

# Intervention Effects and Optimization Strategies of Social Work Services in the Field of Mental Health

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the intervention effects of social work services in the mental health field and relevant optimization strategies. Utilizing literature analysis, the research examines how social work services can effectively enhance the quality and outcomes of mental health services from three dimensions: social work theory, community service models, and mental health intervention practices. The study systematically reviews recent social work practices across various settings, including universities, child welfare institutions, and community mental health services, while also considering existing policy frameworks and implementation strategies. By comparing related literature from domestic and international contexts, the research identifies challenges faced by social work in the mental health domain and corresponding coping strategies. In the conclusion, the study summarizes the environmental support, institutional guarantees, and professional talent development necessary for effective mental health services through social work. Results indicate that enhanced social work interventions significantly improve psychological adaptability and quality of life among target populations. The study recommends further policy-level efforts to deeply integrate social work with mental health services, optimize resource allocation, and refine service processes to improve overall intervention effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Social Work; Mental Health; Intervention Effects; Optimization Strategies; Community Services

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background and Significance

With the rapid development of the socio-economic landscape, mental health issues have

garnered increasing attention. Particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing social changes, individuals are facing heightened psychological stress. According to data from the National Center for Mental Health, the incidence of anxiety and depression has significantly increased since 2021, with specific groups such as adolescents, the elderly, and grassroots workers being particularly affected. In this context, social work has emerged as a vital intervention in the mental health field, serving as a crucial channel for addressing psychological issues and thus playing a significant role in enhancing overall societal health. Therefore, research on the intervention effects of social work services in mental health and their optimization strategies aims to provide effective references for practice.

### 1.2 Review of Domestic and International Research

Internationally, social work has established a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework for mental health support, counseling, and intervention. Data from the American Institute of Mental Health indicates that social work interventions have become a core component of most psychotherapy models. Additionally, research from the UK and Australia emphasizes the strong relationship between social support networks and mental health, positioning social work as a key driver of mental health services.

In contrast, domestic research commenced relatively later and tends to focus more on case intervention effects and comparative analyses of localized examples. Cheng Ye's exploration indicates that the integration of community social work into university mental health services has shown positive intervention outcomes, yet further optimization pathways are needed. Moreover, Li Yawei's study on community mental health service systems highlights the potential of the "social work

plus" model for mental health interventions, underscoring the importance of integrating multidisciplinary perspectives such as law, healthcare, and social work for strategic cohesion.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations of Social Work Services

### 2.1 Definition and Development of Social Work

Social work is defined as a human-centered professional activity aimed at enhancing social functions and alleviating mental health issues. According to Wu Junsheng (2020), social work involves combining community resources with autonomous individuals to enhance their capacity for fulfillment. This definition reflects the holistic care and multidimensional characteristics of social work, balancing rationality and emotional support.

Social work practice has evolved from insurance assistance to community services, culminating in a comprehensive service system. In the ecological classification of mental health issues, social work integrates social support, coordination mechanisms, and intervention outcomes to present a multifaceted view of individual mental health, as demonstrated through clinical and long-term intervention strategies.

### 2.2 Theoretical Framework of Mental Health Services

Mental health services encompass prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation. Research by Xiu Yingguo et al. categorizes mental health interventions into routine services and specialized interventions, emphasizing a combination of psychological education, counseling, and emotional support. For social workers, intervention strategies must be adjusted according to the characteristics of target populations.

The theoretical framework emphasizes the value of a systems approach, advocating for an ecological model that considers individuals within their social contexts. Consequently, mental health services should not only involve skill training at the individual level but also encompass social support at the relational level and cognitive adjustment at the dialogical level. This necessitates a clear categorization in empirical research models and the

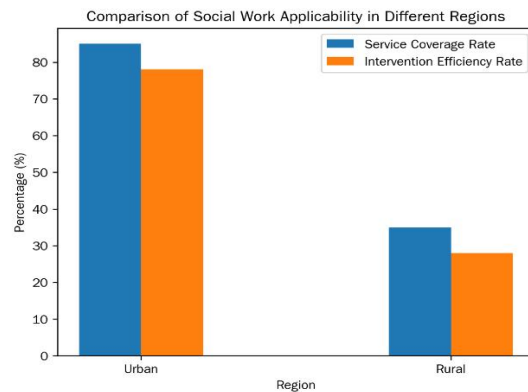
implementation of optimization plans in social work services.

## 3. Role of Social Work in the Field of Mental Health

### 3.1 Current Status of Social Work Services

Currently, social work services are increasingly penetrating various levels of mental health initiatives in both urban and rural settings. Many universities have established mental health education and counseling centers, showing positive trends in data research and intervention services. In contrast, rural areas have been slower to enhance psychological interventions, although the training of community workers and their intervention capabilities are gradually improving.

