

A Call for the International Adoption of the Casework Effectiveness Scale (CES-10)

S. Rama Gokula Krishnan

School of Social Work
St. Joseph's University
Bengaluru, India

Hepzibah Sharmila

Vathsalya Charitable Trust
Bengaluru, India.

B. Preethi Meena

School of Social Work
Kumaraguru College of Liberal Arts and Sciences,
Coimbatore, India

Alan Potter

Department of Social Work
The American College
Madurai, India

Shreenithi S.K.

Spastics Society of Karnataka
Bengaluru, India.

Running Head: Adoption of the Casework Effectiveness Scale (CES-10)

Corresponding Author: S. Rama Gokula Krishnan, School of Social Work, St. Joseph's University, Langford Road, Bengaluru- 560027, Karnataka, India
Email: ramagokulakrishnan@gmail.com

Declaration of Interest: The authors of this present article would like to declare that they are also the authors of the Casework Effectiveness Scale (CES-10), which has been scientifically developed and published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Funding Statement: There is no funding associated with the present research.

Statement on AI: The authors would like to declare that they have not used AI in generating any information presented in this article or in searching for any information.

Data Availability: The scale associated with the present research can be found at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/392798669_The_Casework_Effectiveness_Scale_CES-10. The scale is licensed under CC-BY-4 and is free to use. Date Accessed: August 26, 2025. The data used to develop the scale is also publicly available at: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.28737461.v1>

This is an Accepted Version of the Manuscript: Krishnan, S. R. G., Sharmila, H., Meena, B. P., Potter, A., & S.K., S. (2026). A call for the international adoption of the Casework Effectiveness Scale (CES-10). *International Social Work*.

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728261421038>The Author(s). DOI:
[<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728261421038>].

Abstract

Social casework is one of the primary methods of social work aimed at helping individuals. Despite its central role in social work, over the years, there have been studies that have questioned its effectiveness. In order to fill this existing gap, the Casework Effectiveness Scale has been developed. The present work highlights the need for the international adoption of this scale through translations and validation studies across various cultures and countries. It is further hoped that the scale will encourage social work practitioners to ensure that their intervention strategies are evidence-based, as encouraged by the International Federation of Social Workers.

Keywords: Casework, Casework Effectiveness Scale, CES-10, IFSW, Global Social Work, Effectiveness

Introduction

As a primary method of social work, casework is mainly concerned with helping individuals resolve their problems. Mary Richmond, who is widely considered to be the mother of social work, laid out the theoretical basis for the practice of casework (Fjeldheim et al., 2015). In her book, *Social Diagnosis*, published in 1917, she touched upon casework as a method of helping clients to overcome their problems (Richmond, 1917). However, it is in her other book titled 'What is Social Case Work?' where she delved deeper into the practical aspect of casework with the help of several examples (Richmond, 1922). Despite the voluminous contributions of Richmond and other pioneers who helped establish the social work profession, including casework, one of the challenges that continues to exist is the scientific evaluation of the effectiveness of the casework process. One of the earliest known records of an effort to objectively measure the effectiveness of the casework process is the work by Behling (1961), which was essentially a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Ohio. In this study, Behling (1961) compared two groups. One group with a high caseload and the other group with a low caseload in order to identify which group experienced greater improvement. The researcher used

the Hunt-Kogan Movement Scale to measure the improvement in the clients' condition. The study showed that casework was more effective when the caseloads handled by the caseworkers were smaller, compared to situations involving larger caseloads. Although statistically rigorous for its time, the study did not answer specific questions, such as the ideal number of sessions for clients, as well as the effectiveness of casework across various problems faced by clients. This particular study was based on casework services being rendered by government agencies, largely aimed at addressing economic difficulties. Moreover, the Hunt-Kogan Movement Scale was not tested using advanced statistical analyses such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) since it was invented much later in 1969 (Jöreskog, 1969). Nevertheless, this was a good attempt to measure casework effectiveness.

The Need for a Standardised Scale Grows

About a decade after the study by Behling (1961), Fischer (1973) carried out a form of meta-analysis wherein he included only randomised control trials to examine the effectiveness of casework across different studies. Due to the paucity of randomised control trials (partly owing to the lack of an effective tool to measure casework effectiveness), Fisher (1973) did not include the vast majority of the studies. This resulted in a relatively small number of studies with heterogeneous sample sizes, and it led Fisher (1973) to conclude that casework was not effective. In fact, in his paper, he concludes that casework is counterproductive. One of the major methodological weaknesses in his study was heterogeneity, which can have detrimental effects on the overall result (Ruppar, 2020). However, a larger concern was the paucity of a standardised tool to measure the effectiveness of casework. Five years after this study was published, another systematic analysis of existing studies related to the effectiveness of casework was carried out by Wood (1978). This was a response to existing studies, such as the one by Fisher (1973). Wood (1978) noted that the empirical evidence from the existing studies indicated that casework, though in need of certain improvements, was nevertheless helpful and could not be considered dead (Wood, 1978). During this period, there were also attempts by a few to measure satisfaction

