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## A STUDY OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH



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### ABSTRACT :

Social work is a professional and practicing course. It has incorporated different social sciences to develop the body of knowledge. Thus, it has built up its body of knowledge with the help of social sciences and social work discipline. To utilise the body of knowledge, principles and philosophy, the profession has devised and designed its specific techniques to practice social work in different fields. The said techniques are known as its professional speciality. Though these techniques are devised in America, they are found useful, fruitful, result and change oriented in any society or in any country of

the world provided the necessary skills are developed and used for their implementation.

**KEY WORDS:** Social work, Social Work Research, social work techniques.

### INTRODUCTION :

Social work research is one of the social work techniques. The basic aim of all these six social work techniques is to utilize them to resolve the problems of the people, community and institutions scientifically and effectively. Social work research is also one of the techniques which is meant for the purpose of not only to examine the old knowledge and to gain new knowledge, it is also meant for getting perfect and effective solutions of the complicated human problems in the society. However, it seems that this aspect is neglected in India either by the theoreticians or by the practitioners in the field.

The trained professional social workers, working in the field of social work, are well aware that the social work profession has been introduced by the sociologists and social scientists in India. Hence, it is quite natural that the methodology of research introduced in social work discipline was of their



own understanding, and practised by them. Actually, it was a methodology of social sciences i.e. social research. While introducing they might not have understood that the social work is a profession and it is not an ordinary social science like sociology, psychology, economics, history and political science, due to which they might have introduced the methodology of ordinary sciences i.e. social research. Once introduced this methodology was considered suitable and acceptable and the same was practiced years together. Hence, it is firmly fixed in the minds of the social work researcher that social research is nothing but social work research. Today, everyone has considered it as it is one and the same. In fact, social work is a practising profession. Naturally, its methodology and utility should also be professional and practice oriented. On this ground only, it is said that the terms “Social Research” and “Social Work Research” are different. However, no one has defined and redefined these terms clearly, explaining their different conceptual meanings and practices.

In social work discipline, the trained professional social workers are expected to select the problems for social work research, which they face in the fields or which they identify based on their field observation or personal experiences to conduct field survey. They are also expected to form research concepts and practice first in the field to observe the social phenomena which is under their study. Thus, they are expected to process further following the social work research methodology to prepare their reports or theses. In short, field based observation and practice oriented research is to be carried out in social work profession. Moreover, the exploratory social work research done by the social work researcher is also expected to be utilised for social work practice. Such social work researches are expected to be conducted from professional social work perspectives for systematic, scientific and methodical social work practice. The social workers are aware that social work research is one of the techniques of social work, hence, either the social work research done based on the field observation and practice or whether it is exploratory research, the same is to be used for practice or to resolve the problems of the people, institution and the community at large. The social work research is expected to assist the field practitioners, NGOs, GOs, Social serviceman, traditional socio-religious practitioners and socio-political workers to identify the needs and problems of the people and also to understand their nature and magnitude. It is expected to help the practitioners to plan out the relevant programmes and activities. Social work findings and conclusions are also expected to assist the trained social workers to devise and design the need based social work projects and suitable preventive and curative social services. Social work research is also expected to assist to evaluate the programmes implemented in the field. Systematic and scientific professional oriented evaluation is expected to assist the practitioners to come to the conclusion to devise different programmes, activities and methods to be used for social work practice to resolve the problems of the people of different fields of social work.

Social work profession expects that the trained social work researchers should develop the modules of social work research for social work practice to resolve the complicated institutional, community oriented and general social problems which are not at all solved in the society years together. It is not expected simply to record suggestions in one or two sentences based on their findings and conclusions as social scientists. The expected modules should contain the aspects like core of the subjects, techniques and methods used for research skills, manpower, funds, sources of funds, expenditure, programmes, activities, practices, processes, period, expected results, cost benefit analysis etc. With these contents, the modules are expected to be developed based on the findings and conclusions of research. To make the practitioners understand, clear instructions are to be given to adopt and implement the expected devised modules in the fields through NGOs, GOs or such organisations. The modules should have specific and general programmes, planning, utility directions,

methodical process etc. However, it is unfortunate on the part of the trained professional social workers that they have not at all thought over this scientific and professional aspect and have not made any attempt to prepare such research modules for social work practice. On the contrary the social work researchers are seen recording one or two sentences as suggestions to improve the conditions based on their research findings and conclusions as social scientists and not as social work researcher.

