**Introduction**

Social workers traditionally use a series of steps or processes to help clients resolve their problems. These steps include building a relationship among the worker, the client, and the client’s environment (engagement), collecting information about the client (assessment), making sense out of the information (diagnosis), doing of the work that will enable the client and the practitioner to accomplish the goal decided upon in the assessment (intervention) and determining whether the process has been helpful (evaluation). However, the social work process rarely follows a clear linear route and is more often a fluid circular process whereby workers may move from assessment through to intervention and evaluation and back to assessment again.

A key element of the social work process is the selection of intervention methods, informed by psychological and sociological theories, and social work assessments. Through skills of observation and assessment, social workers are able to analyse and explain situations, develop hypotheses about potential outcomes, and select intervention methods to achieve desired outcomes.

Social work interventions are combinations of skills applied by practitioners, their clients, and collateral participants (e.g., family members etc.) and implemented for the purpose of reducing symptoms, resolving problems, enhancing adaptive capabilities, and improving the overall psychosocial well-being of the client. Interventions include skills and combinations of skills that help clients achieve important intervention goals (e.g., lower depression, improve school performance etc.).

**Meaning of Intervention in Social Work**

Intervention is rarely defined. It comes from the Latin word ‘intervenire’, meaning “to come between, interrupt”. Interventions are at the heart of everyday social interactions and make ‘inevitably make up a substantial majority of human behaviour and are made by those who desire and intend to influence some part of the world and the beings within it’ (Kennard et al. 1993). Social work interventions are purposeful actions we undertake as workers which are based on knowledge and understanding acquired, skills learnt and values adopted. Therefore, interventions are knowledge, skills, understanding and values in action. Intervention may focus on individuals, families, communities, or groups and be in different forms depending on their purpose and whether directive or non-directive.

Social work interventions are selected on the basis of the issues, needs and strengths of the client. These are determined as a result of a psychosocial assessment conducted by the social worker. In initial meetings with the client, the social worker will obtain extensive information from the client in order to develop a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the client. The assessment will be used to develop a treatment plan with the client, in which interventions, action steps and desired outcomes are specified. A time-frame will be established for each outcome, with a means to measure the client's progress towards achieving his/her goals on a regular basis identified.

**Levels of Social Work Intervention**

Social work is often divided into three broad practice categories: macro, mezzo and micro. Macro level social work is interventions provided on a large scale that affect entire communities and systems of care. Mezzo social work happens on an intermediate scale, involving neighbourhoods, institutions or other smaller groups. Micro social work is the most common practice, and happens directly with an individual client or family. These three levels of social work practice at times overlap and always influence each other, so it is important to understand the distinctions between these social work approaches.

## Macro Social Work

The practice of macro social work is the effort to help clients by intervening in large systems. Examples include lobbying to change a health care law, organizing a state-wide activist group or advocating for large-scale social policy change. Macro practice is one of the key distinctions between social work and other helping professions, such as psychiatric therapy. Macro social work generally addresses issues experienced in mezzo or micro social work practice, as well as social work research. Macro practice empowers clients by involving them in systemic change.

## Mezzo Social Work

Mezzo social work practice deals with small-to-medium-sized groups, such as neighbourhoods, schools or other local organizations. Examples of mezzo social work include community organizing, management of a social work organization or focus on institutional or cultural change rather than individual clients. Social workers engaged in mezzo practice are often also engaged in micro and/or macro social work. This ensures the needs and challenges of individual clients are understood and addressed in tandem with larger social issues.

## Micro Social Work

Micro practice is the most common kind of social work, and is how most people imagine social workers providing services. In micro social work, the social worker engages with individuals or families to solve problems. Common examples include helping individuals to find appropriate housing, health care and social services. Family therapy and individual counselling would also fall under the auspices of micro practice. Many social workers engage in micro and mezzo practice simultaneously. Even the most ambitious macro-level interventions have their roots in the conversations between a single social worker and a single client.

Social workers must not only be skilled in judging what methods of interventions to employ within the range of their own competence, but they must be able to judge the circumstances under which these methods are either insufficient or irrelevant to the objectives they wish to achieve. This is particularly true in circumstances where resources are inadequate.

**Purpose of Social Work Intervention**

The purpose of the intervention is diverse and ranges from:

* increasing life skills or changing behaviour to increase life options
* promoting independence and inter-dependence
* working with conflicts of interest or in relationships
* stabilising or slowing down deterioration and loss of independence
* coping with changed life situations and transitions
* learning new skills, for example in parenting or as a family career
* loss, bereavement and trauma,
* balancing expectations, needs and responsibilities that involve ethical and moral dilemmas
* supporting individuals' development to enable them to participate in groups, use local community resources or to move to mainstream services.

**Methods of Social Work Intervention**

The most common forms of methods of social work intervention are:

1. **Community development**

Where problems such as environmental poverty, high unemployment rates and poor housing, are affecting a community, social work intervention at the individual, family or group level will not address the problems and a community development approach is necessary.

