

What if Social Workers are Paid More?

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Abstract

Governments around the world are increasingly worried about widening income inequalities and the stagnation of low - skilled wages. Social Workers are the frontline staff providing financial as well as other social services to low income households. The effectiveness of national and agency - based programs to the poor depends heavily on the discretionary help given by such front line staff. Using Singapore as a case study, this article reflects on the question what if Social Workers are paid more. The Compensating Wage Differential model in Labor Economics explains low salaries and high turnover of Social Workers. Comparison of two small surveys with a past research and nationally reported wages shows that Social Work salaries in Singapore are low compared to other occupations and countries. Implications of the study include government intervention to increase relative wages of Social Workers and specifications for future empirical research.

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