

## Mental Health And Social Work Interven5ons

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### Abstract

This research explores the Intersec1on of mental health challenges and social work interven1ons, examining the pivotal role of social workers In addressing prevalent mental health issues. The paper provides an overview of various mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and substance abuse, highligh1ng the complex and mul1faceted nature of these condi1ons. Drawing upon theore1cal frameworks such as ecological systems theory and the strengths-based approach, the study explores the theore1cal underpinnings that inform social work interven1ons in mental health. Addi1onally, the research delves into the importance of accurate assessment and diagnosis in social work prac1ce, emphasizing its implica1ons for tailored interven1on plans and effec1ve treatment strategies. Furthermore, the paper examines evidence-based interven1ons for mental health disorders, offering insights into empirical research on effec1ve social work prac1ces. It also discusses the integra1on of mental health services within primary care seDngs and the role of social workers in collabora1ve care models.

**Keywords:** Mental health, social work Interven1ons, theore1cal frameworks, assessment and diagnosis, evidence-based interven1ons.

### **Introduction:**

Mental health challenges encompass a broad spectrum of conditions that impact the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral well-being of individuals. These challenges are pervasive across the globe, affecting people of all ages, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultural identities. Prevalent mental health issues include mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders like generalized anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia, substance use disorders, eating disorders, and neurodevelopmental disorders like autism spectrum disorder. These conditions not only cause significant distress and impairment in functioning but also carry a substantial burden on individuals, families, communities, and societies as a whole. Mental health challenges can manifest in various ways, ranging from mild symptoms to severe and disabling conditions that disrupt daily life, relationships, work, and education. Social determinants such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, discrimination, trauma, and access to healthcare services significantly influence mental health outcomes, exacerbating the prevalence and impact of mental health challenges. In addressing these complex issues, social work interventions play a crucial role in promoting mental health, preventing crises, and facilitating recovery. Social workers employ a range of evidence-based strategies and approaches tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of clients, working collaboratively with individuals, families, communities, and interdisciplinary teams to address the multifaceted nature of mental health challenges. Through psychoeducation, counseling, advocacy, case management, and community outreach, social workers strive to enhance resilience, empower clients, and promote social justice to improve overall well-being and quality of life.(6)

### **Theoretical Framework:**

Social work interventions for mental health are grounded in various theoretical perspectives that provide a conceptual framework for understanding human behavior, addressing systemic influences, and guiding intervention strategies. One influential theoretical approach is ecological systems theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, which emphasizes the dynamic interplay between individuals and their social environments. According to this perspective, individuals are nested within multiple systems, including the microsystem (e.g., family, school), mesosystem (e.g., interactions between family and school), exosystem (e.g., community resources), and macrosystem (e.g., cultural norms, societal values). Mental

health challenges arise from the interactions between individuals and these systems, with environmental factors exerting significant influence on individual well-being. Social workers utilizing ecological systems theory adopt a holistic and systemic approach to intervention, addressing not only individual symptoms but also underlying environmental factors contributing to mental health issues.(17) Another theoretical perspective widely employed in social work practice is the strengths-based approach, which focuses on identifying and building upon individuals' strengths, resources, and capacities for growth and resilience. Rather than pathologizing clients and focusing solely on deficits, social workers using a strengths-based perspective emphasize empowerment, collaboration, and client self-determination. By recognizing and amplifying clients' inherent strengths and abilities, social workers facilitate positive change, enhance coping skills, and promote self-efficacy, thereby fostering holistic and client-centered interventions in mental health practice. These theoretical frameworks underscore the importance of considering both individual and environmental factors in understanding and addressing mental health challenges, guiding social workers in their efforts to promote well-being, empower clients, and create positive systemic change.(16)

**The importance of accurate assessment and diagnosis in social work practice and its implications for mental health interventions:**

