

STUDYING FOREIGN EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK: SOCIAL WORK MODELS

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Abstract

Social work is a profession committed to improving the overall welfare of individuals, families, groups and society at large. Professionals in this field undergo training to recognize and tackle a variety of social, economic and psychological difficulties that individuals encounter. They utilize a diverse set of theories and methods to gain insights into the underlying reasons behind these challenges. Theoretical and methodological influence of structural social work has also begun to increase with the aim of providing assistance to various social groups in need, implementing social policies and optimizing the activities of social work organizations.

Keywords

Social work, social work theories, cognitive approach, social systems, client-centered approach, social worker-client relationship, learning theory.

1. Introduction

The connection between sociology and social work is intricate and multifaceted. On one side, social work often draws upon sociology as a theoretical foundation. Conversely, in contemporary times, sociology has evolved beyond being solely an academic discipline and has established complex ties with social work. The debate over whether sociology should remain purely theoretical, focused exclusively on societal development and change or embrace practical applications has persisted for a long time. Ultimately, a consensus has emerged in favor of practicality. As a result, sociology has transformed into a practical, applied field, surpassing its original abstract and theoretical roots. This transformation underscores the critical need for a close partnership between sociology and the emerging field of social work, which is still in its early stages in our country (Turner, 2017). For this very reason, there arises a necessity to closely link the emerging field of social work, which has only recently begun to organize itself in our country, with sociology. The theoretical foundation of social work is highly sophisticated, and its principles are shaped based on the demands of social work and formulated within the framework of specific time contexts, relying on sociological and social-psychological concepts. This forms the model of relationships between clients and social workers.

Through comprehensive assessments and the creation of intervention strategies, social workers assume a crucial role in unlocking the inherent strengths within both individuals and communities (National Association of Social Workers, Washington, Dc. 1994).

Theoretical foundations of social work are shaped by several conceptual models, which serve as both a specific type of social activity and a social phenomenon. These

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models not only guide representatives of various theoretical schools in analyzing contemporary societal welfare issues and conducting ongoing scholarly research but also influence changes in the form and content of social work and contribute to its evolution. While selecting and distinguishing individual theoretical models is essential, it can be stated with confidence that the following models exist:

1. Psychodynamic
2. Behaviorist
3. Cognitive
4. Systems Ecological

Despite the apparent similarities among these models that form the basis of Western experience, each of them has its own social characteristics when it comes to establishing relationships with clients. The initial theoretical models applied in social work were rooted in the ideas of classical psychoanalysis (late 20th and early 30th centuries). Following the ideology of Freudianism, these models emphasized the active therapeutic role of the social worker and the passive behavior of the client. This approach has left its mark on the future development of social work practices, whether at the same or different levels. Transition from directive and controlled client-social worker relationships to open and meaningful ones took a long time. Social work gradually realized the limitations of psychoanalysis in terms of its focus on individual psychology (emphasizing maladaptation, gradual integration into the existing social situation and so on). Eventually, it became clear that the social work theory should extend beyond the framework of purely psychological methods and consider other social factors, leading to the emergence of alternative concepts.

One of these models is the psychosocial or psychodynamic model. The psychosocial or psychodynamic model is a theoretical model that focuses on the balance between an individual's psychological life and external relationships that affect their life activities. Among them, the most widely known is the concept of "casework" or "person in the situation", developed and prepared by F. Hollis and M. Woods. At the core of this concept is the personality, which is connected on one side with individuals and on the other side, with the surrounding environment. Unlike classical psychoanalysis, the current concept directs its attention not to a person's past but to their present and analyzes how the personality accepts real social situations. The psychodynamic model of social work is based on several important postulates, including:

–In the context of the client relationship, the social worker must consider that the client possesses a certain psychological structure and this structure can change under the influence of external and internal factors in the environment with which the client interacts.

–While influencing the client, the social worker should take into account the client's socio-economic situation and status, assessing their position at various levels of management and should learn the client's role in the social environment they belong to, as well as the dynamics of their relationships.

–The social worker should place a primary emphasis on the client's personal situation, their individual experiences and their thoughts when choosing a strategy and tactics suitable for the client's situation within this framework.

–Within this framework, not only is the "status quo" analyzed, but also the relationships between the client and the social worker, as well as the development of relationships between those in need within the specific social environment are analyzed.

– The psychodynamic model of social work generally aims to influence the client's internal world, their perception of reality and the character of their relationships within the group they belong to, with the goal of changing and correcting their behavior, perspectives and relationships.