### **SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH BACKGROUND:**

Right from the beginning of social work profession, the researchers, are found selecting the theoretical oriented problems or subjects, social research methodology, and recording ordinary suggestions as social scientists and finishing the research work. Such ordinary social work research works are seen in the racks of the libraries of the universities without having any utility value for social work practice. In other words it can be said that, they are found useless for solution of the problems. Nothing is visible. No record of utility and practice of research is available. The aims and objectives of social work research are not seen fulfilled as it is expected is social work profession. Moreover, the social work researchers have not thought over this aspects, how their efforts for doing researches in terms of their personal money, time, labour, energy and intellect are going waste. It is also observed that, in general, no one is seen bothered about how Govt. funds are misutilized or consumed or spent by them and how the said amount is not utilised as it is expected in terms of cost benefit analysis. Moreover, no one is seen bothered about how the time, labour, energy of the people or actual respondents are utilised and how they are not used properly for the welfare and social development of the community at large. The concerned organisations efforts are also not seen utilised for the public and the society. In this way, after spending lot of funds and energy, labour and intellect the research works are not used for social work practices to resolve the problems of the people and the society at large. The research guide Dr. I. S. Subhedar has stated here that “ The academician in social work education field select the simple subjects to complete their researches to get degrees like M.Phil, Ph.D for financial increments, status, respects rather than their utility or to resolve the specific and related general problems of the society”. He has also stated that “ The social work researchers have failed to prove that the social researches and social work researches are altogether different in nature, utility, practice and results.

It is also observed that the social work practitioners have failed to use social work research as a tool or technique or method of social work as case work and group work techniques are used to resolve the problems. In fact, the social problems are very complicated in their nature and such complicated problems can be solved effectively if they are studied at micro and macro levels and geographical area wise by devising and designing the professional oriented programmes and activities. It is after all a social process. If this process is developed scientifically, systematically and practiced methodically the result can definitely be positive, change and development oriented and social problems can be resolved in this manner. It's a fact that, certain social problems cannot be eradicated, but it is also true that such social problems can be diluted and their evil impact on the society can be reduced or curbed if studied well and practiced well. Unfortunately the field of social problems is totally neglected by the social work researchers and field practitioners.

The research guide Dr. I.S.Subhedar has stated here that “Schools of Social Work in India are responsible for negligence of social work research in terms of selecting the problems, its methodology, devising and designing research modules for social work practice, utilising research for social work practices, resolving social problems geographical area wise, developing social work projects based on the conclusions of each social problems to prove it's speciality and professional orientation.” Further he

states and criticised “ Schools of Social Work have failed to devise field work training programmes in social work research as Case Work and Group Work Moreover social work research is not used as technique of social work to resolve the problems due to which the social work research has remained ordinary as social sciences research or social research”.

It is observed that the faculty members ask their students to refer the Project Reports of the past students to understand the nature and scope of the research done at this level. Students take benefits of such guidance, practice, and repeat the subjects and methodology. In other words, the methodology of social sciences is practiced. Neither these projects are found worthy having utility value for social work practice nor scientific enough for examining the old knowledge and adding new knowledge of the field. Students money, time, energy and labour, guide’s time, labour and energy is seen going waste University is also put into heavy loss financially and administratively i.e. it has to spend time for conducting viva-voce. Such ordinarily prepared Project Reports are nothing but it’s a fun of the social work discipline and social work research. Actually, it is expected that the schools of social work should contact their fieldwork agencies or other organisations, communities institutions and find out their complicated problems which have not been solved easily with the help of their techniques and methods easily. To resolve these problems students should be asked to undertake such projects. Such projects should be prepared from professional social work perspectives. Students should be asked to prepare modules based on their conclusions. The guides, faculty members and the agency personnel should conduct meetings to implement the projects during the fieldwork training period. In this way, it is expected that social work research is to be practiced to resolve the problems of the respective agencies and communities. However, such practices are not at all developed by the schools of social work in India.

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- 9.Discussions with the faculty member of social work, YCISS, Satara and senior faculty members of SIBER, Kolhapur.



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