Accurate assessment and diagnosis are fundamental components of social work practice in mental health, serving as the foundation for developing effective intervention plans and facilitating clients' access to appropriate services and resources. Social workers engage in comprehensive assessment processes to gather information about clients' presenting problems, strengths, needs, and environmental contexts. This process involves conducting interviews, administering standardized assessment tools, reviewing medical records, and collaborating with other professionals, such as psychologists and psychiatrists. Through thorough assessment, social workers aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of clients' unique circumstances, including their social, economic, cultural, and interpersonal factors that may contribute to their mental health challenges. Moreover, social workers must be sensitive to cultural differences, language barriers, and other cultural considerations that may influence clients' experiences and help-seeking behaviors.(14,15)

accurate diagnosis is essential for determining appropriate interventions and treatment modalities, as well as accessing necessary resources such as psychiatric care, medication, and community support services. However, social workers must approach the diagnostic process cautiously, recognizing the limitations of diagnostic labels and the potential for stigma and discrimination. Social workers must adhere to ethical principles of confidentiality, informed consent, and client autonomy throughout the assessment and diagnosis process, ensuring that clients' rights and dignity are respected. Effective assessment and diagnosis are essential components of ethical and culturally competent social work practice in mental health, facilitating the delivery of personalized and effective interventions to promote clients' well-being and recovery.<sup>(8)</sup> Empirical research on effective social work interventions for various mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, etc.

Evidence-based interventions in social work for mental health disorders are grounded in rigorous empirical research that demonstrates their effectiveness in improving outcomes for individuals experiencing various mental health challenges. Depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and other mental health conditions are complex and multifaceted, requiring comprehensive and targeted interventions tailored to the unique needs of each client. Research in social work has identified a range of evidence-based approaches for these disorders, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), mindfulness-based interventions, psychosocial rehabilitation, and family therapy. For example, CBT has been extensively studied and shown to be effective in treating depression and anxiety by helping individuals identify and challenge negative thought patterns and develop coping strategies to manage symptoms. Similarly, DBT has demonstrated effectiveness in treating borderline personality disorder and other conditions characterized by emotional dysregulation, by teaching individuals skills for emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness.<sup>(7,8)</sup> Psychosocial rehabilitation programs focus on enhancing individuals' functional abilities, social skills, and community integration to support recovery from severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia.

Family therapy interventions aim to improve communication, resolve conflicts, and strengthen family support networks to promote the well-being of both individuals with mental illness

and their families. By incorporating these evidence-based interventions into their practice, social workers can provide high-quality, culturally responsive care that addresses the complex needs of clients and facilitates positive outcomes.(16) ongoing research and evaluation are essential to continuously refine and improve interventions based on the latest evidence and best practices, ensuring that social work remains at the forefront of promoting mental health and well-being.(13)

: Social Work in Integrated Healthcare Settings: Integrated healthcare settings represent a promising approach to addressing the complex interplay between physical health, mental health, and social factors that influence individuals' overall well-being. In integrated care models, mental health services are seamlessly integrated within primary care settings, allowing for holistic and coordinated care that addresses the interconnected needs of patients. Social workers play a vital role in these collaborative care models, serving as key members of interdisciplinary teams alongside physicians, psychologists, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.(13)

Their unique skills and expertise in addressing psychosocial factors, navigating complex systems, and advocating for clients' needs make them invaluable contributors to integrated healthcare teams.(7,9) Within these settings, social workers engage in a variety of roles and activities, including conducting biopsychosocial assessments, providing brief interventions, facilitating referrals to specialized mental health services, coordinating care transitions, and advocating for resources and support services to address patients' social determinants of health. By working collaboratively with other professionals, social workers help ensure that patients receive comprehensive and coordinated care that addresses their physical, mental, and social needs. Integrated care models have been shown to improve access to mental health services, reduce stigma, enhance treatment adherence, and improve health outcomes for individuals with mental health conditions.(1,4) As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve, social workers will continue to play a critical role in advancing integrated care initiatives that promote holistic and person-centered approaches to health and well-being.(3) the importance of cultural competence in social work practice and its relevance to mental health interventions with diverse populations.

Cultural competence is an essential component of effective social work practice, particularly in the context of mental health interventions with diverse populations. Cultural competence

refers to the ability of social workers to understand, respect, and effectively work with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, including differences in race, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status.(12,14) Culturally competent social work practice recognizes the impact of cultural factors on individuals' experiences of mental health and illness, as well as their helpseeking behaviors, treatment preferences, and access to resources. Moreover, cultural competence requires ongoing self-awareness, reflection, and humility on the part of social workers to recognize their own biases, assumptions, and privilege, and how these may influence their interactions with clients. In mental health interventions, cultural competence involves adapting evidence-based practices to be culturally responsive and relevant to the unique cultural contexts and values of clients.(11)

This may include incorporating cultural rituals, beliefs, and healing practices into treatment approaches, as well as collaborating with community leaders, spiritual advisors, and traditional healers to provide holistic and culturally appropriate care. Cultural competence extends beyond individual interactions to systemic and organizational levels, advocating for policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within social work and mental health systems. By embracing cultural competence, social workers can enhance the effectiveness of their interventions, build trust and rapport with clients, and promote social justice by addressing disparities in access to mental health services and disparities in mental health outcomes among diverse populations.(6,7) the principles of trauma-informed care and their application in social work practice for individuals with a history of trauma and mental health challenges.

