making it something that was okay to talk about openly would help. (Respondent 40, Q9)

Students felt they were unfairly treated when placement sites took students based on their year of study, which was perceived to deprive less experienced students with valuable opportunities to grow and learn.

**Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access (EDIA).** Many respondents shared experiences where they had been unfairly or inequitably treated in field education. These EDIA issues mostly manifested as prejudice and discrimination (e.g., against one’s race, religion, and ethnicity) that some students would experience in their interactions with the field instructor. For those who felt oppressed in field education, some found it hard to voice their concerns, given the power imbalance within the traditional student-supervisor dyad. The fact that students depend on field instructors’ positive evaluations made addressing EDIA issues complex, as the oppressed party did not have a safe space to tell their stories. The problem of discrimination was more extensively explored in the second open-
ended question (Q5). Responses to that question identified specific forms of discrimination in field education.

**Experiences of Discrimination in Field Education**

In an attempt to explore the extent to which discrimination creates challenges for those involved in field education, Question 5 (Q5) asked if respondents personally experienced discrimination in field education based on their identities. Responses to this question revealed eight risk factors for experiencing discriminatory or stereotypical acts in field education, including age, race, physical appearance, disability, sexual orientation, religion, health, and pre-social work experience. Most of the stereotypical and discriminatory acts mentioned were perpetrated by some powerful figures at the field agency (e.g., Executive Director, Field Instructor) and acted upon the students.

**Age.** Among the 16 respondents who confirmed having been discriminated against, four had their “skills and abilities disrespected due to age” (Respondent 68). These respondents consistently described how “looking young” or “at a young age” had a negative connotation regarding their capacity.

**Race.** Three respondents noted race as the reason for their experiences of discrimination. These comments were directed to Black students or to Black clients.

**Physical Appearance.** Two respondents were verbally harassed because of their physical appearance. Perpetrators commented on respondents’ weight, body shape, and their look in general. For example, a supervisor once referred the student as “sticks”, referring to how the student’s legs looked.

**Additional Forms of Discrimination.** Respondents reported disability, sexual orientation, religion, health, and prior-social work adverse life experience as risk factors for discrimination in field education. Each of these forms was noted in one response to Q5 as a risk factor for discrimination in field education. According to these responses, students were verbally abused and discriminated against based on a visual disability; they were told that they would have to leave the program if coming out; they were judged for their religion and faith for no reason; they were stigmatized for mental illness. A respondent also described a student who did not have adequate resources secured for them because they entered the program late and had injured themselves during previous employment. It is important to consider these other forms of discrimination that influence respondents’ experiences in field education.

**Diversity and Inclusion.** Although most respondents who denied experiencing discrimination in field education answered with a “No” (59 out of 76), three respondents indicated a positive working environment in the field, where they experienced diversity and inclusion. To illustrate, Respondent 36 stated “there was a lot of diversity within the professors and field educators”.

DISCUSSION

Amongst the five challenges investigated in the Likert-scale type questions, not all presented significant challenges according to the respondents. The findings of the Likert-scale type questions suggest that respondents had positive experiences regarding three aspects of field education: learning outcomes, lack of discrimination, and supervision and support. These findings also indicated that respondents experienced challenges and barriers or had negative perceptions in two areas: accommodation and accessibility, and financial compensation. Thus, although respondents had mixed views on whether the five topics presented a challenge, all five topics were mentioned in the responses from the open-ended questions. Moreover, the responses from the open-ended questions also identified other challenges that were not asked in the Likert-scale type questions, namely administrative challenges and COVID-19 online learning and practice.

Inconsistent responses on the challenge of learning outcomes were reported in the Likert-scale type questions and the open-ended responses. In the former, most respondents agreed that they received adequate training in the field setting to prepare them to enter the social work field after graduation, whereas students’ uncertainty about whether their field education experience adequately prepares them for social work practice was framed as the most significant challenge in many qualitative responses.

Similarly, while many respondents reported that they did not experience challenges or barriers in their field setting due to the supervision model or support from the faculty or field agency, many responses to the open-ended questions identified concerns in this area as a significant challenge. For example, many students felt they received inadequate or disappointing supervision in their field setting and indicated that the communication with their field instructor was not conducive to their learning. Moreover, field instructors and field agency personnel indicated that they experienced challenges due to lack of communication and support from the social work faculty personnel. Supervision and support should not be overlooked as an area of improvement as it still poses challenges to many respondents involved in social work field education.

