

Current Problems and Approaches in Social Work

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CURRENT PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES IN SOCIAL WORK

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(Edited by: Özgür Altındağ, Oktay Tatlıcıoğlu, Yulia Kryvenko)

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INTRODUCTION

International Conference on Current Debates in Social Sciences (CUDES) aims to encourage interdisciplinary studies in social sciences was started to organize by Farhang Morady at University of Westminster (United Kingdom) under the collaboration of Kocaeli University (Turkey) and Silesian University in Opava (Czech Republic) in 2010. CUDES 2019 is organized by Altunbaş University (Turkey), University of Belgrade (Serbia), Batman University (Turkey), VUZF University (Bulgaria) and Near East University (Cyprus) and supported by IJOPEC Publication and University of Westminster (United Kingdom) and will be held on 3-5 December 2019 in İstanbul.

One of the themes of the CUDES congress was social work. Social work is a professional profession and science since the 1800s, when it emerged in America and Europe. It aims to make the clients self-sufficient, providing support to individuals, groups and families who cannot solve their problems and need support.

The definition of social work agreed upon by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is as follows; Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels (IFSW,2014).

As it can be understood from the definition, social work carries out multi-dimensional studies with many different client groups. In social work practices, individual, group and community-scale studies are conducted with very different client groups, and support is provided from other disciplines when necessary.

There are five basic elements of the social work profession, they are information base and value system, society, service institution, client and social worker (Kut, 1988). These five elements form the framework of the social work profession.

To express the purpose of social work, the main purpose of social work is to meet human needs and develop human potential. One of the main goals of social service is to work with individuals in order to make them active, to bring them to the best point that can be achieved personally and socially, and to work to improve social justice in the name of social change and development (AASW,2010).

Looking at the developments in the last 30 years, the social service profession faces many local and international social problems such as global warming, wars, internal conflicts, natural disasters, migrations, economic crises, developments in science and technology, and divorce and increase in criminality rates. Social service practitioners should take an international approach to social problems and respect local knowledge and cultural sensitivity. The need for developing new theories and innovative and practice and research forms, innovative educational models and efforts to influence local, national and global policy makers in the face of changing social problems is increasing day by day.

INTRODUCTION

In this context, the topics covered in 12 chapters are as follows; social dimension of neoliberal transformation: evaluation from micro to macro neoliberal, immigrant commission in the ottoman state in the context of the history of social work, the role of media in public image of social work profession, an assessment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) policies in the context of right of asylum, spirituality in clinical social work, the need to improve social functionality and advocacy activities when working disadvantage individuals and marginalized groups, empowerment based practice in social work, the ties between social work and positive psychology: how can individual and social welfare services be strengthened?, cultivation of mindfulness within social work practices, art-therapy work with child victims of domestic violence, using metaphor in divorce studies and social work and group works in substance addiction.

In this comprehensive study, which deals with many different contexts, it has tried to make original contributions to the theoretician and practice of social work. It is thought to make a significant contribution to the literature of social work.

Wishing to be useful to social workers and academics.

Özgür Altındağ, Oktay Tatlıcıoğlu, Yulia Kryvenko

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9

CULTIVATION OF MINDFULNESS WITHIN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES

Sena ÖKSÜZ¹

Abstract

Mindfulness which is defined as paying attention to present moment experiences nonjudgmentally and on purpose is a deep-rooted Buddhist practice. It has been gaining a considerable amount of recognition all over the world for its usefulness in clinical settings for reducing stress and anxiety; and increasing peace and well-being. Many helping professions, including psychology, counseling, medicine and social work are integrating mindfulness techniques at some levels to their interventions. Social work profession contributes to the mitigation of psychological problems experienced by people as well as the protection and development of human dignity that all people possess regardless of their race, age, gender, nationality, religion or political view etc. Social workers carry out professional practices within the framework of general social work practice with individuals, groups and society, in other words it functions in micro, mezzo and macro levels. This work reviews what is mindfulness and emerging guidelines and techniques on how to integrate mindfulness into social work practice with individuals, families, groups and communities.