Trauma-informed care is a framework that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma on individuals' lives and emphasizes the importance of understanding, acknowledging, and responding to the effects of trauma in all aspects of service delivery. This approach is especially relevant in social work practice for individuals with a history of trauma and mental health challenges, as trauma can have profound and long-lasting effects on physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing. Trauma-informed care is guided by several core principles, including safety, trustworthiness, empowerment, collaboration, and cultural competence.(7)

These principles emphasize creating environments that are safe, predictable, and empowering, where clients feel heard, respected, and supported in their journey towards healing and recovery. In social work practice, trauma-informed care involves adopting a strengths-based approach that recognizes survivors' resilience and coping mechanisms, while also acknowledging the impact of trauma on their lives. It prioritizes building trust and rapport with clients, providing choices and autonomy in decision-making, and fostering a sense of agency and empowerment. Trauma-informed care involves understanding how trauma may manifest in behaviors, emotions, and relationships, and tailoring interventions accordingly. This may include providing trauma-specific therapies such as cognitive processing therapy (CPT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), or trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (TF-CBT), as well as integrating trauma-informed practices into everyday interactions and service delivery. By adopting a trauma-informed approach, social workers can create safe and supportive environments that promote healing, resilience, and recovery for individuals with a history of trauma and mental health challenges.(10)

**Strategies for preventing mental health problems and promoting early intervention through social work programs and services:**

Prevention and early intervention are critical components of social work practice aimed at reducing the incidence and severity of mental health problems and promoting overall wellbeing. These strategies recognize the importance of addressing risk factors and promoting protective factors across the lifespan to prevent the onset of mental health issues or mitigate their impact. Social workers engage in a variety of prevention and early intervention efforts, including psychoeducation, skillbuilding programs, community outreach, policy advocacy, and screening and assessment initiatives.(7) These efforts are often targeted towards at-risk populations, such as children and youth, individuals experiencing poverty or homelessness, survivors of trauma, and older adults facing social isolation or caregiving challenges. Prevention strategies may include promoting healthy coping skills, resilience-building activities, and social support networks to enhance individuals' ability to navigate life stressors and challenges. Early intervention efforts focus on identifying and addressing mental health concerns in their early stages, before they escalate into more severe and debilitating conditions.(8) This may involve providing brief interventions, connecting individuals with

appropriate resources and support services, and implementing evidence-based programs to address specific risk factors or populations. Moreover, social workers play a crucial role in advocating for systemic changes and policies that promote mental health and well-being at the community and societal levels, such as increasing access to affordable mental health services, reducing stigma and discrimination, and addressing social determinants of health. By investing in prevention and early intervention efforts, social workers contribute to building resilient communities, reducing disparities in mental health outcomes, and promoting the overall health and well-being of individuals and populations.(14)

### **Role of Social Workers in Crisis Intervention:**

Social workers play a central role in crisis intervention and emergency mental health services, providing immediate support and assistance to individuals experiencing acute psychological distress or crisis situations. Crisis intervention involves a range of activities aimed at stabilizing individuals in crisis, assessing their safety and well-being, and connecting them with appropriate resources and support services to address their immediate needs. Social workers are trained to conduct crisis assessments, de-escalate volatile situations, and implement crisis management strategies to ensure the safety of clients and others involved. They also collaborate closely with other professionals, such as law enforcement, emergency medical personnel, and mental health professionals, to coordinate response efforts and facilitate access to timely and appropriate care. In crisis situations involving suicidal ideation or self-harm, social workers are trained to conduct suicide risk assessments, develop safety plans, and provide crisis counseling and support to individuals in distress. (19)social workers play a crucial role in suicide prevention efforts, engaging in community outreach, education, and advocacy to raise awareness about risk factors, warning signs, and available resources for individuals at risk of suicide. Crisis intervention also extends beyond individual encounters to include postcrisis support and follow-up services, such as referrals to ongoing mental health treatment, support groups, and crisis hotlines. By providing compassionate and responsive care in times of crisis, social workers help individuals navigate through difficult circumstances, access the support they need, and ultimately, work towards recovery and resilience.(15)