Events that occur in an individual's life and the associated social experiences they gather play a crucial role in shaping their psychological makeup. Simultaneously, in the relationship between the social worker and the client, the personal experiences of the social worker, the dynamics of the development of their relationships and their ability to connect with the people surrounding them should also be considered important factors. In the context of the relationship between the client and the social worker, the presence of personal experiences and psychological perception, as well as the emphasis on the uniqueness of the client's personality, should be taken into account.

Within the framework of the psychodynamic model of social work, they delineate several important stages related to implementation:

- Understanding the client's problems.
- Understanding the client's social situation, mental state and emotions.
- Establishing rapport and building relationships with the social worker.
- Reviewing significant events in the client's life and their relevance to their current issues.
- Creating an action plan based on mutual trust between the client and the social worker for resolving the client's problems.
- Collaborative activities between the client and the social worker related to addressing the client's issues within the context of sociological activities.

It can be said that, alongside the psychodynamic concept, another alternative theory of social work has emerged, known as behaviorism. This approach primarily focuses on the observation of the client's behavior in response to external stimuli. One of the significant contributions of behaviorism to the field of social work is its enrichment of the field's content through empirical research, making it an essential part of one of the necessary stages of social work.

Behaviorism is a well-known method as one of the theoretical foundations of social work. Unlike the psychodynamic approach, behaviorism primarily focuses on the theory of learning or observed behavior. In behaviorist social work, it is often based on experimental schemes that follow the classical "stimulus-response" principle. Once the possible type of behavior is identified, it undergoes evaluation, followed by intervention. Both during and after this stage, various aspects of such behavior are measured. Consequently, it is necessary to determine the client's response to different stimuli and analyze the response reaction. Based on the response elicited from the individual to the stimulus, interventions can be initiated, involving both the direct influence of the social worker and the introduction of new stimuli to facilitate the desired behavioral changes.

The application of this model in social work is also associated with several significant challenges. For example, there are cases where a social worker encounters clients who exhibit behavior that can not be easily attributed to any discernible motive. In such situations, finding a solution within the framework of behaviorism can be quite challenging. Furthermore, this particular model has also faced criticism for reducing clients' problems to a purely positivist view and a technological approach to resolution.

Until the 1960s, these two theoretical approaches, psychodynamic and behaviorist, coexisted as the main conceptual models in social work theory, enriching each other's content. However, starting in the 1960s, the foundational principles of social

work theory began to diversify, giving rise to cognitive and systems models. In contrast to psychodynamic and behaviorist models, the cognitive model focuses its attention on the rational control of a client's own behavior.

The cognitive model of social work deals with human well-being, its impact on human behavior, and the resolution of individual and social problems. This model incorporates elements from psychosocial, sociological and social systems perspectives in identifying and resolving social work problems. Through the optimization of rational thinking styles aimed at the defense of individual and social interests, the cognitive model directs both the client and the social worker toward not only personal change and adaptation but also the improvement of their social environment. Within the framework of the cognitive model, several essential points emerge, which can be characterized as the distinctive features of the current model:

- People can be better understood as they are always in search, eager to eliminate obstacles in their personal and social lives and striving towards specific goals.
- Despite what people see and understand, they create their own models of reality.
- By adapting to social reality, humans change themselves and attempt to change reality, ultimately gaining a sense of self-fulfillment.
- The process of adaptation for both individuals and their environment is influenced by our sensory perceptions and imaginative thoughts.

Thus, the cognitive approach, based on the rational aspects of human behavior, provides a complex perspective for addressing social work problems. The fundamental idea of this model is rooted in the theses of symbolic interactionism, suggesting that reality is constructed solely by the subject themselves. Applying this idea to social work implies that the client's perception should not be dismissed as incorrect but rather considered as something different. In other words, methods used in working with clients should be educative and developmental rather than rigid. The emergence of the cognitive theory in social work is associated with the name of Q. Goldstein. In this concept, a central role is given to "perception" within the social context (the field of perception). Interactions (mutual relationships) occurring in this social context play a significant role, and the responses to stimuli that inspire individual rational activity result from these mutual relationships. Consequently, the perception of a stimulus depends on its differentiation from other stimuli, the similarity of its elements and the long-term impact of its effects. According to Goldstein, this way of looking at perception connects social and psychological methods and encompasses both thoughts and emotions, as well as the external world and the social environment. The interaction between the individual's external context and their internal world is seen as an active transactional process and the following types of activities constitute its essential aspects:

- Adaptation (adjustment) involves aligning with the environment.
- External stabilization for achieving one's goals despite constantly changing reasons, while maintaining the balance between internal and external systems.
- Intentional activity aims to achieve internal goals while making certain changes in the external environment.
- The cognitive model of social work, as well as the social worker's activity, primarily focuses on social education and skill acquisition. In this regard, Goldstein distinguishes three main types of training applied in practice:
- Strategic training for acquiring information, collecting the experience necessary to achieve certain goals.
- Tactical training for adapting to daily life purposes.

