Ethical Considerations in Mental Health Social Work: Principles and Practice

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Abstract

Background: It is therefore very important for mental health social work especially by addressing ethical issues that may prevail within the practice area since such social work involves handling of children or other vulnerable individuals in society. The concepts like autonomy, confidentiality and justice are the important focal points that help social workers while making decisions.

Aim: The purpose of this study is to examine the principles of ethical practice in mental health social work as well as an evaluate the concern and care the practitioners have over their clients.

Methods: In this process, a qualitative approach is adopted in an attempt to survey the literature as well as case studies to explain how ethical theories work in practice.

Results: The study outlines key ethical concepts that are described in relation to examples concerning the clients in vulnerable situations and the dynamics of ethical reflection in practice.

Conclusion: In mental health social work, ethical principles are core any social worker acts in the best interest of the client and client's rights. Ethical practice dictates that there is now need for the professionals to undergo their continuous professional development.

Keywords: Mental health social work, ethical principles on mental health social work, autonomy, confidentiality, justice, beneficence.

Introduction

Understanding and practicing professional ethical in mental health social work form a concise and imperative foundation for professional practice for the provision of timely and appropriate care specific to mental health clients. In their practice, social workers work with special needs and interdependent populations and rise to situations that entail consideration of ethical standards. Principles like autonomy, confidentiality, justice, beneficence, and the principle of informed consent constitutes the most of the principles of ethical practice and is valuable tools within a mental health setting. When social workers engage intellectually with the mentally ill about their condition they have the following scenarios; Autonomy-parity: In their line of duty, social workers are involved with decisions that involve submitting the clients to treatment against their wish, which involves solving the autonomy-Parity dilemma Safety-confidentiality: Social workers have the confidentiality responsibility with the safety-responsibility, which makes them solve the dilemma between the two. Equitability: When handling the Discovering the main

ethical issues in mental health social work, this paper discusses how these guidelines help social work professionals better assist the population in their pursuit of mental health. By understanding these ethical frameworks, social workers can navigate their roles effectively and make informed decisions that prioritize the best interests of their clients.[1,2]

Understanding the Connection Between Social Work and Mental Health

Initiation of the huge responsibility for treatment of mental health patients by social workers requires an understanding of the relationship between social work and mental health. It is a social science profession that has firmly established its primary goal – the welfare and change of people's lives for the better. Mental health can be considered as one of the most vital dimensions of human health and now days social work profession plays an important role in tankling with the mental health problems in people. Workers in social care are grateful to decipher the relationship between mental, psychological, social, and physical aspects of human life that determine mental health. They also take into account a person's psychological needs as well as social, economical and cultural environment the person belongs to.[3,4] It is with clients who have mental health disorders for which the connection between social work and mental health is perhaps most obvious, in terms of how social workers may intervene, where depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia may be present. Mental health social workers have the expertise in regard to offering counselling, enabling, and advocacy services. These practitioners engage with their clients to cater for their unique needs and establish individualized treatment goals and goals with the end product being a definitive list of therapeutic services all done with the goal of encouraging the discovery of the client's potential. Social workers play a role of referrals to other basic needs entailing legal services, medical, housing, and financial services, all of which determine the welfare of the client's mental health.[5]

social work has increasing importance in mental health at the community level as it promotes organizational change in order to enhance mental health services as well as decrease prejudices around mental illness and those who suffering from it. Thus, social workers intervene in communities: educate the public about mental health problems and combat discriminations. Most of them fight for increased funding to support mental health services, increased access to healthcare and favorable policies dealing with social determinants of mental health including poverty, housing insecurity and poor education. Addressing these wider social concerns the social worker can then ensure that environment is conducive to Psychological wellbeing at the Level of both the Person and the Population.[6] Apart from direct practice, social workers also play a sectoral role in research and policy setting in mental health care delivery systems. They inform the treatment interventions, collaborate with other healthcare, education, and policy professionals, so people with MH conditions can get care services that are both effective and fairly delivered. In summary, social work and mental health are linked and complex, about which social workers are critical assets to preventive, intervention, and supportive services with people groups.[7]