### **Ethical dilemmas and legal issues related to mental health practice in social work:**



Ethical and legal considerations are paramount in mental health practice within social work, as practitioners navigate complex situations that require adherence to professional standards and legal mandates while upholding clients' rights and dignity. One key ethical dilemma revolves around confidentiality, as social workers are ethically obligated to protect clients' privacy and confidentiality, except in situations where disclosure is required by law or necessary to prevent harm.(7) Balancing the need for confidentiality with the duty to protect clients and others from harm presents a challenging ethical dilemma, particularly in cases involving threats of harm to self or others or disclosures of abuse or neglect. Social workers must carefully assess each situation, considering the potential risks and benefits of disclosure, and involve clients in decision-making whenever possible. Informed consent is another critical ethical consideration, requiring social workers to ensure that clients have a clear understanding of the nature, purpose, risks, and benefits of proposed interventions or services before providing consent.(17) This involves providing information in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner, obtaining voluntary consent from clients or their legal guardians, and addressing any questions or concerns they may have. Additionally, social workers must navigate legal mandates such as involuntary commitment laws, which allow for the involuntary hospitalization of individuals deemed to be a danger to themselves or others due to mental illness. These laws raise ethical concerns regarding clients' rights to autonomy and self-determination, as well as the potential for coercion and abuse. Social workers must advocate for the least restrictive interventions that respect clients' rights and preferences while ensuring their safety and well-being. Overall, ethical and legal considerations are integral to ethical social work practice in mental health, guiding practitioners in upholding the profession's core values of integrity, competence, and respect for clients' rights and dignity.(20) **challenges facing mental health social work practice and propose future directions for research, policy, and practice improvement:**

Mental health social work practice faces a myriad of challenges that impact the delivery of quality care and the well-being of clients, as well as opportunities for innovation and improvement. One challenge is the persistent stigma surrounding mental illness, which can impede help-seeking behaviors, delay diagnosis and treatment, and contribute to social isolation and discrimination. Addressing stigma requires concerted efforts at multiple levels, including education,

advocacy, and policy changes to promote awareness, acceptance, and inclusivity. (7) Disparities in access to mental health services and resources pose significant challenges, particularly for marginalized and underserved populations who face barriers such as poverty, discrimination, lack of insurance, and geographic isolation. (15) Social workers must advocate for equitable access to mental health care and address social determinants of health to reduce disparities and promote health equity.

The fragmentation of mental health services and the lack of coordination and collaboration among providers can hinder continuity of care and exacerbate gaps in service delivery. Social workers play a crucial role in promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, integrated care models, and care coordination to ensure that clients receive comprehensive and seamless care across settings. Looking ahead, future directions for mental health social work practice include advancing evidence-based interventions, integrating technology and telehealth into service delivery, promoting cultural competence and diversity, and addressing emerging issues such as the mental health impact of climate change, globalization, and technological advancements. By addressing these challenges and embracing innovative approaches, mental health social work practice can continue to evolve and adapt to meet the evolving needs of individuals, families, and communities. (7)

**Conclusion:** This research sheds light on the critical intersection of mental health challenges and social work interventions, underscoring the indispensable role of social workers in addressing the complex needs of individuals, families, and communities affected by mental illness. Through a comprehensive exploration of theoretical frameworks, assessment practices, evidence-based interventions, and ethical considerations, the study highlights the multifaceted nature of social work practice in mental health. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of integrating mental health services within primary care settings, promoting cultural competence and diversity, and addressing ethical and legal dilemmas to ensure the delivery of ethical, effective, and culturally responsive care. However, despite significant advancements in mental health social work practice, challenges persist, including stigma, disparities in access to care, and fragmentation of services. Looking ahead, it is imperative for social workers to continue advocating for policy changes, advancing research, and embracing innovative approaches to

meet the evolving needs of individuals and communities. By addressing these challenges and embracing future directions for practice improvement, mental health social work can continue to play a pivotal role in promoting resilience, recovery, and well-being for all. (17) **References:**

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