



---

## PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH - STRATEGY FOR SOLUTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

---

**Dr. Deepak Manohar Bhosale**

*Associate Professor,  
Department of Social Work,  
CSIBER College, Kolhapur.*

---

### INTRODUCTION:

Social work research in the application of research methods to the production of knowledge that social workers need to solve problems they confront in the practice of social work. The knowledge is useful in appraising the effectiveness of methods and techniques of social work. It provides information that can be taken into consideration by social workers prior to making decisions, that affect their clients, programmes or agencies such as use of alternative intervention techniques or change or modification of programme/ client objectives and so forth.

Following are some of the examples where social work research methods are used: a social case worker is interested in obtaining information about the actual or potential effectiveness of the individuals, couples or families; a group worker wishes to assess the extent to which the technique of role play is more or less effective than group discussion in increasing knowledge drug abuse among school going children; a community organizer wants to know the views of the community before he takes a decision to change the programme objectives; a director of special school for mentally retarded children wants to know whether group therapy is as effective as individual therapy in increasing adaptability of mentally retarded children ; and an administrator is concerned about effectiveness of implementation of new programme launched. These are some of the situations, which call for application of social work research methods and techniques.

Social work research offers an opportunity for all social workers to make differences in their practice. There is no doubt about the fact that social worker will be more effective practitioner guided by the findings of social work research. Social work research deals with those methods and issues, which are useful in evaluating social work programmes and practices. The unit of analysis of social work research could be individuals, groups, families or programme of the agency. Social Work research typically focuses on assessment of practitioners work with individuals, groups, families, communities or appraisal of agencies or programmes that involve the continued efforts of practitioners with many clients. As such, the research design, data collection and analytic strategies in social work research vary as function of unit of analysis and programme of agencies of social work practitioner.

Social work research is the use of the scientific method in the 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. Social work research helps to find ways and means to enhance social functioning at the individual, group, community and societal levels.

Social work research may be defined as systematic investigation into the problems in the field of social work. The study of concepts, principles, theories underlying social work methods and skills are major concern of social work research. It involves the study of the relationship of social workers with their clients- individuals, groups or communities- on various levels of interaction or therapy as well as their natural relationships and functioning within the organization structure of social agencies.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH:**

Social work is a practice profession. As such, the major objective of social work research is to search for answers to questions raised regarding interventions or treatment effectiveness in social work practice. In other words, social work research attempts to provide knowledge about the interventions or treatments that really help or hinder the attainment of social work goals. In

*Dr. Deepak Manohar Bhosale.*

addition, it also helps in searching for answers to problems or difficulties faced by social work practitioners in the practice of their profession, ultimately, it helps in searching for answers to problems or difficulties faced by social work practitioners in the practice of their profession, and ultimately, it helps building knowledge base for social work theory and practice.

#### **NATURE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH:**

Social work research primarily deals with problems, faced by professional social Workers, social work agencies and community, in their concern with social work functions. In other words, in social work research, the problems to be investigated are always found in the course of doing social work or planning to do it.

It is very obvious that in social work research the study of a problem is done from the point of view of social work and that of professional social work. The designing of research problems, data collection and their interpretation will have to be attempted in a manner as would be useful to professional social workers, which would add new knowledge to the social work theory and practice and improve the efficiency of professional social workers

Social Work Research mostly draws its inferences through inductive reasoning. In so Social Work Research, inductive reasoning carries us from observation to theory through intervention/assessment. Practitioners, for example, may observe that delinquents tend to come from families wit low socio-economic status. Based on assumption that the parent-child bond is weaker in low socio- economic families and that such parents therefore, have less control over their children, the practitioners may inductively conclude that a weak parent - child bond leads to delinquency. Social Work practice is concerned with the micro- level design of study and techniques. Social Work Research lays special emphasis is also understood as evaluative research. Evaluation of agencies and their projects, efficacy and programmes are some of the specialized areas of social work research.