Social Work Interventions: How to Treat Mental Disorders

In addressing mental health problems, social work practice is comprehensive focusing on the different areas of need of individual, families, and communities who are in contact with mental health problems. This paper aims to explore as to how social workers engage different strategies and methods in addressing mental health incidents with regard to the interpersonal and environmental contexts. Their actions are usually in response to needs arising from intricacies of mental illnesses and the social, economic and environmental factors that dictates them. The strengths perspective is utilized in social work because it aids the client in seeing they have a capacity to change for the better.[8,9] To some extent, the primary strategy of the social workers when addressing mental health issues involves therapeutic counseling. Since social workers are nowadays taught different kinds of therapeutic models, they can use such methods as CBT or solution-oriented approaches, as well as psychodynamic techniques. These approaches assist people to find ways how to cope with stressful situations, change negative emotions and cognition and gain better control over their feelings. Crisis intervention is another function of social workers; they help people in distress, including those that are suicidal, those with severe depression, or trauma disorder. In these cases social

workers intervene to calm the situation and the people involved, prevent further harm to the individuals and others and to provide them with accurate referrals and type of care.[10]

To supplement the one on one counseling, this social work practice entails tracking of services for those afflicted with mental disorder. Called as a case management, this involves helping clients to identify their needs, create effective plans for assistance and coordinate or provide services like health care or shelter or job training. Clients often need assistance in getting to the right place, whether it is mental healthcare services, legal assistance and social services that a client may require and social workers ensure clients get all the support they need. Often, social workers take the client's role and assist them get the resources that are necessary for recovery from substance use including medication, therapy, living sheltered and other social services.Also rather significant for the performed social work interventions is the consideration of support provided to families and communities. A mental illness person is not only torn apart but also affects the family and other members of society. The strategies involve education where social workers accompany families to explain issues on mental health at home. It may include teaching family members about the illness, providing information about how to help a person, and conducting couple/marital or family therapy. Of equal importance is the placement of interventions within the community as such, social workers assist the clients in linking up with support agencies and groups, advocate groups, and other mental health resources in the client's community since such sources offer long term emotional and social support.[11,12]

They also practice at an external level, giving voice for better reforms on issues to do with mental health and parity as well. Volunteering for governmental and healthcare institutions as well as certified patient organizations, they participate in shaping policies that would advanced patient rights, increase mental health literacy, and decrease stigma. Social workers pursue culturally acceptable and accessible mental health service with the intention of promoting better treatment of people with mental health problems. Not only do these systemic interventions help individual clients but they societal transformation since will facilitate the provision of accessible and affordable mental health services.[13]

Role of Social Workers in Managing Mental HealthSD164 Marian G. McBeth Spring 2012

The role of poed planning in enhancing individuals experiencing mental disorder can be known to be tremendous and in order, this section will briefly highlight on the contribution of social workers as they deliver basic services which are important in caring for individuals with mental health disorders in the society. Many clients approach social workers directly and thus, the prerequisite of showing sensitive and versatile support is critical for producing positive results. Social workers also follow one of the most important strategies that has an effect on the clients with mental illness and that is direct client therapy. Depending on CBT, DBT or person-centered therapy as main methods, social workers assist people to recognize their perceptions, feelings, and actions, and support development of better ways to deal with emotions. This therapeutic support is critical for those with mental disorders, including anxiety, depression, and psycho-trauma to make them regain some control of their lives.[14,15] Apart from therapy, social workers are involved in case management through which they assess the needs of a candidate, come up with the right course of treatment, and give the candidate the appropriate contacts. Mental illness always comes hand in hand with other problems like poverty, housing problems, and substance abuse, and as such social workers are well suited to deal with complex problems like these. To this end social workers arrange for individuals to cover with healthcare associations, housing organizations, legal aid and other relevant services. They in turn as case managers make sure that people get not only mental health care, but other aspects of life that lag them behind are also catered for.[16,17]