Discrimination based on race and cultural differences were reported as a significant challenge according to the results from the Likert-scale type responses and the open-ended responses. However, given that the demographic characteristics of the survey’s sample was predominantly white, female, and heterosexual, this finding is not representative of diverse experiences and future research is needed. Additionally, in the open-ended questions, respondents raised other issues of discrimination not addressed in the Likert-scale question on discrimination based on age, sexual orientation, physical appearance, and health status. These areas of discrimination should be further explored.

Both the Likert-scale type and open-ended responses suggested that respondents experienced challenges with accommodation, accessibility, and financial compensation. Responses from the Likert-scale type question indicated that many respondents experienced challenges accessing accommodations in their field education setting. In the open-ended responses, respondents noted difficulties in securing physical space in placements and having a safe space to voice concerns. The Likert-scale type question about accessibility allowed respondents to interpret the term ‘accessibility’ subjectively. As such, the open-ended responses indicate more specific concerns about accessibility; they refer to modifications made to accommodate physical, mental, and emotional needs.
Most respondents agreed that financial compensation impacted their field education experiences and that they should be compensated for their role in field education. Respondents also elaborated that the lack of financial compensation in field education created pressure, given the burden of increased workload and time spent on participating in field education. Many respondents described the impact of financial compensation relative to their overwhelming workload and multiple roles — as students with financial responsibilities and class work, and agency employees with less time to uphold their workload responsibilities due to their role as field instructors. As such, these findings indicate that financial compensation for students and field instructors is a significant challenge to be addressed in social work field education.
LIMITATIONS

There were several notable limitations in the study. As this study is specific to Canadian social work field education, capturing only the experiences of respondents affiliated with CASWE-ACFTS accredited universities, the findings cannot be generalized to social work certificate and diploma programs or to social work programs in other countries. However, the challenges experienced may resonate in other contexts in the social service workforce.

Secondly, the lack of diversity in the demographic makeup of respondents was quite noticeable (see Tables 1 – 4 for a comprehensive breakdown of each demographic question). The sample comprised a balance of responses from both students and field instructors, which helped to strengthen our study findings as being representative of perspectives for multiple roles within social work field education. Additionally, there was good variation in the duration of experience within social work field education; for example, while 34.18% of respondents had less than one year of field experience, 31.65% had over five years of experience.

However, there was a significant lack of geographic representation across the sample, which predominantly represented Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, and Ontario. Other provinces and territories (such as New Brunswick, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon) had no responses. Consequently, it is not possible to generalize our survey findings across the country even though this survey was intended to capture the perceived experiences and challenges of field education across Canada. It is also important to note that our demographic was primarily female, heterosexual, and white; consequently, our findings should not be generalized to be representative of all populations and identities within Canadian social work field education.

As the survey was open for a period of approximately three weeks, the researchers recognize that it is very difficult to gather a complete and comprehensive understanding of all field challenges experienced in social work field education in Canada in a short period of time. Another limitation is the high rate of skipped responses in the survey. By allowing respondents to skip and choose to answer certain questions, it is difficult to ascertain who was and was not represented in each question. Although all the questions were examined to ensure that respondents could answer every question depending on their position (as students, field educators, and administrators), it is possible that respondents skipped questions that they felt may not have been applicable to them. Consequently, the findings of each question are based solely on the respondents who chose to respond, which makes it difficult for the researchers to conclude that all respondents are equally represented in each question.

As social work students ourselves, our research team also recognized that we may have pre-existing biases in our perceptions of challenges in field education based on our own experiences. There were several responses that we strongly resonated with and related to, and while we used various research methods and practices to ensure transparency, accountability, objectivity, and inter-rater reliability, we recognize that our own positionality and proximity to these questions may have biased our understanding of the survey results and findings. As well, the diverse identities that our research team possesses also influenced our perceptions of and experiences within the social work profession. Although this diversity has been beneficial and allowed us to think more critically throughout our research process, this may also lead to limitations and biases that we must acknowledge.
RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the survey limitations, we received comprehensive and enriching responses that are beneficial for our critical examination of Canadian social work field education. The diverse range and breadth of the perceptions of challenges identified creates various opportunities and areas for future research and systemic change. This survey contributes towards having a better understanding of the current challenges in social work field education in Canada. Based on the analysis of the survey responses, we offer the following key recommendations:

1. All stakeholders in field education programs need to contribute to the development of innovative and sustainable models of field education, as the current models that are being practiced are unsustainable. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, many field education opportunities have been erased or changed to remote settings. The remote learning and practice will likely continue beyond the pandemic; therefore, more research is needed to provide students with quality online field education opportunities.