Keywords: mindfulness, social work, helping profession

The Concept of Mindfulness

Mindfulness which is defined as paying attention to the very present moment nonjudgmentally, on purpose is an old Buddhist practice. Its practical use for general wellbeing and cultivation of meaningful life goes back to 2500 years ago (Kabatt-Zinn, 2003, p. 144; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). In ancient texts the equivalent term used to describe mindfulness is “sati” (a Pali word) which embraces three concepts which are “awareness”, “attention” and “remembering” (Siegel et al., 2009, p. 18). The nature of being mindful requires one to remember to pay attention to be aware every single experience inside and out.

According to Buddhist teachings, one can reach personal transformation through examining the self and correction (Loizzo, 2006, p. 72). Even though there are approximately four hundred million Buddhists mostly in Far East, the doctrines and practices of Buddhism have gotten the limits of that geography and found its sphere in western world. Thurman regards Buddhism as a “practice of psychology science rather than a religion since its interaction with western mind sciences is growing each day” (As cited in Öksüz, 2018, p. 23).

Another important collection of concepts of Buddhism on which mindfulness is based the “Four Noble Truths”. Dukkha, samudaya, niroda and magga are known to be four realities in Buddhism, which carry the souls of people to the ultimate enlightenment and self-realization.

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The first noble truth (dukkha) is often called “suffering”. Buddha said that our lives are filled with pain and that even what we call ordinary happiness carries with it many problems. If what we call ordinary happiness was genuine happiness, then the more we had that happiness, the happier we would be. It is accepted by many Buddhist scholars that ignorance is the main reason of the suffering of human beings. What is meant by ignorance is getting attached to things or ideas blindly without examination of self and the universe (Harvey, 1990, p. 70-74).

Second noble truth (Samudaya) which explains the cause of suffering claims that the real cause of suffering is craving or thirst people experience because of the perpetual search for happiness or satisfaction. It tells the inner sufferer comes from chains we build based on our desires. Those insatiable desires cause uneasy emotions. This means acting or talking or thinking under the influence of uneasy emotions. They cause us to lose our inner peace and self-control. It's anger, greed, jealousy, arrogance, naivety, and the list goes on and on. When our thoughts are completely caught up in these feelings and when we speak or act under their influence, they will be a source of unhappiness for us. Maybe not right away, but we would be unhappy in the long run. On the other hand, behaviors that are not under the influence of these disturbing emotions are called constructive behaviors, and the motivation for these constructive emotions can also be more positive emotions such as love, compassion, or patience. Acting constructively brings happiness. Managing to control minds and acts carries people to the third noble truth.

Third noble truth is end of suffering (Niroda). This is often translated as “genuine termination” and means it is possible to get rid of the mind confusion in question in such a way that it will never be repeated again. When we get rid of the mental confusion that is the real cause, we get rid of the real problems: these ups and downs and the uncontrollably repeated rebirths that form the basis of them. That way, we get what's called” Emancipation. It tells that suffering can end with a diligent self-practice. Niroda truth focuses on the elimination of the compulsive behaviors and maladjusted cognitive patterns. State of happiness and wisdom can be reached through following a mindful path. Liberation of the minds can only be achieved through non clinging to whatever innerly or socially constructed desires (Goldstein, 2013, p. 111).

The fourth Noble Truth (Magga) is often translated as” the true path “ and helps us understand the third truth. What is meant is a state of mind that, if we develop it, becomes a path to Emancipation. That's why it's called the” mind path. Kabat-Zinn defines this step as “treatment phase” and describes Noble Eightfold as “systematically training and cultivating various aspects of mind and heart via the faculty of mindful attention (2005, p. 145). The reason Magga is considered to be true path is, it clearly provides a guideline to end suffering and discover the self. It is very important in Buddhism for each individual to implement the eight-step path in a practical way in line with his or her interpretation. The most practical and direct ways of training the human mind are sought in the framework of a moral life by setting out with the right intention.

The Eightfold Path is:

1. Right View or Right Understanding, insight into the true nature of reality.
2. Right Intention, the unselfish desire to realize enlightenment.
3. Right Speech, using speech compassionately.
4. Right Action, ethical conduct; manifesting compassion.
5. Right Livelihood, making a living through ethical and non-harmful means.
6. Right Effort, cultivating wholesome qualities; releasing unwholesome qualities.

7. Right Mindfulness, whole body-and-mind awareness.
8. Right Concentration, meditation or some other dedicated, concentrated practice.