of patients and clients in general (but not casework in particular), such as the development of the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (Larsen et al., 1979). Despite such efforts, Fisher's study has left a negative mark on casework, and his study has been widely cited and discussed through published reviews as well (Rosen, 1978). In recent times, there have been very few efforts to objectively measure the effectiveness of casework and social work in general, although a few qualitative efforts have been made (Turner et al., 2010). One recent study was carried out by Forrester et al. (2019), which identified a positive relationship between social work skills and outcomes for 127 families. However, this study did not involve the use of a specialised scale such as the CES-10 to measure the effectiveness of the intervention as such. The Casework Effectiveness Scale (CES-10) fills this serious gap. It allows social work researchers and practitioners to objectively measure the effectiveness of casework across different populations and problems.

About the Casework Effectiveness Scale (CES-10) and its Scope

In order to fill this existing gap, the authors of the present article from India have recently developed a ten-item scale called the Casework Effectiveness Scale (CES-10) (Krishnan et al., 2025). This scale has been developed using both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, apart from bootstrapping, which proves the robustness of the model (Kim and Millsap, 2014). The ten-item scale is unidimensional in nature, and each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale, with strongly agree being rated as 4 and strongly disagree being rated as 0, wherein a higher score indicates higher casework effectiveness. The maximum score is 40, and the minimum score is 0, with higher scores indicating higher levels of casework effectiveness. The classifications of the level of effectiveness are as follows: 0-12: Low, 13-25: Moderate, and 26 and above: High (Krishnan et al., 2025). It may be noted that the thresholds were derived using a criterion-referenced approach, with the total score of 40 being divided into nearly equal parts of low, moderate, and high. These thresholds were introduced to allow practitioners and researchers to quickly interpret the results without requiring the help of additional software. The scale is

pioneering for several reasons. Firstly, no such scale has been previously developed by other researchers, specifically for social casework. This gap allowed studies such as those by Fisher (1973) to conclude that casework was not only ineffective, but also counter-productive. Secondly, CES-10 can help researchers not only compare the effectiveness of different types of casework interventions, but can also enable them to conduct randomised controlled trials, which is considered the gold standard of effectiveness research (Hariton and Locascio, 2018). Eventually, it is hoped that the results from a collection of such randomised controlled trials will be used by researchers in the future to conduct meta-analyses (Akhter et al., 2019), which in turn can help establish the scientific validity and usefulness of casework as a primary method of social work. It may be noted that the process adopted to develop CES-10 has been well documented and published in another reputable peer-reviewed journal (Krishnan et al., 2025), and the scale is both valid and reliable. Both convergent and construct validity of the scale have been established, apart from two forms of reliability- internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha: 0.956) and composite reliability (Krishnan et al., 2025). Furthermore, the researchers have ensured that the scale is available for free and easily accessible to the public, enabling researchers interested in using this scale to produce more studies. Developed using data from Indian clients who had sought casework services to address various issues, such as mental health-related problems, problems related to family adjustment, behavioural issues, apart from financial issues, to name a few, the scale could be useful for caseworkers in India. One of the limitations of the scale is that it is based on a one-country sample from only those organisations that were willing to take part in the study. Therefore, there is a need for validation across other countries to ensure its international adoption. To summarise, the present scale is intended to measure the effectiveness of the casework process among clients with various socio-economic and behavioural problems who have completed all their casework sessions in an organisation that adheres to the various steps in the casework process. Respondents are encouraged to respond to

the items in the scale when the organisation carries out a follow-up, which is generally between six months to one year. It may be noted that none of the items on the scale are reverse-scored.

The Call for the International Adoption of CES-10

Currently, CES-10 is only available in English, which limits its usability to only those countries where English is widely spoken. There is, therefore, an urgent need for social work researchers around the world to undertake efforts to translate and validate the CES-10 in other languages as well. At this juncture, some of the most commonly spoken languages apart from English include Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish, Arabic, French, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, and Indonesian (Statista, 2025). Perhaps it would be best to start with these languages and then further expand to other languages as well. With globalisation, combined with the effects of political conflicts, the world is witnessing more international migration than ever before (International Organization for Migration, 2025). This means that the world is experiencing a large number of people migrating to new countries where a different language is spoken. This increases their vulnerability to exploitation and poverty, leading to the need for social workers in those host nations to conduct social work interventions, including casework, to help empower members of such communities. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the scale is translated into as many languages as possible and as early as possible as well. Furthermore, the translation and adoption of CES-10 into different languages would also help establish the scale's usability across a diverse population with different cultures. It is also hoped that the scale and its international adoption will inspire other researchers in social work to develop tools to measure the effectiveness of other methods of social work, such as group work and community organisation, which will help strengthen the scientific foundation of social work. Currently, fields such as psychology are primarily recognised due to the existence of a significant number of scales that enable researchers in that field to carry out empirical studies and accurately measure certain constructs. The adoption of a similar strategy could greatly benefit social work as well, and the CES-10 is a significant step in that direction.