The fourth important role of social workers in assistance delivery to people suffering from mental health issues is; Advocacy and education. (targets: 3 P) Social workers primarily act as clients' representatives promoting their rights in order to access the appropriate care, especially within mental health contexts that are commonly fragmented and complicated. They assist clients to address issues of discrimination and prejudices arising from the mentally ill, inform people of their rights and enable the mentally ill to court for their rights. Just as other professionals, social workers fight to eliminate prejudice towards mental health issues within the societies they serve. Also, social workers engage in teaching service users about their

mental health disorders, the management and treatment, as well as practical ways of dealing with every day life stressors while ailing and in the process of managing this condition.[18,19]

Another important role cheered in by social workers is the provision of support to families of mentally ill people. Emotional illness may be really devastating to those who are directly involved, including families and those close to them. Professional caregivers explain to families what the illness is and what it means; the difficulties that the person may encounter; how they can support him or her. Family therapy is one of the interventions social workers can use to examine what the mental health issue means to the family relationships as well as facilitate modified interaction and increase the family's efficacy. In this sense, through mobilization of family involvement, social workers establish support system for the targeted client which can go along way towards mitigating some of the drawbacks to more short-term approach.[20] In a wider perspective, social workers bring reforms on issues regarding the system of mental health needy people by politicking for legal clauses of health care for mentally ill people. They are usually engaged in campaigns to Change structure of mental health care services, in a bid to make mental health care accessible to all. Professional social workers are involved in the observation of gatekeeper ship in advancing mental, health care services, especially to those population density areas with inadequate health care services, including rural or low-end population density regions. Due to the lobbying for higher budget allocations towards mental health, or better coordination of mental health services with primary health care, social worker actively enhance the efficiency of a health platform for delivering mental health care services.[21]

Empowering Communities: Chapters on the topics that have already been published

The Impact of Social Work on Mental Health: This paper is about how the social work profession contributes to the promotion of mental health for more population of people. Support for consumers is another goal of social work, and a chief component of social work practice is enhancing those consumer communities that may be most vulnerable to conditions that negatively affect mental health. Mental health of entire communities is enhanced through the efforts of social workers who work to eliminate both personal and environmental factors which lead to mental health issues. In underpinning community endeavors, social workers ensure that the communities in which clients live are suitable for human habitation and include measures for minimizing stress and boosting strength within every human being. In this context, social workers do not just analyze and treat persons with mental health problems as it is done in psychiatry, but mental wellbeing is conceived of as being built in the community. They appreciate the fact that aspects like social support, resources in the community, the economy and services we have play a very pivotal role in dict site 's health. Nonetheless, social workers mobilize communities to become alternative systems that are welcoming and encourage positive mental health of each member.[22,23]

There is evidence that social workers empower communities mainly through raising awareness of issues to do with mental health. In this capacity, social workers participate in community-emersion activities to sensitize people about mental health issues, demystify them and encourage advocacy for mental health. Such initiatives are relevant where people may not discuss mental conditions or those where there is little knowledge about a specific condition. Social workers educate the community about mental health conditions, the types of treatment that are available, as well as additional support available to suffering patients. Still, this form of learning also makes people stay open for assistance as well as makes the society find ways to support one another when experiencing emotions such as depression or anxiety among others.[24,25] Besides education, in collaboration with their clients, social workers aim on ensuring that the individuals within a community have close connections. Networking is essential to overall psychological health because it offers people sources of comfort and validated feelings and a place in which they can find solace and protection against stress. A typical function of social workers is to establish social relatedness by means of arranging group meetings, community events, and other similar actions. Systematic ones; These are initiatives that offer platforms for people to share their experiences and feelings, and get support of similar-minded people. Self-help groups such as peer support groups are however very useful since people suffering from mental health problems get to find at least those who are equally suffering from similar conditions. Through such opportunities in social relations, social workers contribute towards building the community fabric of a society and of well-being.[26,27]