Mindfulness Practice

1960s and 1970s were the eras when there was a huge trend for westerners to set off for Far East for various reasons. The teachings of Buddha, yoga and other spiritual disciplines have particularly influenced young people who have lost faith in the values of materialism, militarism and modernism by making journeys to America. Similarly, many Westerners travel to Asia to meditate based on Buddhism these teachings gained popularity as they experienced their practices and teachings and returned home and shared their experiences. This popularity attracted the attention of medical professionals, neuroscientists and psychotherapists, and began an exciting communication between Eastern spiritualists and Western scientists (Bodhi, 2011, p. 20-21).

Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg were among those who travelled to Asia in the late 1960s and early 70s and experienced Buddhism-based practices. These three names at Naropa University, in Colorado, United States started to teach Vipassana retreats. One of the names who benefited from these retreats was Jon Kabat-Zinn who is considered to be one of the most influential pioneers in extending mindfulness-based practices in western World (Wolf and Serpa, 2015, p. 20-23).

As stated earlier Mindfulness-Based meditation has been practiced in eastern cultures for centuries with its foundation in Theravada Buddhism and has been westernized through Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center (Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

In fact, Jon Kabat-Zinn, a molecular biologist, first experienced Zen Buddhism practices and then Vipassana practices. That the mind produces pain and suffering realizing that it is actually often unnecessary, Kabat-Zinn finds his experiences and he has created a lesson by systematizing what he has learned. 1979 in Massachusetts He was given permission to do his first course in the cafeteria of the University Hospital, and in particular those with the most difficult diseases, such as cancer, chronic pain, depression, should be able to participate and they should learn to live with these conditions. he asked them to be informed. These courses have had very positive effects and have been achieved his reputation for accomplishments began to spread (Wolf and Serpa, 2015, p. 25).

Jon Kabat-Zinn says his goal in his work on the basis of conscious awareness, he describes it as reaching as wide as possible the teachings of Buddhism, called dharma, which he emphasizes has great importance in his own life. In other words, he defines his motivation as calming people's suffering; as acting as a catalyst in adding more compassion and wisdom to life and culture. But in doing so, he preferred to follow a universal and secular path that appealed to the common mind. Especially in the Early Years, a secular style was preferred because of the possibility that the emphasis on Buddhism might lead people to be deprived of conscious awareness and related teachings or to the perception of conscious awareness as a new-age product, a mystical element.

Conscious awareness-Based Stress Reduction Program, developed after conscious it has served as a stem cell for mindfulness classes Afterwards, a type of psychotherapy beyond coping with stress and different psychological its use as a treatment method for ailments has become widespread (Bodhi, 2011; (Wolf and Serpa, 2015).

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Programme

When we look at Human Development, it is seen that individuals face many opportunities and difficulties during each phase of their development period throughout their lives (Duncan and Bardacke, 2010). Chronic diseases, physical obstacles and symptoms it is a sad problem for a significant segment of society (Grossman et al. 2004). Kreitzer (2012) lists six spheres that affects human wellbeing which are:

- health: physical, emotional, and mental spiritual health;
- purpose of life: direction to go, life and work leading to spiritual values loaded meanings;
- relationships: social connections, networks, and quality of relationships;
- society: resources and infrastructure, limits of duty and authority of individuals, cultural values;
- environment: free access to clean air, water and toxins as well as nature;
- safety: essential it refers to human needs, a fixed job, sufficient financial strength, personal security.

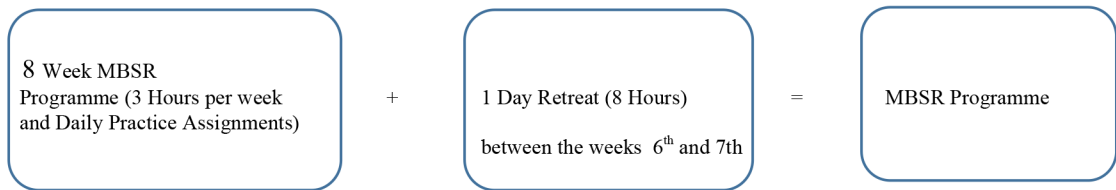
Mindfulness is directing attention to the present moment without the judgment of instant experiences, and it is based on observation by acceptance (Roemer 2002:58). It is a mind and body practice that involves the voluntary focus of attention on instant lives and the observation of inner experiences (Kabat-Zin, 2009). Awareness, of all bodily sensations is based on observation in the repetitive manner (Davidson et al. 2003). Mindfulness is associated with one's perception, knowledge and description of the transition experience. The level of awareness varies according to the relationship between what is known about processes and responses and the person's response to a similar transition, perception and expectation.