Conclusion

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), as part of its Global Statement of Ethical Principles (IFSW, 2018), has stated that “Decisions should always be informed by empirical evidence; practice wisdom; and ethical, legal, and cultural considerations.” What this translates to is the call for increased research investment into the development of tools such as CES-10, which would enable social work practitioners to make better and informed decisions about the implementation of their interventions. It is empirical evidence from studies that use tools such as the CES-10 that can not only lead to better outcomes for clients but will also eventually lead to the strengthening of the reputation of social work practice around the world. The CES-10 is currently new and needs the support of social work researchers around the world. Faculty members can encourage their graduate students to use this scale as part of their dissertations, and the scale may also be included as part of the casework syllabus in universities. Finally, social work students who are placed in settings where casework is practised could be encouraged to evaluate the impact of their casework intervention through the CES-10. These efforts, when implemented internationally, will inspire the next generation of social work practitioners to be more likely to engage in evidence-based social work, which is the need of the hour.

References

- Akhter S, Pauyo T and Khan M (2019) What Is the Difference Between a Systematic Review and a Meta-analysis? In: Musahl V, Karlsson J, Hirschmann MT, et al. (eds) *Basic Methods Handbook for Clinical Orthopaedic Research: A Practical Guide and Case Based Research Approach*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 331–342. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-58254-1_37 (accessed 7 May 2025).
- Behling JH (1961) An Experimental study to measure the effectiveness of casework service. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/f85f45cf95f5f298bd47d502f11d534f/1?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar> (accessed 20 April 2025).
- Fischer J (1973) Is casework effective? a review. *Social Work* 18(1): 5–20.
- Fjeldheim S, Levin I and Engebretsen E (2015) The theoretical foundation of social case work. *Nordic Social Work Research* 5(sup1). Routledge: 42–55.
- Forrester D, Westlake D, Killian M, et al. (2019) What Is the Relationship between Worker Skills and Outcomes for Families in Child and Family Social Work? *The British Journal of Social Work* 49(8): 2148–2167.
- Hariton E and Locascio JJ (2018) Randomised controlled trials—the gold standard for effectiveness research. *BJOG: an international journal of obstetrics and gynaecology* 125(13): 1716.
- IFSW (2018) Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles – International Federation of Social Workers. Available at: <https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/> (accessed 25 August 2025).
- International Organization for Migration (2025) World Migration Report 2024 Reveals Latest Global Trends and Challenges in Human Mobility. Available at: <https://www.iom.int/news/world-migration-report-2024-reveals-latest-global-trends-and-challenges-human-mobility> (accessed 25 August 2025).

- Kim H and Millsap R (2014) Using the Bollen-Stine Bootstrapping Method for Evaluating Approximate Fit Indices. *Multivariate behavioral research* 49(6): 581–596.
- Krishnan SRG, Sharmila H, Meena BP, et al. (2025) A Scale to Measure the Effectiveness of Casework (CES-10). *Research on Social Work Practice*. SAGE Publications Inc: 10497315251351554.
- Larsen DL, Attkisson CC, Hargreaves WA, et al. (1979) Assessment of client/patient satisfaction: Development of a general scale. *Evaluation and Program Planning* 2(3): 197–207.
- Richmond M (1922) What is Social Case Work? | RSF. Available at: <https://www.russellsage.org/what-social-case-work> (accessed 18 April 2025).
- Richmond ME (1917) *Social Diagnosis*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Rosen A (1978) Book Review: The Effectiveness of Social Casework. *Social Casework* 59(2). SAGE Publications: 121–122.
- Ruppar T (2020) Meta-analysis: How to quantify and explain heterogeneity? *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing* 19(7). SAGE Publications: 646–652.
- Statista (2025) The most spoken languages worldwide 2025. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/> (accessed 25 August 2025).
- Turner S, Leisa R and Mohammed A (2010) Doing an effective job? Measuring the impact of casework. *Educational Psychology in Practice* 26(4). Routledge: 313–329.
- Wood KM (1978) Casework effectiveness: a new look at the research evidence. *Social Work* 23(6): 437–458.