

# Social Work Research and Development

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# Social Work Profession

Social work is a value-based profession. According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, “**Social workers promote social justice and social change** with and on behalf of clients” (2008, p.1). It is further stated in the Code **that this action-orientation extends to all professional activities, including research and evaluation.**

## Research

Any study to create new knowledge or to add to the existing knowledge, may it be through observation or by any other methods is called research.

## Social Work Research

Social work research is the use of the scientific method in search of knowledge, including knowledge of alternate practice and intervention techniques, which would be of direct use to the social work profession and thus enhance the practice of social work methods (Ramachandran, 1990)

Social Work Research is the systematic, critical investigation of questions in the field of social welfare with the purpose of yielding answers to the problems of social work and of extending social work knowledge and concepts (Fried Lander 1957).

# Social Work Research

Social Work Research begins with practical problems and its objectives is to produce knowledge that can be put to use in planning or carrying on social work programme (Ripple, 1990)

Social work Research is formulation and testing of social work knowledge. Application of Knowledge in to Acton - Cause - Effect - Phenomena (Occurrence, Events, Facts etc)

Social work research may be defined as systematic investigation into the problems in the field of social work. (Laldas)

Therefore, research in social work is nothing but applying research knowledge in the fields of social work (Laldas, 2000)

Social work research means conducting an investigation in accordance with the scientific method (Rubin, 2007)

Social work research is the application of research methods to solve problems of the individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities that social workers confront in the practice of social work.

# Research-informed practice and Practice-informed research

- ❖ Social work research means 'Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research' (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.).
- ❖ Research-informed practice - use the experience gained through the practice/field to inform (update/enlighten) research. - use practice/field experience to inform scientific inquiry -Field experiences is integrated with research
- ❖ Practice-informed research -uses research evidence to inform (update/enlighten) practice. Research evidence is integrated with field, client's values, preferences and circumstances

## Social workers should

Use practice/field experience to develop scientific inquiry and  
Use research evidence to develop field practice.

It means. social workers use experience gained through the practice/from the field to update research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.).

# Knowledge and Skills

Social workers should have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

**Knowledge** includes identifying, analysing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analysing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice. (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.).

**Professional Practice (skills)** involves dynamic and interactive processes of *engagement, assessment, intervention and evaluation* with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

# Professional Practice / Skills

**ENGAGEMENT: Apply engagement strategies based on circumstances and changing practice**

- i. Substantively and affectively prepares for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.
- ii. Uses empathy and other interpersonal skills appropriately.
- iii. Develops a mutually agreed-upon focus of work and desired outcomes.

**ASSESSMENT: Assess the application and/or psychometric properties of assessment instruments for use with various client systems.**

- i. Skills in collecting, organising, and interpret client data.
- ii. Assesses client strengths and limitations.
- iii. Develops mutually agreed-upon intervention goals and objectives.
- iv. Selects appropriate intervention strategies

**INTERVENTION: Collaborate with other professionals and stakeholders to develop and/or coordinate interventions.**

- i. Initiates actions to achieve organizational goals.
- ii. Implements prevention interventions that enhance client capacities.
- iii. Helps clients resolve problems.
- iv. Negotiates, mediates, and advocates on behalf of clients.
- v. Facilitates transitions and endings within professional relationships.

**EVALUATION: Design and apply methods for evaluation of interventions and/or programs**

Critically analyses, monitors and evaluates interventions.

## Aim and Objective

The aim of Social work research is not only to solve the problems of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities but also promote social justice and social change

The aim of social work research is to build the social work knowledge base in order to solve practical problems in social work practice or social policy (Rubin)

It also aims to study the individual cases/problems to arrive a conclusion at high level

Research in social work tries to establish causal connections (i.e. social problems like crime, suicide, murder, poverty, etc)



# Importance of SWR

**According to the NASW, through social work research, one can:**

- ✓ Assess the needs and resources of people in their environments
- ✓ Evaluate the effectiveness of social work services in meeting people's needs
- ✓ Demonstrate relative costs and benefits of social work services
- ✓ Advance professional education in light of changing contexts for practice
- ✓ Understand the impact of legislation and social policy on the clients and communities we serve

## Cont...

Social work research can be used **to guide** programs, practices, and ethical situations

Social work research is used **to evaluate** the effectiveness of the practice in which social workers engage and the programs they implement.