While people are bombarded by thoughts and emotions on a daily basis, mindfulness teaches the individual to observe and recognize those thoughts but then allow them to pass by without judging them or becoming immersed in them (Öksüz, 2018, p. 1).

Mindfulness-based stress reduction is a standardized 8-week meditation program developed by Jon Kabat- Zinn in 1979. It is an integration of Buddhist mindfulness meditation with contemporary clinical and psychological practice (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). It was originally formed to relieve sufferings of patients with chronic pain and to alleviate to medical illness as well as providing to systematic training in mindfulness meditation as a self-regulation approach to stress reduction and emotion management (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). Now, MBSR as an intensive structured training programme has proved its efficacy in different populations in different parts of the world.

MBSR requires soul-body-mind exercises. National Health of America Institute, National Center for Complementary and alternative therapies refers to body-mind exercises as “practices that focus on the interaction between the body, brain, mind and behaviors, using the mind to influence physical functions and improve health” (NCCAM, 2013). These practices focus on mindfulness-based meditation and basic yoga (Lupien et al. 2009).

Figure 1: MBSR Programme



Source: Kabat-Zinn, 2013

This program is three hours a week and repeats all the applications learned in one day. It is an eight-week program covering an eight-hour special session (Figure 1). To help participants develop an awareness-based approach, meditation, yoga and body scan practices are taught and they are asked to practice all through daily assignments. Body scan meditation focuses primarily on breathing, then on each part of the body. During the body scan, participants regularly concentrate on each part of their bodies, observe their feelings and internally relax every part of their bodies (Davidson et al., 2003, Kabat-Zinn 2009). Apart from body scan participants are taught to practice sitting meditation which allows them to focus on “now and here.” Individuals are trained to integrate meditation into their daily lives, so that the daily life activities begin to become meditative practices (Praisman, 2008). Participants are encouraged to spend about 45 minutes a day on mindfulness-based stress reduction exercises. (Kabat-Zinn 2009, Duncan and Bardacke, 2010).

Seven Foundational Attitudes of Mindfulness

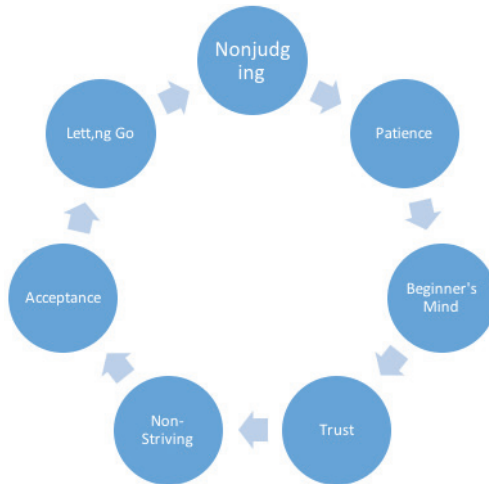
Vital changes can only take place when the mind is truly open can. The whole self in mindfulness practice to this process must include (Kabat-Zinn 2009). If an individual forces himself/herself to feel comfortable and relax or expect a magic wand to touch their souls and create miracle, it would be inevitable for him/her to think that meditation does not work (Baer, 2003, Duncan, at al. 2003).

Gaining meditative awareness requires a completely new way of looking at the learning process, because thinking about what is needed and where it is intended is quite settled in the minds of individuals. Individuals try to control everything that they come across to achieve their goals. Such an attitude is quite disincensive to awareness and might hinder healing (Kabat-Zinn 2009). Mindfulness requires giving attention and seeing everything as it is, not urging to chance (Davidson et al. 2003, Kabat-Zinn 2003)

A mindfulness-based life requires long practice, mind educating, gaining the ability to manage energy, keeping the mind open to the moment to live that provides a form of life.

