



Social Work Methods for Enhancing the Empowerment of Communities in Ecological Protection

Mahmoud Keyvanara*, Behnam Sarfaraz

Isfahan University of Medical Science, Isfahan, Iran

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***Corresponding Author:**
Isfahan University of Medical
Science, Isfahan, Iran

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Social work, as an academic discipline and a profession grounded in social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity, emphasizes the empowerment of individuals, the promotion of social cohesion, the liberation of marginalized groups, and the resolution of challenges faced by communities. A healthy environment is a fundamental human right intrinsically linked to human dignity and non-discrimination within the social sphere. The field of ecology-based social work seeks to uphold this human right. As a significant subfield of social work, ecology-based social work examines the intricate relationship between humans and their ecological surroundings. However, despite the growing recognition of eco-social approaches and related theories, the roles of social workers and the principles of this theory remain underappreciated in Iran, where social work practices are predominantly traditional. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the role of social workers in empowering communities to protect the environment.

Methods and Materials: The research method employed in this study utilized a literature review approach, examining texts and sources relevant to community empowerment and environmental social work through the analysis of articles, books, and electronic resources. All documents were systematically reviewed, analyzed, and synthesized using library studies. This method involves several stages: defining research questions, searching for sources, selecting studies, extracting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and writing the final report. The approach adopted for this study included a comprehensive review of existing literature on social work methods in Iran.

Results: Findings indicated that social workers could contribute to environmental protection and community empowerment through the eco-social work approach, sustainable development principles, and related theories and subfields. They designed programs and projects that had social and economic impacts while supporting environmental conservation. These initiatives entailed environmental education, creating job opportunities related to environmental conservation, and developing sustainable green spaces within communities. Furthermore, by establishing local social networks and promoting active community participation, social workers could aid in both environmental protection and community empowerment in this field.

Conclusion and Discussion: This study emphasizes the critical role of social work in promoting community empowerment for ecological protection. Social workers adopt eco-social work approaches and sustainable development principles to integrate environmental concerns into their practice. They design innovative programs for environmental education, sustainable livelihoods, and community engagement, empowering communities to contribute to ecological conservation actively. Despite challenges in traditional social work frameworks in Iran, expanding the recognition and implementation of eco-social work principles can significantly enhance environmental sustainability and community well-being.

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