2. Financial barriers are a significant challenge for many social work students. This was confirmed in our survey by the students’ and field instructors’ responses. While field education in social work has historically been unpaid and is highly regarded for its experiential value in developing skills for future practice, many students experience significant financial hardships. Consequently, many students work and have multiple responsibilities in addition to being a student, and the unpaid nature of practicum is burdensome and challenging for students with financial challenges to balance these various roles. The discussion of financial discrimination (which may be influenced by gender) is also reflected in the broader profession as a whole and should be addressed and researched further.

3. There is a significant challenge with the lack of diversity, particularly with regards to race, not just in the sample of our survey, but in the social work profession as a whole. Social work research and practice has historically and continues to be predominantly white and female. Although some programs have seen an increase in the diversity of social work students and there have been intentional efforts to address these racial gaps, the lack of racial diversity in field education, curricula, and practice remains a pressing issue. The lack of diversity in our profession raises considerable criticisms and calls for a critical discussion of the overall profession at large. Although various perceptions of field challenges have been identified in our work, we cannot ignore that many racialized students, staff, and faculty experience additional barriers and challenges within their respective roles in social work, and there needs to be more specialized research, as well as intentional systemic and institutional changes, to address these racial gaps.

4. Identify ways to increase diverse representation of respondents in future research on the state of social work field education in Canada (geographic location, race, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.)

Since research on the current state of field education in Canada is still new, implementing these recommendations will require commitment and collaboration with multiple stakeholders, partners, CASWE-ACFTS accredited universities, Canadian social work regulatory bodies, and many others. Our survey findings provide information on the most common and significant challenges experienced by numerous stakeholders in field education. Policy and institutional change is needed to
address the challenges identified across Canada. Future research should consider more comprehensive and diverse understandings of the challenges experienced in Canadian social work field education, which we believe will allow for the development of more sustainable and innovative field education models in the future.
CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

As MSW students and as members of TFEL, the student researchers had the opportunity to develop and further our understanding of the challenges experienced in field education from the perspectives of undergraduate and graduate social work students, field education coordinators/directors, and field instructors. As students with a diverse makeup of identities and experiences, we also relate to, and have personally experienced, many of the most significant challenges identified in the study. We believe there is considerable need for research that is both intentional and inclusive of all individuals in Canadian social work field education, with a particular emphasis and focus on the need to include and empower individuals that have been traditionally underrepresented, misrepresented, marginalized, and erased in the social work profession. Additionally, we hope to see changes at the institutional level, not just in various field education organizations and sites, but also in educational institutions and curricula.

After contributing to the study and report, each of us have been able to gain a better understanding, empathy, and appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and commitment necessary to improve the field education experience for students. As a signature pedagogy in social work, it is crucial that field education improves and adapts to meet the needs and demands of the individuals involved. Furthermore, representation matters, and all identities should be represented and consulted when leading the process for change. We believe the information presented in this report should be distributed across Canada to social work students, faculty, field education administrators, and field instructors, to help advocate for innovation and sustainability in field education models. We hope both current and future generations of social workers will also support this process for change to create new opportunities and transform existing ones to improve the overall field education experience for all parties.
REFERENCES


https://doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2019.1578326


APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Informed Consent for the "National Survey on Perceptions of Challenges in Social Work Field Education in Canada”

This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board. This survey meets standards for human subject protections. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and confidential. By choosing to continue in this survey, you note your understanding of these protections. If you wish to decline participation in the survey, you may simply exit the survey. This survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. There are no anticipated risks to participating in this survey.

The purpose of this study is to learn about the challenges experienced by social work students (MSW & BSW), field educators, and administration in social work field education in Canada.

The survey includes questions about perceptions of field challenges, accessibility, cultural competence, supervision and support, and compensation in social work field education. General demographic data are also requested.

Information collected through this survey will be kept confidential except for aggregated data sets that allow analysis and communication of results. Responses will be aggregated into data sets, such as geographic region and school size; individual responses will not be identifiable or available to parties other than the TFEL researchers.

