

## Social Work Research

Research deals with almost every aspect of human life and brings developments, comforts and solution to problems. It is not limited to only chemistry and physics labs and biology but it also helps to answer questions of social science fields which could include social work, sociology, political science, psychology etc. The questions are answered through the use of scientific method by social research. Here it is essential to make clarity about science, scientific method and social research before further discussion on the social work research.

Everyone knows and sometimes uses word 'science'. Some people consider mathematics as science while others think science is about white coats and laboratories. As a social worker or social scientist, if you tell strangers that you are taking a course dealing with scientific inquiry, most of them will guess your work like biology or physics than social work. Science means '*accumulation of systematic knowledge*'. This gathering of knowledge is not about only chemistry, biology and physics but it could be in other fields also i.e., fields dealing with human behaviours and social problems. So it is clear that disciplines dealing with human relationships, social issues, society and behaviours are also sciences and they need scientific enquiries to add new knowledge.

**The scientific method** is a logical order of steps by which scientists come to conclusions about the social phenomena. This method is the most important part of science. The scientific method is a way to make sure that your experiment can give a good answer to your specific question. In fact, many social workers themselves often underestimate the importance of scientific inquiry in social work practice. But with the passage of time, social workers are learning how the use of scientific methods can enhance effectiveness of social work practice.

**Social research** is the scientific study of society. More specifically, social research examines a society's attitudes, assumptions, beliefs and trends. The scope of social research can be small or large, ranging from a single individual to the entire country. Popular topics of social research include poverty, class issues, unemployment, voting behaviour, gender discrimination, policing and criminal behaviour. According to C.A. Moser: "*Social research is a systematized investigation to gain new knowledge about social phenomenon and problems.*"

### Social Work Research

Social work research may be defined as a systematic investigation into the problems in the field of social work. In a very broad sense, social work research is the application of research methods to solve problems that social workers face in the practice of social work. This research provides

information that can be taken into consideration by social workers before making decisions. Following are some of the situations which need the application of social work research methods:

A social caseworker is interested in assessing the nature and extent of the problem of his client who has been facing family adjustment issues. He may also be keen to know about best suitable problem solving techniques.

A group worker wishes to assess which technique more or less effective in increasing knowledge of drug abuse among school going children.

A community organiser 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.

A social work administrator is concerned about the effectiveness of implementation of new programme launched.

The study of concepts, principles, theories underlying social work methods and skills are the major areas of social work research. It involves the study of the relationship of social workers with their clients; individuals, groups or communities as well as their functioning within the organizational structure of social agencies. On the theoretical side, social work research re-examines the body of knowledge; concepts and theories. In the area of social work practice it tries to develop a systematic theory and valid concepts, to know the effectiveness of different methods of social work as to search for suitable innovative treatments. The areas of social work research may be broadly categorized as follows:

- Studies to identify and measure the need for service.
- To measure the suitability of provided services.
- To test, measure and evaluate results of social work intervention (involvement).
- To list the effectiveness of specific techniques of offering services.

Social work is a diverse profession, possible broad research areas could be:

- Community Development
- Child Welfare
- Women Welfare
- Youth Welfare
- Aged Welfare
- Poverty Alleviation
- Physical and Mental Disabilities
- Juvenile Delinquency
- Crime and Correction, etc.
- Management of Social Welfare Department and Organisation
- Disaster Management

The list is not comprehensive, it's only an exemplary list which enlists broad areas which is very frequently studied by social workers. Again, within one or more problem areas research might focus on individuals, families, groups, community organisations or broad social systems.