

## Social Justice-Focused Mental Health Practice: An Integrative Model for Clinical Social Work

**Authors :** Hye-Kyung Kang

**Abstract :** Social justice is a central principle of the social work profession and education. However, scholars have long questioned the profession's commitment to putting social justice values into practice. Clinical social work has been particularly criticized for its lack of attention to social justice and for failing to address the concerns of the oppressed. One prominent criticism of clinical social work is that it often relies on individual intervention and fails to take on system-level changes or advocacy. This concern evokes the historical macro-micro tension of the social work profession where micro (e.g., mental health counseling) and macro (e.g., policy advocacy) practices are conceptualized as separate domains, creating a false binary for social workers. One contributor to this false binary seems to be that most clinical practice models do not prepare social work students and practitioners to make a clear link between clinical practice and social justice. This paper presents a model of clinical social work practice that clearly recognizes the essential and necessary connection between social justice, advocacy, and clinical practice throughout the clinical process: engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation. Contemporary relational theories, critical social work frameworks, and anti-oppressive practice approaches are integrated to build a clinical social work practice model that addresses the urgent need for mental health practice that not only helps and heals the person but also challenges societal oppressions and aims to change them. The application of the model is presented through case vignettes.

**Keywords :** social justice, clinical social work, clinical social work model, integrative model

**Conference Title :** ICSW 2024 : International Conference on Social Work

**Conference Location :** Paris, France

**Conference Dates :** May 16-17, 2024