Accessibility for persons with disabilities: This electronic survey is compatible with most screen reading technology. Google's ChromeVox is one option, but other screen reading programs can be used. The online survey is being administered by SurveyMonkey©, an American software company. As such, your responses are subject to U.S. laws, including the USA Patriot Act. The risks associated with participation are minimal and similar to those associated with many e-mail programs, such as Gmail© and social utilities spaces, such as Facebook©. However, we understand that COVID-19 can be a stressful time for some, and this link serves to provide COVID-19 information and mental health support if needed: https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/covid-19-resources/

If you have any questions, please email tfelresearch@gmail.com or contact Dr. Julie Drolet at jdrolet@ucalgary.ca.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Dr. Julie Drolet
Project Director, Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL) & Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary
1. I consent to participate in the survey: (add check box below)

Yes (proceed to survey questions)
No

Section #1 - Introduction

1. Tell us about the most significant challenge you experience in social work field education.

Section #2 – Perceptions of Field Challenges

Through our own review of the literature, we have identified some key themes and challenges in field education. The following questions aim to explore respondents’ perceptions of these challenges through a Likert Scale assessment.

For each of the following statements, please choose the option that best describes your experience in field education (to what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements).

Learning Outcomes

1. My field education setting allows for flexibility in strengthening personal learning development.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

2. I have the opportunity to integrate research activities into field education.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

3. I have the opportunity to integrate curriculum and theory into field education.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

4. Field education adequately prepares students for social work practice after graduation.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree
Accessibility/Training

5. I have experienced a challenge with accessing accommodations in field education.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

6. I am provided with training that makes me feel more prepared for my role in the field setting.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

Challenges/Barriers

7. According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, discrimination “is an act or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons” such as their race, national or ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. Have you personally experienced discrimination in field education based on your own identities? If you feel comfortable, please elaborate below.

8. I have experienced racism or witnessed it in field education (e.g., personal experiences, observations, policies, etc.).
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

9. I have experienced challenges or barriers due to racial/cultural differences in field education (e.g., with team members/colleagues, service users, placement context, etc.).
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

Supervision & Support

10. Wellness and self-care are prioritized in field education.
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neither agree nor disagree
11. Appropriate and adequate resources are offered to support my wellness in field education.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

12. I am satisfied with my field supervision experience.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

13. I am satisfied with the communication and liaison between the practicum office at my institution and field agency.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

Compensation

14. I believe I should be financially compensated for my role in field education.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

15. I believe financial compensation (or lack of) impacts my field education experience.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

Section #3 - Conclusion

16. Are there any other field challenges you have experienced that were not covered in the sections above? If so, please specify below.

Demographic Information
The following section asks respondents to provide demographic information to help the researchers understand the qualities of our sample.

**Please identify your role in field education (select all that apply).**
- BSW student
- MSW student
- Field instructor
- Field coordinator / director
- External MSW supervisor
- Practicum administrative staff (school)
- Faculty-field liaison
- External field supervisor
- Other (please specify):

**How long have you been involved in field education?**
- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 5+ years

**Please select your geographic location.**
- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Manitoba
- New Brunswick
- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Nova Scotia
- Ontario
- Prince Edward Island
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan
- Northwest Territories
- Nunavut
- Yukon
- USA
- International (please specify)
- Not applicable

**Please identify your gender identity (select all that apply).**
- Agender
- Cisgender
- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary/Non-Conforming
- Transgender
• Two-Spirit
• Prefer not to say
• Prefer to self-describe:

Please identify your sexual orientation (select all that apply).
• Asexual
• Bisexual
• Gay
• Heterosexual
• Lesbian
• Pansexual
• Queer
• Prefer not to say
• Prefer to self-describe:

Please identify your racial/ethnic identity (select all that apply).
• Biracial
• Black
• East Asian
• Hispanic
• Indigenous
• Multiracial
• South Asian
• White/Caucasian
• Prefer not to say
• Prefer to self-describe:

Do you identify as a person with a disability?
• Yes
• No
• Prefer not to say
• Prefer to self-describe:

If you wish to receive a confirmation copy of this submitted survey or send a copy to someone else, please enter an e-mail address below.

WARNING: You can only enter one e-mail address; otherwise this option will not work.

* If you have completed this survey, please respond to this item and then click the "Submit" button below. You will not be able to access this survey instrument after you submit your survey. Thank you for your participation.