Figure 1 illustrates the comparative applicability of social work across different regions, highlighting changes in service populations and potential issues in intervention outcomes. In the future, assessing whether services accurately reflect social needs will be a critical source of information for achieving effective interventions.



**Figure 1. Comparison of Social Work Applicability Across Different Regions**

### 3.2 Diverse Manifestations of Social Work Services

Social work services in mental health exhibit diverse manifestations, enhancing practical outcomes through case management, community interventions, and medical social work. During the case service phase, integrated interventions can effectively reduce selection bias, while guiding roles allow intervention personnel to further engage with individuals' growth experiences and backgrounds. According to a study by Duan Wenjie et al.,

this integration enhances the feasibility of implementing effective social work services for specific groups, combining empirical science with individual perceptions.

Notably, adolescents often face psychological obstacles due to their limited ability to filter information, particularly when confronted with the paradoxes of online social interactions. In this context, interventions focusing on green behavioral practices, positive incentives, and group activities have become essential components of social work interventions. Moreover, authoritative industry resources and intervention tools are gradually emerging, providing social workers with broader developmental platforms.

#### **4. Evaluation Standards and Methods for Intervention Effects**

##### **4.1 Analysis of Intervention Effectiveness Indicators**

In the mental health field, the evaluation indicators for the effectiveness of social work services are diverse, reflecting intervention outcomes from various dimensions.

Improvement in mental health status is one of the core indicators. Standardized psychological scales, such as the Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90), are commonly used for measurement. This scale encompasses various dimensions, including somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, and anxiety. By testing subjects before and after interventions, noticeable changes in these psychological symptoms can be observed. For example, in a social work intervention project targeting community depression patients, 50 participants had an average depression score of 2.8 (with scores ranging from 1 to 5, where higher scores indicate more severe symptoms). Following a six-month systematic intervention, the average depression score dropped to 1.8, indicating significant improvement in depressive symptoms.

Restoration of social functioning is also a critical evaluation indicator. Social functioning includes individuals' capabilities in family, occupational, and social contexts. For instance, to assess occupational functionality, employment status and work performance indicators can be analyzed pre- and post-intervention. Research indicates that, among

unemployed individuals with mental health issues receiving social work interventions, 60% of the intervention group found employment within three months, compared to only 25% in the control group. This demonstrates the positive impact of social work interventions in promoting social functioning recovery.

Improvement in quality of life is another crucial aspect. Quality of life can be assessed through material and psychological living standards. The General Quality of Life Inventory (GQOLI-74) is commonly employed for this purpose, assessing physical, psychological, social functions, and material living conditions. In a project focused on mental health interventions for the elderly, the application of this questionnaire revealed significant improvements in scores related to psychological and social functions, indicating enhanced overall quality of life.

##### **4.2 Selection and Application of Evaluation Methods**

The selection of evaluation methods should align with the specific indicators and characteristics of the service population. Common evaluation methods include surveys, interviews, and observations.

Surveys are efficient and objective. The scales, such as SCL-90 and GQOLI-74, utilize questionnaire-based data collection. During implementation, it is crucial to maintain a standardized process for distributing and collecting questionnaires. For large-scale mental health intervention evaluations, a combination of online and offline distribution methods can enhance response rates and sample representativeness.

Interviews provide in-depth insights into service users' subjective experiences. These can be structured or unstructured. Structured interviews adhere to predetermined questions, ensuring consistency and comparability, while unstructured interviews allow for greater flexibility and enable service users to express their thoughts freely. When evaluating the effects of mental health interventions for adolescents, unstructured interviews can facilitate a deeper understanding of their internal feelings about intervention activities and personal growth during the process.

Observation assesses intervention effectiveness by monitoring service users' behaviors in daily

life. For example, observing individuals' interactions and emotional states in social settings can provide direct insights into the impact of interventions. In social work interventions for children with autism, observing their participation in group activities and eye contact with peers can offer clear indicators of intervention success.

In practice, a combination of multiple evaluation methods is often employed. For instance, in a community mental health promotion project, initial data on residents' mental health and quality of life can be collected through surveys, followed by interviews to gather feedback on satisfaction and personal gains from the project, and finally, observations of residents' behaviors during community activities to comprehensively evaluate intervention effectiveness.

## 5. Case Analysis and Experience Summary

### 5.1 Characteristics of Successful Cases

An exemplary case from a university's mental health education and counseling center illustrates a successful intervention for a student experiencing severe depression due to academic pressure and interpersonal issues. Upon receiving the student's request for help, the center promptly initiated its intervention protocol.