There are seven important attitudinal elements of the beginning of mindfulness practices (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Foundational Attitudes of Mindfulness



1. Non Judging

Awareness is gained by assuming that the individual is an impartial witness to his or her experience. Almost everything perceived is labeled and categorized by reason (Mackenzie, et al., 2006). About everything experienced by the mind a labeling is made according to the individual's loaded meanings (Matchim et al., 2011). Kabat-Zinn (2009) tells that people tend to label others or events as "good" when it makes the person feel good, and all that makes them feel bad in the same way is labeled as "bad". Other than these, anything that remains, which feels nothing, is unrelated to the individual, is considered "neutral." Neutral things, events, people are thrown out of consciousness, since there is no value to pay attention. People are usually not even aware of the categorization their minds create yet display automatic reactions. (Raingruber, 2007). These proceedings tend to govern minds, and it is a major obstacle for people to find peace within themselves (Matchim, et al., 2011). Kabat-Zinn (2009) when an individual finds his or her mind judging things, he or she shouldn't try to stop it, because it's to improve awareness of the proceedings it states that it is necessary.

2. Patience

Çağrıçı describes patience as a virtue to wait in silence and diligence when confronted with distressing situations and showing resistance (2008, p. 337). In-mindfulness based practices patience attitude is tried to be developed through training body and mind. Through meditation, the individual reminds himself that there is no need to be impatient with himself (Matchim et al. 2011). When judgmental thoughts come to the mind, it must be assumed that they are part of reality and life at that point (Davidson et al. 2003, Kabat - Zin 2009).

Patience can be particularly helpful when an individual's mind is tense and complex. Patience-cultivating practices function as a reminder that there is no need to waste time when the mind in an exhausting state (Davidson et al. 2003). Being patient simply being open to every moment of life, every minute in its entirety and accepting means knowing that everything will happen at the time when it should happen (Kabat-Zinn 2009).

3. Beginner's Mind

People are born with empty and clear minds ready to be inventors in this life. We start to pack our empty suitcases through our experiences. Our minds tend to work with categorization. When we meet with a new person, event or situation we open a new file in our brain add any new material, which fits to category in terms of shape, topic or feeling (Öksüz, 2018, p. 9). To see the richness and uniqueness of the time lived in, having a novice mind willing to see the things as if it were the first time is needed (Tsang et al. 2012). Even though the procedure performed in each meditation practice is the same, the awareness of the emotions felt, the mood during the practices are different and the difference can be felt with beginner's mind only (Kabat-Zin 2009). It is not right to constantly think about past experiences during practices. Beginner's mind gives the opportunity to be open to innovations and protects individuals from being stucked in certain circumstances (Witek-Janusek, et al., 2008).

4. Trust

The individual's confidence in himself and his feelings is complementary to the practice of meditation (Kabat-Zinn 2009). Raingruber (2007) states that trusting one's own intuition and expertise is much better than being guided about the steps, life and decisions that he or she takes, even if one sometimes makes mistakes. Self the attitude of relying on his wisdom and virtue is an important element of the practice of meditation (Tsang et al. 2012). For a person who learns to trust his own intuition and feelings, it will be easier to trust other people and reveal the goodness within them (Kabat-Zinn 2009).

5. Non-Striving

Many vital activities are performed with the expectation of reaching a goal or achieving something, (Matchim et al. 2011). This attitude can be a real obstacle for meditation. This is what distinguishes meditation from other stress-reduction exercises; to realize the self of meditation, to teach to hear the voice of mind and body it has no other purpose (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). If the individual is nervous, he / she should focus only on his / her tension; pain if he / she feels pain, judgment if he / she judges his / her mind. The ability to live life moment by moment with patience and regular practices non-striving attitude would be cultivated spontaneously (Kabat-Zinn, 2009; Witek-Janusek et. all. 2008).

6. Acceptance

Acceptance is another tenet aimed to be cultivated in mindfulness. The term acceptance does not mean developing indulgence when one confronts with an aggravating circumstance. Yet it means "realizing how things are and finding ways to be in wise relationship with them. And then to act, as appropriate, out of that clarity of vision" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 130) Achieving acceptance process it is not easy, individuals tend to accept their truth after a long period of anger and denial (Tsang et al. 2012). These phases are part of the natural signs of progress and recovery in understanding what is going on in the life cycle. However, when individuals are too busy with denial, strain, striving, there would be too little energy for recovery and development and awareness would be hindered (Kabat-Zinn 2009). To accept does not mean to love everything, to give up your own rules and values, yet to see what is happening in the environment as it is, no matter what it is (Kabat-Zinn 2009; Matchim et al. 2011).