**Encyclopaedia of Social Work-** Social Work research helps **to find out ways and means to enhance social functioning** at individual, group, community and societal level

**Rubin and Babbie (2011)** (i) Research- generated facts to **guide practice**  
(ii) Research can make **to further knowledge and practice.**

However, it is seen that social workers may often **underestimate** the importance research contributions in social work practice (Rubin & Babbie, 2011).

# Social Work Research Process

Identification of Problems

Need Assessment

Selection of Social Work Research design

Pre-Intervention Measurement  
(Data Collection)

Introduce Intervention

Assess the Intervention Effects  
(Data Collection)



## Suggested Research Design

Posttest without Intervention

Posttest after intervention

Pretest and Posttest

Multiple Pretest and Posttest

Quasi Experimental

Experimental

Single-Subject Designs

# Functions/utility of Social Work Research

## Curative

## Preventive

## Promotive

**CURATIVE:** This would mean identification of problems giving rise to social work intervention, conditions under which these problems arise, the point of time in the growth of the problem at which it can be identified easily and tackled, alternate avenues available to tackle and dissolve the problem, variations in intervention details depending on stages at which the identification take place, etc

**PREVENTIVE:** Ascertaining the conditions under which the predisposition factors can be prevented from occurring or in channelising them in to acceptable behavioural and personality traits for the enhancement of social well being.

**PROMOTIVE:** Enhancing the social functioning of individuals, group and communities in order to raise the well being of each individual.

# Scope of Social Work Research

1. Scope for application of social work methods and techniques in research
2. Helpful to finding out the root causes of the problem (diagnosis)
3. To evolve proper intervention strategies to solve the problem of the client, group or community
4. Knowledge of research methods also can also help to conduct the research among the clients, groups and community
5. Benefit for both the worker and the client to achieve the goal
6. Helpful for evaluation of the various methods and techniques adopted in social work practice
7. Research findings will provide new insights to the practitioner
8. Providing a foundation of further research
9. Provide more immediate and useful information.

# The Future of Research Education in Social Work

As noted above, a number of problems remain in the teaching of research at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels.

Establishment of a continuum of specific objectives for research curricula at the, master's, and doctoral levels that will lead to clearer specifications of research knowledge and skills that should be taught in all schools of social work (Adam et al., 2004; Fraser & Lewis, 2003; Henley & Dunlap, 1995/1996).

Recent recommendations for improving the research education in social work have included emphasizing the practicality of social-work research to students, providing encouragement and support for student publications, increasing the integration of evidence-based practice in both the classroom and the field setting, improving master's-level research preparation for doctoral study via summer research workshops and research fellowships for master's-level students, (Anastas, 2012; Cameron & Este, 2008; Davis et al., 2013; Elliott et al., 2013; Videka, Blackburn, & Moran, 2008).

Recommendations have been made that traditional master's-level research courses should be replaced by courses that strengthen student competencies as evidence-based practitioners (Howard & Allen-Meares, 2006; Jensen, 2006; Shlonsky & Stern, 2006).

# Barriers in Practicing Social Work Research

## Internal Barriers

1. Lack of knowledge
2. Lack of instruments and research environment,
3. Lack of vigour,
4. Lack of interaction between subjects,
5. Politics
6. Corruption in state agencies etc.

## External Barriers

1. Lack of recognition,
2. Lack of universal training and assessment,
3. Lack of knowledge networks,
4. Politicized social work education and
5. Discrimination by state and national agencies etc.



**THANK YOU**