- Adaptive training aimed at changing one's own "self" and the created reality. The training process includes four consecutive stages:
- The "discrimination" stage involves identifying problems in the external environment.
- The "conceptual" stage involves learning the ideas and symbols used by the client in the process of processing information.
- The "principled" stage involves learning the values system and the internal "self".
- The "problem-solving" stage, which, by synthesizing the previous stages, is both a process and the second method of logical evaluation of the situation. This stage itself consists of three main sub-stages: in the first sub-stage, the existing problem becomes understandable and felt by the client; in the second, the problem is analyzed, various methods of solving it are explored and an action strategy is determined and finally, in the final sub-stage, the perceived strategy is implemented and technologies are prepared by the client for solving similar problems in the future.

While this model wasn't initially embraced by all social workers, it has gained significant traction in social work since the 1980s.

Some of the conceptual frameworks that form the theoretical foundations of social work could be reevaluated. One of them is the systemic approach. In social work, there are three main models of this approach. The first one is based on Ludwig von Bertalanffy's system theory. Initially, this approach was developed for biological systems and posited that all organisms consist of subsystems, with the system itself being part of a larger system. For example, a human being is considered part of society, just as their circulatory system, material exchange processes and even the smallest particles like atoms are part of them. This perspective has been applied in social work to analyze social systems, including social groups, public institutions, families, small groups and collectives, viewing individuals through the lens of social systems.

This model introduced several concepts from systems theory into the field of social work, such as input, output, entropy and more. Initially, these ideas weren't widely embraced by practicing social workers. However, the analysis of individuals through the lens of social systems has since provided new perspectives for social work theory.

The psychosocial or psychodynamic model is a theoretical framework that pertains to the balance between an individual's psychological life and the external relationships that influence their life activities. Among these frameworks, one of the most widely spread and elaborated concepts is the "situation work" or "person-in-situation" concept, developed and worked on by scholars such as F. Hollis and M. Woods. At the core of this concept lies the individual, considering both their interactions with people and their connection to the surrounding environment. Unlike classical psychoanalysis, this current concept directs its attention not to an individual's past but to their present circumstances and analyzes how an individual's personality responds to the real social situation they find themselves in. The psychodynamic model of social work is based on several important postulates, including the following:

- In the context of the client relationship, the social worker must consider that the client possesses a certain psychological structure and that this structure can change under the influence of external and internal factors within the environment with which they interact.
- When influencing the client, the social worker should take into account the client's socio-economic situation, status, place in various levels of administration, as well

as their role and relationship dynamics within the social environment to which the client belongs.

- The social worker should place a primary emphasis on the client's personal situation, individual experiences, uniqueness and thoughts when selecting strategies and tactics that are suitable for the client's current state.
- Within this framework, not only is the status quo analyzed, but also the relationships between the client and the social worker, as well as the interrelations among those in need within the specific social environment, are comprehensively examined.
- The psychodynamic model of social work generally aims to influence and correct the client's behavior, perspectives and relationships by impacting their internal world, perception of reality and the character of their relationships within the group to which they belong.

Within the framework of the psychodynamic model of social work, several important stages related to the implementation of psychosocial influence are identified:

1. Understanding the client's problems.
2. Understanding the client's social situation, psychological state and emotions.
3. Establishing rapport and creating connections between the social worker and the client.
4. Reviewing significant events in the client's life and their relevance to the client's current issues.
5. Collaboratively developing an action plan based on mutual trust between the client and the social worker.

2. Conclusion

Events that occur in an individual's life and the social experiences they accumulate play a significant role in shaping their psychological makeup and personality. At the same time, in the context of the social worker's relationship with the client, the social worker's own psychological characteristics, the dynamics of their relationships and their ability to connect with the people around them should also be considered important factors.

Social workers may use different social work models in different situations. One of the important issues here is the right choice of the model to be used. The wrong model for use will not only solve the problem, but also cause additional problems. This is an indicator of the low level of professionalism of the social worker.

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