7. Letting Go

In his book *Full catastrophe living* Kabat Zinn uses the metaphor an old monkey catching trick to explain letting go attitude. When a hunter opens up a whole in coconut and place banana, it catches monkeys' attention and they put their hands in the whole yet would not be able to take their hands out of coconut since the whole is big enough for their hands only not their fists. Only the monkeys who let banana go and stay inside the coconuts would be escaped, while most others stick to the banana and get caught. Allowing is indicative of accepting events as they are. When the individual returns to his inner world, he finds himself judging things and passing them by must allow (Tsang et al., 2012). He shouldn't notice them and chase them any further. In the same way, when thoughts about the past or the future are revived in the mind, they pass again he should be allowed to go (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). If you let some emotions flow if not, then emotions will be put on hold. Let it take hold it is expressed as the opposite of giving (Tsang et al., 2012). Individual awareness if he's willing to live for good, let the emotions, the events, the thoughts go away. he'll learn in time how to let it go. giving up their lives and their values not to say (Matchim et al., 2011), to see what is happening in the environment as it is sincerely, no matter what it is (Kabat-Zinn 2009).

Mindfulness and Social Work Practice

Even though all helping professionals including psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors are using mindfulness; social workers are engaged with it in unique and different levels. Social work is more than a profession conducting individual or group therapy. Unlike other helping professions social workers work at community and policy levels as well.

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing”(IFSW, 2014).

As the definition reveals itself, one of the main goals of social work profession is to enhance wellbeing of people. In order to achieve this, many social policy tools have been used since the beginning of the profession. Yet, an effective social work intervention should take clients as a holistic being. If social work is to help individuals realize themselves, its interventions must surely involve various techniques that would enable them to comprehend their inner worlds.

According to the current definition of IFSW (2014), social work profession should contributes to the protection of psychological problems experienced by people as well as the protection and development of human dignity that all people possess regardless of their race, age, gender, nationality, religion or political view etc. In order to protect the values that human beings possess naturally, social workers should perform professional practices that ensure well-beings of the clients in the bio-psychosocial and spiritual aspects and the importance of human dignity.

Social workers, who perform micro, mezzo and macro level practices within the framework of general social work approach, implement their professional applications in these three fields of application. Micro and mezzo levels practices are mainly composed of social policy implementations in social service organizations while macro social

work practices aim to achieve social change. In order to respond to complex, intermingled problems of the clients, social workers should be able to have advanced clinical knowledge and skills.

The primary mission of social work is remarked by National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics (2017, p. 1) highlights the role of social work professionals in enhancing the well-beings of human:

“The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession’s dual focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living”.

By definition social work profession aims to increase well beings of people. Social work interventions without grasping the essence, spirits of clients would not exceed mechanic help process. Akbaş (2017, p. 100-102) criticizes the traditional approach of social work, which regards clients as prototypes since such stand ignores the spiritual search for self. He suggests that it is a useless and even cruel attitude to try to ameliorate a person without comprehending him/her as a whole being.

Clinical social work is a special practice field of social work, which focuses on the assessment, treatment and prevention of mental disorders and behavioral disturbances. Clinical social work is a specific track of social work discipline through which practitioners make use of their clinical and counseling skills to help clients achieve psychosocial wellbeing. Hick (2009, p. 1) states that “social workers are increasingly using aspects of mindfulness in three ways:

1. as a means of self-care, looking inward, and cultivating mindfulness within themselves;
2. directly in their practice as an intervention within micro practice (direct intervention with individuals, families and groups) and in mezzo and macro practice (community work and policy);
3. as a means to positively affect the helping or therapeutic relationship between social worker and client”.

NASW lists the abilities of the clinical social workers in the Standards of Clinical Social Work in Social Work Practice (2005: 13) as:

- Establishing and maintaining a relationship of mutual respect, acceptance, and trust
- Gather and interpret social, personal, environmental, and health information
- Evaluate and treat problems within their scope of practice
- Establish achievable treatment goals with the client
- Facilitate cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes consistent with treatment goals
- Evaluate the effectiveness of treatment services provided to the client
- Identify appropriate resources and assessment instruments, as needed
- Advocate for client services
- Collaborate effectively with other social work or allied professionals, when appropriate.