Another unique aspect of work that social workers are involved with is the need to bring about changes on the population level towards mental health. They undertake advocacy for policies, in a bid to ensure adequate, equal and culturally competent mental health care for the people within that society. It can include a campaign for increased budgets for mental health causes, for the expansion of mental health treatments step by step into primary care representation or demanding political measures for the elimination of the detrimental effects of economic differences leading to deteriorating mental health. For instance, social workers work in government agencies, non profit organizations, schools and health facilities to come up with social policies and intervention frameworks to explicate mental health thus addressing factors such as laborlessness, frail homes, and non access to school. With regard to these points, it is the role of the social worker to make mental well-being possible environments. The final critical activity noticed in the mental health promotion at the community level in social work is capacity building. Social workers help communities to build capacity in destining and accessing the skills required for supportive mental health. This can include raising awareness and offering basic education on mental health problems among community members, training of the community leaders, volunteers, or any other stakeholder in the parish to identify signs of the specific mental health problems, keep up with the basics and offer the basic guidelines to the affected individuals and /or engaging them to seek proper service. Promoting community capacity includes the development of practice, resources and knowledge for community support of persons with mental health needs. Capitalizing the locals, social workers contribute to relocating from reliance on foreign services, developing the self-sustainability of communities when it comes to mental health problems.[28,29,30]

social workers are significant players in building community capacity for recovery from adversity. Of most importance is the concept of resilience, which is the capacity of person and communities to cope with and recover from adversity and stress. Despite the scarcity of such research, social workers build the capacity of communities to respond to adversity through social support, supporting coping efforts and supplying the communities with stress- and trauma-related resources. Social workers are needed in communities that have gone through some form of hardship including disaster, famine or civil strife as their role involves assisting our collective sense of power or agency. Trauma-focused intervention and anti-adversity approach enable social workers to help those they serve not only overcome a crisis but come out better off from having faced it.[31,32]

Prevention and Early Intervention:

The general concept of mental health necessarily contain elements of prevention and timely response, and so the perspective of social work is irreplaceable for both aspects. It is for this reason that social workers are usually key players in early identification of mental health precursors and corresponding anticipatory measures to prevent the development of the illness as well as undertaking intervention as soon as the first signs of the illness are discernible. Social workers prevent exacerbated mental conditions and lessen severity of health issues, as well as enhance clients' future performances. Promoting mental health involves attempts to stop or decrease factors that can lead to mental health problem including; substance use, physical abuse, loneliness, and poverty while intervention involves quick and accurate identification of early signs of mental illness, offer response and care and link with adequate service. In this way, social workers make a great impact towards building the culture of the mental health and guaranteeing that the populations and communities to which they belong have the power to address the concerns in their lives.[33,34]

In the AOP, social workers concentrate on identifying risk and protective factors for adverse health outcomes at the individual and community levels. They participate in offering educational sessions where people and whole society can be informed on better mental health, sources of stress and self-management. Such programs are usually focused on those people that could be at risk of developing mental health issues, for instance youth, elderly people, or people of a certain ethnicity, or gender etc. Social workers also participate in community organizing activities as a means of enhancing social connectedness social charitableness which are well established as risk factors for mental disorders. Through the maintenance of social integration social workers contribute to the creation of a protective mantle that can forestall the