The success of this case was largely due to timely assessment and intervention. Social workers conducted a comprehensive psychological assessment within 24 hours of the request, utilizing a combination of standardized psychological scales and interviews to accurately identify the student's mental state and underlying issues. This swift response allowed for a timely intervention.

Collaboration among a multidisciplinary team was also key to the success. The center assembled a team comprising psychologists, psychiatrists, and student counselors. Psychologists provided individual counseling sessions 2-3 times weekly to help the student manage emotional issues and reframe cognitive patterns. The psychiatrist prescribed appropriate medication based on the student's symptoms and conducted regular follow-ups to adjust the treatment plan. Meanwhile, student counselors offered ongoing support in the student's daily academic and social life, facilitating feedback on the student's progress.

Statistics indicate that, through this collaborative approach, the student's depressive symptoms significantly improved within three months, and they returned to a normal academic and social functioning level after six months.

Additionally, the development of a personalized intervention plan contributed to the success. Social workers tailored interventions to the student's specific needs. For interpersonal issues, they organized a skills training group focused on enhancing communication abilities through simulated social scenarios. To address academic pressure, they connected the student with volunteer tutors to develop a manageable study plan.

### 5.2 Reflections and Improvements from Failed Cases

In contrast, a mental health intervention project aimed at providing services to left-behind elderly individuals in rural areas faced challenges that resulted in suboptimal outcomes.

One significant issue was the lack of targeted services. The project team did not sufficiently consider the cultural background and actual needs of the elderly demographic. For instance, they employed psychological health seminars common in urban settings, which were difficult for the elderly to understand. Surveys indicated that fewer than 30% of the elderly could comprehend the lecture content, resulting in low participation rates.

Another challenge was inadequate resource integration. The project team failed to effectively leverage local resources, such as village committees and volunteer organizations. This lack of support led to compromised service coverage and quality. For example, the initial plan to provide monthly psychological care visits was reduced to quarterly visits due to staff shortages.

To address these issues, improvements are necessary. Service design should involve a deep understanding of the target population's culture and needs to create more relevant intervention plans. Utilizing accessible methods, such as storytelling and case studies for mental health education, can enhance comprehension. Additionally, strengthening partnerships with local village committees and volunteer organizations is crucial to optimize the utilization of local resources, thereby

improving service quality and efficiency.

## 6. Recommendations for Optimization Strategies

### 6.1 Institutional-Level Optimization

At the institutional level, it is essential to establish a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for mental health services. Currently, existing laws in China regarding mental health services are insufficient, leading to ambiguities in service provision and responsibilities. A dedicated mental health service law should be enacted to clarify the rights and obligations of social work service providers and professionals in mental health interventions, thereby standardizing service processes and criteria. Furthermore, government investment in social work services for mental health should be increased, incorporating these services into the basic public service system and establishing special funds to support intervention projects. Comparatively, in some developed countries, government investment in mental health services accounts for 10-15% of total healthcare expenditures, while China's proportion remains relatively low. Increasing investment can provide more resources and support for social work services.

### 6.2 Professional Training and Team Building

Specialized training is crucial for enhancing social workers' service capabilities in the mental health sector. A systematic training framework should be established, including orientation training, continuing education, and in-service training. Orientation training should cover foundational psychology, mental health assessment methods, and intervention techniques. In-service training should be tailored to specific work stages and needs, such as crisis intervention and group counseling. Continuing education should encourage social workers to stay updated with industry developments.

In terms of team building, it is vital to create a diverse professional team that includes psychologists, psychiatrists, rehabilitation therapists, and other specialists. Enhanced collaboration and communication among professionals will foster complementary expertise. For example, periodic

interdisciplinary case discussion meetings can be organized to collectively explore issues and solutions for service users.

### 6.3 Integration and Sharing of Community Resources

Communities serve as crucial platforms for mental health interventions, necessitating the integration and sharing of local resources. Partnerships with local schools, hospitals, and businesses should be strengthened. Schools can provide venues and student resources for youth mental health interventions; hospitals can offer medical support and technical guidance; businesses can fund and support mental health activities for community services. Additionally, community volunteer resources should be tapped. Training and organizing community volunteers to participate in mental health services can enhance outreach and effectiveness. Statistics indicate that in certain communities, volunteer involvement in mental health services has expanded service coverage by 30% and significantly increased user satisfaction.

### 6.4 Strategy Implementation and Follow-Up Evaluation

For effective strategy implementation, a clear accountability system must be established to ensure that optimization strategies are executed. Responsibilities and tasks for various departments and personnel should be clearly defined, along with a detailed work plan and timeline. For instance, a stringent oversight mechanism should be implemented for the use of government funds, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively for mental health services.

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