1. **Group Work**

The most common forms of group work are with people who abuse alcohol and drugs, with mental health difficulties, young carers, children and young people who are accommodated, teenage mothers, children who are unaccompanied asylum seekers, and offenders. They use the collective experience and expertise to share effective solutions, provide mutual support, promotes self esteem, confidence and identity. They are a powerful resource in facilitating the empowerment of people using services and in reducing isolation for example women who have survived

1. **Individual or family casework**

Social work intervention with individuals and families assist people to survive coping with the impossible, foster resilience or enable them to begin to build platforms of support that could improve their lives. It supports the individual or family to identify, and use their social network's experience and expertise as a resource for:

* releasing potential that has been blocked by past experiences
* problem solving where there are current relationship or parenting difficulties
* promoting self-esteem and confidence to adopt different approaches to existing problems etc.

**Models for Social Work Intervention**

Social work is a complex activity and often workers and service users have multiple objectives to pursue. Social workers are assisted by intervention models in achieving desired and agreed outcomes for service users. These models are framed with the understanding of social workers operate at many different levels in society – with individuals, families, groups and communities.

There are many different practice models that influence the way social workers choose to help people meet their goals. Some of the major social work practice models used in various roles are-

**Problem-Solving Model**

This model owes its existence to Perlman. The main emphasis in this model is on social casework as an extension of the processes of ordinary living. Life consists of problem-solving activities. For much of the time human beings are engaged in these activities without being consciously aware of their challenge to themselves.

This model assists people with the problem solving process. Rather than tell clients what to do, social workers teach clients how to apply a problem solving method so they can develop their own solutions.

**Task-Centred Practice**

This model of casework practice was formulated by Reid and Epstein. It constitutes a very specific model of short-term social work. It is a short-term treatment where clients establish specific, measurable goals. Social workers and clients collaborate together and create specific strategies and steps to begin reaching those goals.

This model suggests that beneficial and desired changes can be achieved by working in partnership with service users to resolve other areas of concern. Whilst partnership is stressed, task centred practice can be used with people who do not wish to work with social worker. It is therefore, a useful model to employ as part of wider social work intervention.

**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**

Cognitive behavioural therapy was emerged in 1950 & 1960 to counter the primacy of the psychoanalytic practice however; it was originated from social psychology. It is also an approach that deals with human’s thoughts, images, beliefs and attitudes that human have and how human’s behaviour are impacted by and influenced these.

Moreover, Cognitive Behaviour practice focuses on modifying individuals’ environment whereby behaviours arise, cause, prompt, provoke and its consequences as well as describing and pointing out clients’ behavioural problems of social phobias, anxiety and depression.

**Crisis Intervention Model**

A crisis presents an opportunity for social workers to influence positively the coping capacities of others. Crisis intervention has been used with positive results in many different service user groups, not only with people who are bereaved or diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses. These include suicide, mental health issues, domestic violence, rape crisis etc.

Crisis intervention provides a unique opportunity to work towards constructive change, to intervene in order to optimise social functioning and enable choice and participation and to provide appropriate services.

**The Psycho-Social Therapy Model**

One of the chief characteristics of the psycho-social therapy model and its major contribution to social work has been the importance attached to the content and the process of ‘psycho-social study’ as an essential prerequisite to ‘psycho-social treatment.

Another valuable contribution of the model is that regardless of the nature and the origins of a problem, it is being experienced by a human person and therefore calls for attempts to understand the person and his/her reactions to the problem, as well as understanding the problem itself.

**Critical Evaluation**

When providing services and interventions, social workers have been criticized in a number of areas and are not always viewed in a positive light. Social workers are often thought to be untrained, uncaring and disruptive in the lives of clients. In a recent report in 2007 by Peter Beresford on client feedback, it was found that clients frequently complain that little social support is provided by social workers and prevention services are rarely available. Clients continue to feel stigmatized and looked down upon after working with a social worker. There remains a need for continued efforts to improve and strengthen the role of social workers as they intervene in the lives of those with whom they work.

Moreover, some claimed that the purpose and use of different interventions is contentious. It was argued that ‘the term intervention is oppressive as it indicates the moral and political authority of the social worker’. This concern is also shared by describing the potentially ‘invasive’ nature of interventions and how they can be used to control others. Jones suggests that in relation to power differences and the attitude of social workers especially with regards to people living in poverty: ‘the working class poor have been generally antagonistic toward social work intervention and have rejected social work’s downward gaze and highly interventionist and moralistic approach to their poverty and associated difficulties’.

Therefore, it is recognised that intervention can be oppressive, delivered with no clear purpose or in-depth experience however, some seek and find interventions that are empathic, caring and non-judgemental due to practitioners demonstrating ‘relevant experienced and show appropriate knowledge’ (Lishman, 1994). For many practitioners, these attributes are essential in any intervention and are demonstrated through commitment, concern and respect for others which are qualities that are valued by service users (Cheetham et al.2000).

**Conclusion**

Social work intervention, social workers offer intervention to individuals, families and groups which enable them to meet their needs and issues. The main purpose of these interventions is to aid clients in alleviating problems and improving their well being. It is crucial that social workers should think creatively about interventions that may be helpful to the individuals, couples, families, and groups or communities they serve. However, social work intervention usually involves some minor changes to plans as the situation continues to change and additional information becomes available.

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