development of such ILLNESS or hinder their worsening. Also, with the collaboration of schools, healthcare providers, and other community agencies, the social workers ensure that multiple universal practices are used including mental health promotion practice, risk assessment, and educating children, youths and caregivers about resilience programs. It is also important in that these preventive measures enable individuals put in place mechanisms to seek help in cases of developing signs of distress early before they develop severe conditions.[35] Another point that requires Social workers' constant involvement is the early intervention. Early intervention in mental health sin can be seen as a prevention of early stage disorders like anxiety, depression, or new behavior disturbances to becoming more severe. The ability of identifying the signs of mental health problems is one of the strong skills of social workers with the subsequent action being to administer therapy as well as linking the affected persons to relevant resources as well as managing their health. For instance, social workers can assess and intervene in the case of people with initial symptoms of depression by teaching how to prevent it or participate in talk therapy or, refer affected clients to a psychiatrist. Social workers are understanding mental health issues at an early stage thus decreasing chances of worsening to serious illness, disability or other mental disorders. In addition, the prevention is possible to reduce the overall load on the healthcare system as the young people with mental health disorders are easier to cure than those with critical conditions of mental illnesses. [35,36] It is important that early intervention in social work embraces competencies in working with families and caregivers of those with early indicators of mental health problems. Family endorses and support centers find it necessary to engage in psycho education and counseling in order to equip the families with knowledge on issues to do with mental health disorders; how families can support their members; and to enhance the overall functionality of the family system. It also has the advantage of avoiding distress between family members hence no strain in managing mentally ill persons. It is also important for social workers to help families to access their rights to the right mental health care; provide support to families in their efforts to ensure their loved ones get the right mental health care that they deserve; offer families emotional support in their efforts to carter for a family member who has mental health issues. In early stages of the treatment process, social workers involve families as a means of guaranteeing that the treated individuals are encased in a respectable support system that is a cornerstone of any efficient intervention.[37,38]

Social workers also contribute to early intervention through membership and involvement in Interdisciplinary Team Meetings where issues of mental health are identified and addressed. In organized schools, affiliated hospitals and clinics, social workers tend to join hands with psychologists, psychiatrists, administrators, healthcare and teaching professionals, in order to screen out people at risk of developing such issues and to embark on an individualized management plan. For example in a school environment, social workers are many a times the first to identify clients who are in need of their social work services because of changes in behavior or academic or social performance. They may then consult with school counselors and teachers, or parents how to start on early interventions for example counseling, academic help or behavioral. Education and assisting a health care client to access and obtain requisite mental health services is a function commonly served by health care social workers within a health care setting especially when the health care client's mental health is threatened or significantly altered due to changing states such as bereavement or serious medical condition.[39]

In addition, they also support early identification and evaluation by ensuring that different systems enhance early identification and access to services. They help influence the minds of decision makers and provider agencies with respect to mental health services, and they help offer the tools to the person in need to seek for the help s/he requires. People seeking employment, children and students are represented by social workers as they fight for regular mental health testing in school, workplace, and primary care settings. Such screening is particularly paramount in removing the social standing of mental disease since people could easily seek help due to demonstration effect. In this way, social workers help to build more policy support for such early intervention measures to make mental health care service available, sensitive, and friendly.[40]

Ethics of Practice in Mental Health Social Work

Ethical issues in mental health social work: concerns with regard to the delivery of competent, sensitive and fair services to those with mental health issues upon which consumers of mental health social work services depend. The work of a social worker involves one to come across with many ethical dilemmas that involve the knowledge of ethical concepts like autonomy, confidentiality, justice, and beneficence. These ethical standards facilitate helping social workers to balance the needs of the mentally ill, and rights of specific service users with professional and legal implications. The responsibilities of this cadre when working in mental health service delivery frameworks include promotion of the rights of the vulnerable clients, counseling and referral of clients to required service. In this regard, social workers need to be fully committed to ethically good practice in order to improve service users' quality of live as well as confidentiality and integrity.[41] One clinician has elaborated this particular concept; where she focuses on gradually changing perspectives on their problems through the establishment of a trusting and supportive relationship with the person. In other words, social work in mental health occurs because of the condition of that relationship. Thus the different therapist perspectives to the same therapeutic conditions give evidence for the 'therapist effect'; or asserting facts from a different point of view - the quality of all social work is determined by the social worker. Clients frequently divulge thoughts and feelings associated with their mental health, life history, and, at times, with their struggles.