**SCOPE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH:**

Social Work profession has a scientific base, which consists of a special body of knowledge-tested knowledge, hypothetical knowledge and assumptive knowledge. Assumptive knowledge requires transformation into hypothetical knowledge, which in turn, needs transformation into tested knowledge. Social work Research has scientific role in transforming the hypothetical and assumptive knowledge to tested knowledge. Social Work Research may be conducted to know the efficacy of different methods of social work as to search for alternate interventions and treatments.

Identification of social work needs and resources and evaluation of programmes and services of social work agencies are some of the areas in which Social Work Research is undertaken. Thus, Social Work Research embraces the entire gamut of social work profession- concepts, theories, methods, programmes, services and the problems faced by Social Workers in their practice.

**SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH PROCESS:**

It must be borne in mind that the process of social work research is not that of social research. In fact, there are many similarities between this process and the traditional research process. The process, however, has some additional steps designed to suit the objectives of Social Work Research. By following the process Social Work Researchers are in a position to know precisely what intervention was applied and how much effect was produced. The process also links research and practice.

Social Work Research starts with problem identification and setting up of goals. This is followed by the process of assessment of the clients problems .during these initial stages, the researcher strives to obtain a clear and specific understanding of the problem, using assessment tools such as interviewing.

After the problem is identified and is assessed, the next step is to set goals to be achieved. The goals are required to be specific, precisely defined and measurable in some way. The third step in the process is to have a pre-intervention measurement as a basis to compare the client's condition after the intervention is introduced.

*Dr. Deepak Manohar Bhosale.*

The next stage in the research process is to introduce intervention. It is important to note a single, coherent intervention be applied during any intervention phase. In the last stage, we assess the effects of intervention by comparing the two measurements, i.e. pre-intervention measurement and measurement during intervention.

### **ROLE OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE:**

Although the Research is different in many respects from practice, there are significant similarities between the two, which integrated, can help practitioners to have better understanding of the problems and provide services accordingly. Research begins with problem formulation. Having formulated a researchable problem, the researcher develops a research design. The next stage is data collection, and the final step is to draw conclusions by analyzing the data. The practitioner first assesses the problems to decide which behaviour systems are possible. Then he develops a strategy for intervention that will be effective in alleviating the problem specified in the assessment stage, at last the practitioner evaluates the effectiveness of the intervention strategies that are implemented. The practice courses in social work education draw more from practice wisdom than from research, while research courses are not necessarily practice-oriented. Practice and research are treated independently at the training level, and the approach; therefore, continue in the post training careers of social workers. The gulf between researchers and practitioners over the years has widened. Researchers frequently complain that practitioners ignore their pertinent and important findings. Practitioners consider much of the university stimulated research irrelevant and express their inability to use it. The practitioners, due to their pre-occupation with service delivery system, are least concerned about research. Both the contentions underscore the need to solidify the relationship between schools and agencies by integrating research and practice. Thus, as research and practice have existed as parallel to each other, most of the time research is not practice-oriented and as such the findings do not affect social work knowledge and practice.

*Dr. Deepak Manohar Bhosale.*

**REFERENCES:**

1. Herlekar, A. (1964). Research in Social Work, The JSW, Bombay.
2. Jacob. K.K. (1965). Methods and Fields of Social Work in India, Asia Publication, Bombay.
3. Polansky, N. A. (1975). [ed.] Social Work Research, The University of Chicago Press. Chicago.
4. Rubin. Allen & Babbie E. (1989). Research Methodology for Social Work, Belmont. Wadsworth, California.
5. Ramachandran. P. (1968). "Social Work Research and Statistics' In History & Philosophy of Social Work in India, Allied Publishers, Bombay.
6. Ramchandran, P. (1987) "Research In Social Work' in A.B. Bose (ed.) Encyclopaedia of Social Work in India, Govt. of India, New Delhi.