Implementations of clinical social work require the application of advanced clinical equipment and skills in various assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of psychosocial disorders. Even though the most dominant roles of

clinical social workers counselors and therapists, they also work as brokers of services, case managers, educators, mediators and advocates. Clinical social workers function in a wide range of areas, including child welfare institutions, family services institutions, child and adult mental health centers, hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers and private practice. One of the distinguishing features of clinical social work compared to other clinical professions is the social worker’s concern with social context (Cohen, 1980, p. 26).

As stated earlier mindfulness based interventions and theoretical knowledge have gained a considerable interest both in academia and practice (Roose,2009). Hick (2009) notes that mindfulness practice helps clients and practitioners to open their hearts up to their internal and external experiences. Thus, a better psychological and sociological understanding occurs between the clients and practitioners.

Mindfulness is regarded to be an effective tool used in working with individuals, families, and groups. The practice of meditation and mindfulness became a global phenomenon. It is used in a variety of settings such as schools, community health centers, offices of private practitioners and family service agencies in which social work (Moore and Malinowski 2009). Mindfulness based strategies used in change process consciousness would be developed and strengthened naturally. As social work became increasingly strengths based, as a part of a strategy as a change is a perfect fit since focus of the mindfulness will be on awareness not the problem or the client (Hick, 2009, p. 56). Figure 3 explicitly shows how professionals can utilize from mindfulness at different implementation levels.

Figure 3: The Role of Mindfulness in Social Work

| Self | Micro-practice | Mezzo and Macro Practice |
|--|--|--|
| Present-moment orientation | Present-moment orientation | Present-moment orientation |
| Inner peace and calm | Methods to develop deep listening and interpersonal presence | Attentive to process |
| Practices to cultivate self-compassion and self-acceptance | Open and nonjudgmental | Open minded and non-dogmatic |
| Changed relationship to negative emotions and mind states | Practices to cultivate compassion and empathy | Analysis of structural causes of injustice |
| Stress reduction and self-care | | Attentive to intentions for social change |

Source: Hick, 2009, p. 24

The outputs of introspective mindfulness have been discussed in depth earlier. When it comes to its integration into micro-level practice level, mindfulness can change how social workers interact with others especially with their clients. Present moment orientation allows them to tune into what is going on within themselves and around while they practice. Hick (2009:25) states that over time social workers’ inner talk is not accurate and helpful to clients since they often jump to conclusions and judgments about them. Even though regarding clients as unique beings is in the profession’s ethics, working with specific groups for some time, social workers might develop habitual reactions and anticipation. With mindfulness, social workers would become more open to the flow of understanding without judgment and understanding. Also, various meditations of mindfulness help to cultivate compassion and empathy seed which professionals need to seed to develop sound trust relationships with their clients.

Mezzo and macro level practices focus mostly on community work. Working with the community constitutes one of the three important pillars of the social work profession. In addition to working with individuals and groups,

working with society is the oldest method of social work. Egalitarian and sustainable society is one of the main missions of community social work. Mindfulness practices help social workers to uncover how institutions interlink with our everyday actions. Also being mindful of social construct social advocates tend to be more attentive to the details of social schemas and to people who are involved in social change process. This type of attentiveness helps social workers build alliances, enlist additional support and ensure that all voices are heard (Hick, 2009, p. 25).

Conclusion

Mindfulness based techniques are increasingly being employed within social work practices. While with hundreds of years of practice, there are abundant works explaining what mindfulness is and how to practice, it is important to reevaluate the concept and its content in the intervention of helping professions.

Several of the applications of mindfulness-based practices have been used to reduce or treat different symptoms of different problems or to enhance individual strengths. Mindfulness includes a process which results in a mental state characterized by being aware of the present moment experience nonjudgmentally, involving one's emotions, ideas, thoughts, physical states, consciousness, and the surroundings.

Scholarly reviewed works of social workers have shown the efficiency of integrating mindfulness into social work practices in micro, mezzo and macro levels. While it strengthens the relationship between social workers and clients through opening up a deeper path to evaluate the circumstances and feelings of clients in therapeutic settings; it enhances social-justice oriented macro practices more influential

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