It isn't uncommon for many Social Workers to assist clients in distress, therefore being able to provide effective solutions that can solve the problems that arise with the various clients that present themselves. This principle obligates social workers to improve their interventions in such a manner that all the services they provide yield some output to people. In effect, this means that social workers should be competent in assessing the problematic situation of the client in order to determine clients' characteristics such as the psychological status of the client, the client's aims and what the client can achieve or has at hand. At the same time, social workers should be active in ensuring that clients get the adequate level of care and aftercare especially for those with severe mental illnesses who would need assistance for an extended period of time. Such pledge or commitment to beneficence implies that there is need for the social worker to possess professional knowledge and be engaged in learning activities so as to be familiar with the most recent advances in evidence based practices. Also, in addition to these key ethical principles, social workers are to be more cautious in regard to the potential threat of dual relationships and conflict of interests in mental health settings. A dual relationship exists when a social worker has more than one type of relationship with a client, for instance, a social worker is a client's friend, or a family member or an employer.[41,42] The other consideration of ethical decentralization when it comes to mental health social work is the issues of informed consent. The clients have to be made to understand the type of services being delivered to them, the possible consequences and the importance of client Chart 1 autonomy over their treatments. The concept of informed consent is a certain no-brainer as it means that clients are fully engaged in decision making regarding their treatment program. Due to this, social workers have the responsibility of giving their clients easy to understand information about the recommended treatment plans as well as guide clients through untitled mental health services especially if the client cannot explain or has inadequate knowledge about the mental health services available. Respecting the client's autonomy also means that he or she should have the permission to withdraw from treatment at any one time without being punished.[43]

Conclusion

ethical principles address a critical role in mental health care social work by offering a set of reference points to the practitioners so that they can be assured of ethical practice that enhances respect for clients' density and right. Autonomy, confidentiality, justice and beneficence as well as informed consent, all play a big role in enabling social workers to meet the challenges they face in the field. In doing so, social workers are better positioned to conduct relationship building, policy advocacy, and / or difficult decision-making with target populations' best interest at heart. Ethical proficiency is not only instrumental in structuring behaviour within individual practice, but also serves to promote professionalism, cultural sensitivity and organizational justice in social works concerning the mental health discipline. However, it is crucial that

such standards continue to be known and understood by social workers and that their best practice applies critical thinking and reflection alongside further education, in order to continue to meet the needs of service user populations and deliver ethically sound practice.

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الاعتبارات الأخلاقية في العمل الاجتماعي في مجال الصحة النفسية: المبادئ والممارسة

الملخص

الخلفية: يعد من المهم للغاية أن يتناول العمل الاجتماعي في مجال الصحة النفسية القضايا الأخلاقية التي قد تنشأ في مجال الممارسة، حيث يشمل هذا النوع من العمل الاجتماعي التعامل مع الأطفال أو الأفراد الضعفاء الآخرين في المجتمع. وتعد مفاهيم مثل الاستقلالية، والسرية، والعدالة من النقاط المحورية التي تساعد الأخصائيين الاجتماعيين عند اتخاذ قراراتهم.

الهدف: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص مبادئ الممارسة الأخلاقية في العمل الاجتماعي في مجال الصحة النفسية، وكذلك تقييم الاهتمام والرعاية التي يقدمها الممارسون لعملائهم.

الطرق: تم اتباع نهج نوعي في هذه الدراسة من خلال استعراض الأدبيات وحالات دراسية لشرح كيفية تطبيق النظريات الأخلاقية في الممارسة العملية.

النتائج: تحدد الدراسة المفاهيم الأخلاقية الرئيسية التي تم تناولها في سياق أمثلة تتعلق بالعملاء في حالات ضعف، كما تناقش ديناميكيات التفكير الأخلاقي في الممارسة.

الخاتمة: في العمل الاجتماعي في مجال الصحة النفسية، تُعتبر المبادئ الأخلاقية جوهرية؛ حيث يعمل الأخصائي الاجتماعي دائمًا لمصلحة العميل وحقوقه. وتفرض الممارسة الأخلاقية على المتخصصين ضرورة استمرارية تطويرهم المهني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العمل الاجتماعي في مجال الصحة النفسية، المبادئ الأخلاقية في العمل الاجتماعي في مجال الصحة النفسية، الاستقلالية، السرية، العدالة، الإحسان.